ISRAEL EDITION
VOL 8 • NO 1
YOM HA'ATZMAUT 5785

HAMIZRACHI

הַמִּזְרָחִי

MIZRACHI

NOW IN OUR 8TH YEAR!

WITH GRATEFUL THANKS TO THE FOUNDING SPONSORS OF HAMIZRACHI
THE LAMM FAMILY OF MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

עד לישראל

Israel at 77

DON'T MISS YOUR CHANCE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

VOTING ENDS MAY 4

VOTE SLATE 5 OIC-MIZRACHI
WWW.VOTEOIC.ORG

Dedicated in honor of
חיילי צה"ל וכוחות הבטחון בכל מקום שהם
With admiration, appreciation and *tefillot* for your success.

MIZRACHI
WORLD MOVEMENT

www.mizrachi.org
office@mizrachi.org
+972 (0)2 620 9000

NASI
Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

CO-PRESIDENT
Rabbi Yechiel Wasserman

CHAIRMAN
Mr. Harvey Blitz

EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN
Rabbi Doron Perez

CEO
Rabbi Danny Mirvis

EDUCATIONAL DIRECTORS
Rabbi Reuven Taragin
Rabbanit Shani Taragin

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

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

HAMIZRACHI
PUBLISHED BY WORLD MIZRACHI IN JERUSALEM

EDITOR
Rabbi Elie Mischel
editor@mizrachi.org

MANAGING EDITOR
Rabbi Aron White

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Leah Rubin

PROOFREADER
Daniel Cohen

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
Esther Shafier

HaMizrachi seeks to spread Torat Eretz Yisrael throughout the world. HaMizrachi also contains articles, opinion pieces and advertisements that represent the diversity of views and interests in our communities. These do not necessarily reflect any official position of Mizrachi or its branches. If you don't want to keep HaMizrachi, you can double-wrap it before disposal, or place it directly into *genizah* (*sheimos*).

To dedicate an issue of HaMizrachi in memory of a loved one or in celebration of a simcha, or for other HaMizrachi enquiries, please email production@mizrachi.org.

HaMizrachi is available to read online at mizrachi.org/hamizrachi

In partnership with
קרן קיימת לישראל
KKL - JNF

INSIDE

ORTHODOX ISRAEL COALITION MIZRACHI
ON THE FRONTLINES FOR ISRAEL

DON'T MISS YOUR CHANCE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Voting for the World Zionist Congress elections ends May 4

SEE PAGES 12–22 TO LEARN MORE

THE COURAGE AT NACHAL OZ
PAGES 24–25

From Personal Loss to National Service:
An Interview with Ambassador Yechiel Leiter
PAGES 26–29

Finding Jewish Love in the Modern World
A Conversation with Aleeza Ben Shalom
PAGES 38–41

Yom HaAtzmaut Torah
PAGES 44–58

100K+ VOTES

In the first 3 weeks of the World Zionist Congress elections, over 102,380 votes have been cast in total.

This is a

142% increase

from the third week of voting in the 2020 election, and a

657% increase

from the 2015 election.

Due to the high number of new slates involved in the elections, it is more critical than ever to vote OIC-Mizrachi so the Religious Zionist voice is heard.

ORTHODOX ISRAEL COALITION MIZRACHI

ON THE FRONTLINES FOR ISRAEL

VOTE TODAY

VOTING CLOSES MAY 4

WWW.VOTEOIC.ORG

(PHOTO: IDF SPOKESPERSON'S UNIT)

WARRIORS OF OZ

The Meaning of Courage and Boldness Today

Rabbi Doron Perez

Since October 7th, our family's life has been tied in more ways than one to a particular Hebrew word: *oz* (עז) – courage. This word accompanies me every single day, for three reasons.

First and foremost, both of our sons served and fought on October 7th, Simchat Torah, in the army base of *Nachal Oz* (נחל עוז) adjacent to the *kibbutz* which bears the same name. Our younger son Daniel *HY"D* was unfortunately taken hostage, and we heard 163 days later that he had been killed on that day outside *Nachal Oz* base.

Our other son Yonatan left our home at 8:00am that morning and fought most of the day before being shot and injured in the very same base of *Nachal Oz*. The fate of our family is therefore tied, deeply and forever, to *Nachal Oz*. The tremendous pain of Daniel's capture and loss and the enormous appreciation for Yonatan's survival and salvation are linked to this place.

Secondly, Daniel served in the Tank Corps in Battalion 77, known in Hebrew as *G'dud Oz* (גדוד עז). The numerical value of *oz* (עז) is 77. This was the battalion positioned on the Gaza border that day and the battalion to which our son Daniel and his crew belonged. We have become so much a part of the family of Battalion 77 / *Oz* since that difficult day.

Thirdly and finally, this year is the 77th year of the State of Israel – the year of *oz* (עז) and courage.

I therefore spend much time thinking about the meaning of *oz* (עז) as it is inextricably linked not only to the Jewish people in this 77th year but also to the destiny of our family and our sons forever.

Oz everywhere

The more I started looking into the concept of *oz* (עז), the more I realized that *oz*, meaning courage and boldness, is not only absolutely critical to the service of G-d in general but critical to our mission as Jews today.

The first thing I began to notice is that this short, pithy word of two letters – *oz* (עז) – is ubiquitous throughout our daily prayers.

Here are a few examples. In *Pesukei D'Zimra*, the verses of praise that we say every morning, we say: "Give *oz* to G-d, G-d's grandeur and *oz* is on Israel... He gives *oz* and strength to the people, blessed is G-d" (*Tehillim* 68:35–36). In the thrice-daily recited *Tehillim* of *Ashrei*, it appears: "They will proclaim the might (וְעֻזְּךָ) of Your awesome acts" (*Tehillim* 145:6). *Oz* also appears in the concluding *Tehillim* 150 that we also say every day. In the Song of the Sea, "*Ozi v'zimrat Ka*" (*Shemot* 15:2), and then in *Yishtabach*, we say as one of G-d's many attributes "*Oz u'memshalah*" (strength and dominion). At the conclusion of the silent prayer, *Sim Shalom*, in *Nusach Sepharad*, we say, "*B'rov oz v'shalom*" – with great *oz* and peace.

Bold as a leopard

Oz is not only a praise of G-d but also a fundamental human quality in our service of G-d.

The *Mishnah* in *Pirkei Avot* states: "Yehuda ben Teima says, Be bold as a leopard, swift as an eagle, light-footed as a gazelle, and brave as a lion to do the will of your Father in Heaven" (*Pirkei Avot* 5:20).

Yehuda ben Teima begins his list of qualities with the courage and boldness of a leopard, emphasizing this attribute first in our service to G-d. This priority is so significant that Rabbi Ya'akov ben Asher, known as the Tur after his monumental halakhic work the *Arba'a Turim*, opens his entire book with this very *Mishnah*, specifically highlighting why the quality of boldness – *az* (עַז) – is mentioned before all others.

The Tur explains: "He (Rabbi Yehuda ben Teima) specified four things concerning the service of the Creator, may He be blessed. And he began with 'boldness as a leopard' because it is an important general principle in the service of the Creator, may He be blessed."

What exactly is boldness? Why specifically is it a quality of a leopard, and why is it so critical to the service of G-d and living as a Jew?

The Tur continues: "Since sometimes a person desires to perform a *mitzvah* but

is prevented from performing it because of people who mock him. Therefore, he cautioned that you should have fortitude against the mockers and not refrain from performing the *mitzvah*."

From the Tur, we learn that the most important part of serving G-d is knowing how to stand up for the values we believe in. The moment we commit to life, truth, and values, there will always be those who oppose it. Since the dawn of Judaism and the light that it brings to the world, there have been those who have aimed to snuff it out and extinguish its light – not to sanctify life but to celebrate darkness and death.

It was the leading king in Avraham's time, Nimrod, who, according to our sages, opposed Avraham's moral vision of monotheism and attempted to kill him in the fiery furnace. It was Pharaoh and his evil empire who aimed to subjugate and snuff out the Jewish nation. From Haman to Hitler to Hamas, there are always those who, as the *Haggadah* says, "are preparing to destroy us."

If we are not armed with boldness, total dedication, and conviction, we will not be able to uphold our values and G-d's truth. The Tur speaks about people who mock us, who undermine our values, who belittle us for being Jewish and living according to the values of the Torah. We so often are alienated and left to fight our battles as Jews alone. This requires great conviction and encouragement when feeling isolated and alone in the values that we believe to be important.

This explains why boldness and courage are attributes specifically of a leopard. A leopard fights alone. It never travels in a group and does not have the protection of a pack or family group like lions do with their pride. It therefore has to rely on its own strength, boldness, and courage to risk its life in one-on-one battles. It is used to being isolated and fighting alone and fighting for survival alone. Nothing is more important than backbone, courage, and conviction.

The attack on Israel today

Throughout history, persecution of Jews often targeted our religious practices and laws. Our oppressors mocked and undermined the very commandments and rituals that distinguished us from other nations. We needed great conviction in order to follow our values.

What was true of the opposition to Judaism then has now mutated today into opposition to the Jewish state. The focus of antisemites today is no longer the opposition to Judaism or the existence of the Jewish people but the vehement opposition to the Jewish state. We are now mocked, maligned, and delegitimized – not for being Jews or adhering to Judaism but for supporting and being part of the Zionist endeavor and Jewish statehood.

The blood libel of our time has transformed. It is no longer accusations about contaminated Jewish blood as Hitler claimed, nor medieval allegations of Jews killing Christian children to make *matzah*. Today's blood libel focuses on Zionism itself. Israeli leaders and soldiers – the very defenders of Jewish sovereignty – are falsely accused of deliberately killing Palestinian children. These defenders of the Jewish state face not only condemnation in public opinion but also malicious charges in international courts of "justice," where they stand accused of murder, genocide, and severe human rights violations.

We once again are called upon to display enormous courage and conviction in defense of Jewish values – to stand up, often alone, and fight for Jewish destiny.

We now all stand on the front lines in the battle for Israel's legitimacy. Every Jew is called to defend our values and uphold the moral right to a Jewish state. In Israel, many risk their lives as soldiers defending Israel's physical existence, just as countless brave soldiers and civilians did on October 7th and continue to do every day since. Others fight through legal channels, challenging false accusations in international courts of "justice." Many wage the battle of public opinion, using pens, keyboards, and cameras as their weapons, often standing alone against prejudice and misinformation. On college campuses, courageous students confront the growing tide of antisemitism that disguises itself as anti-Zionism. Wherever we are, however isolated we may feel, each of us bears the responsibility to stand up for Zionism and the Jewish state's right to exist.

This mission demands boldness and courage from each of us. Being Jewish has always required the strength to uphold our values against fierce opposition. Today, we need this courage more than ever to withstand the storms of hostility directed at our most fundamental beliefs and to preserve our heritage for generations to come.

Bold but not brazen

Boldness, though, is a double-edged sword. We must take care that it doesn't turn into brazenness. The very same *Mishnah* which urges us to enlist boldness as a quality to serve G-d warns us that boldness should not turn to brazenness and arrogance: "He used to say: the brazen (*az panim* – עז פנים) are headed for *Gehinnom* and the blushing (*boshet panim* – בושת פנים) for the Garden of Eden" (*Pirkei Avot* 5:20).

The author of *Orchot Tzadikim* warns us to be vigilant against crossing from boldness into brazenness. This boundary, though narrow, is crucial. When defending our convictions, we must ensure our confidence doesn't transform into arrogance, our certainty doesn't become dismissiveness, and our strength doesn't lead to contempt for others.

A belief in the righteousness of our cause with little regard for others and belittling those who oppose us can quickly lead us to become haughty, brazen, and rebellious. If we turn the same tenacity needed to fight for our values into a vehicle to rebel against truth and others, it can be destructive, uncompromising, stiff-necked, obstinate, and obstructive.

We must always caution ourselves to be bold but never brazen, self-confident but never arrogant, and deeply committed with conviction but never condescending.

The year of Oz

This is our great challenge in the year of *Oz* (עז) of the State of Israel. We must, both as a country and a people, demonstrate tenacious conviction to stand up for our truth, to confront – alone if necessary – our vicious enemies on the frontlines and the antisemites around the world who attack us in academia, social media, and diplomacy.

In this critical hour, the quality of *oz* (עז) must define us. Every Jew is called to stand up for the truth with boldness, courage, and unwavering conviction. This is not merely our challenge – it is the essence of our collective lives and legacy.

Rabbi Doron Perez
is the Executive Chairman
of World Mizrachi.

ELIT&DORIT

בס"ד

NEVE AMIM

RAMAT BEIT SHEMESH

CONSTRUCTION UNDERWAY!

It's the new Anglo community in Neve Shamir where you fit right in

- √ Vibrant cultura and community life
- √ High-end development with no public housing
- √ Adjacent to RBS A

YIGAL REALTY | USA: +1 (845) 721-7288 | Naomi@yyigal-realty.com

AMIM GROUP קבוצת עמים / Home is where your community is

IDF
Widows &
Orphans Org

Hanna and her two young children, the widow and orphans of
Uriel Cohen z"l — killed in battle in Gaza on December 19, 2023

Since October 7

315 widows | 39 pregnant | 730 orphans

This Yom Hazikaron, stand with the widows of our fallen heroes. Support the **LETZIDECH** program and help care for mothers raising newborns without their partners. *Scan to donate* →

HELP REBUILD THEIR LIVES

The IDF Widows & Orphans Organisation is an independent Israeli non-profit charitable organisation (amuta), established in 1991.
www.idfwo.org/en

Mourning Customs of the Omer on Yom HaAtzmaut

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Are the mourning customs of the *Omer* observed on Yom HaAtzmaut?

There are different customs regarding which days of the *Omer* the mourning practices apply. According to all opinions, the 5th of Iyar – Yom HaAtzmaut – is one of the days on which mourning customs should be observed. The mourning customs include prohibitions on weddings, haircuts, dancing, and listening to music. Are these things permitted on Yom HaAtzmaut?

Shaving on Yom HaAtzmaut

Regarding mourning customs during the *Omer*, it has been established that when there is a joyous event during the *Omer* counting, such as a circumcision or *sheva berachot*, the celebrant is permitted to shave (*Rema* 493:2). The reason for this is that for the celebrant, this day is a holiday (see *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 559:9), and therefore mourning customs do not apply.

In light of this, we can learn a *kal vachomer* – that on a day which is inherently a holiday, like Yom HaAtzmaut, it is permitted to shave (Rabbi Yitzchak Nissim, *Responsa Yayin HaTov*, Vol. 2, *Orach Chaim*, Ch. 11; Rabbi Avraham Shapira, cited in the book of the Chief Rabbinate, p. 878, note 83).

Perhaps we can add a novel idea: Some say that Rabbi Akiva's students, whose deaths are the reason we observe mourning customs, died during the Bar Kochba revolt (Rabbi Moshe Zvi Neria, *Emunat Itecha* 41, p. 5). In other words, Rabbi Akiva's students died while attempting to establish a state – something that did not succeed due to the lack of unity among them. According to this, the entire purpose of mourning is over their failure to establish a state. Therefore, it can be said that on the day we succeeded in establishing a state – the mourning customs do not apply!

In practice, since Yom HaAtzmaut is a day of joy, the mourning customs of the *Omer* are not observed on it, and it is permitted to shave on this day. One may shave even from the day before, as part of the preparations for Yom HaAtzmaut. Similarly, dancing and music are permitted on this day.

Weddings on Yom HaAtzmaut

According to Rabbi Yitzchak Nissim, since Yom HaAtzmaut is a day on which a miracle occurred and mourning customs are suspended, it is permitted to marry on this day. However, *Responsa Yaskil Avdi* (Vol. 6, Ch. 10, Section 2, letters 7–8) rules to prohibit this, because in his opinion, the main miracle was not in the declaration of the State but on the day of the ceasefire at the end of the war, or on the day of the UN decision. Rabbi Unterman (*Responsa Shevet MiYehuda*, Vol. 2, *Orach Chaim*, Ch. 60) also ruled this way, relating that he consulted with the Chazon Ish and tried to convince him to permit weddings on Yom HaAtzmaut, but he was unsuccessful.

In practice, most have the custom not to get married on Yom HaAtzmaut, despite the fact that, as mentioned, they are lenient regarding other mourning customs in honor of Yom HaAtzmaut.

Yom HaAtzmaut not on its original date

In most years, Yom HaAtzmaut is not celebrated on the 5th of Iyar but near it, in order to avoid Shabbat desecration during Yom HaAtzmaut ceremonies and celebrations. This is an exalted expression of the State's independence and an enormous sanctification of G-d's name. Every country in the world has a fixed date for its Independence Day, and no country postpones its Independence Day due to religious concerns. Only in the State of Israel is there no fixed date for Yom HaAtzmaut; rather, it changes according to concerns about Shabbat desecration. This is true independence – an Independence Day determined by the kingdom of Israel, an Independence Day set in accordance with Shabbat observance.

Therefore, each year Yom HaAtzmaut should be celebrated on the day established by law to celebrate it in order to prevent Shabbat desecration, and this is the primary date in that year. This is the day on which *Hallel* is recited, and this is the day on which shaving is permitted and mourning customs of the *Omer* are not observed.

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon
is the Nasi of World Mizrachi.
He is the Founder and Chairman of Sulamot and La'Ofek, and serves as the Chief Rabbi of Gush Etzion, and Rosh Yeshivah of the Jerusalem College of Technology.

YU in Israel offers a seamless blend of Torah learning with a college education. This allows me to grow spiritually while working toward my degree, creating a balance that improves both my Jewish education and my future in Israel.
Nava Miller, Five Towns
YESHIVA UNIVERSITY IN ISRAEL
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM
Achieve Excellence in Torah While Earning a YU Degree in Partnership with Top Israeli Universities
Immersive Torah Studies in a World-Class Beit Midrash Environment with Top Tier Rabbeim and Teachers.
Academic Degrees in Partnership with Leading Israeli Research Universities
Vibrant Student Experience and Residence Life
YU IN ISRAEL
Apply now
LEARN MORE AT YU.EDU/YUI
Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism
MOSAIC UNITED
In partnership with Israel's Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Mosaic United, our university offers students enriching cultural experiences and opportunities to explore Jewish heritage and Israel alongside their academic studies.
Yeshiva University

נפש Nefesh בנפש B'Nefesh

ALIYAH

NATIONAL SERVICE

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ZIONIST EDUCATION

Building a stronger Israel for today *and* tomorrow.

Our vision is to create programs, initiatives and opportunities that benefit the State of Israel, its people and infrastructure in the realms of Aliyah and integration, healthcare, national service and Zionist education.

Through facilitation, advocacy, education and service, we are creating a better shared future for our people, communities and homeland, Israel.

נפש Nefesh בנפש B'Nefesh

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO BUILD A STRONGER ISRAEL THROUGH ALIYAH

Ministry of Aliyah and Integration

THE הסוכנות היהודית JEWISH AGENCY לארץ ישראל FOR ISRAEL

קרן קיימת לישראל KKL-JNF

JEWISH NATIONAL FUND USA

Reichman University
Raphael Recanati International School

YOUR HOME AWAY FROM HOME AT REICHMAN UNIVERSITY

A WARM ENVIRONMENT FOR OUR SHOMREI SHABBAT STUDENTS

Oren Zac
United Kingdom,
BA Business Administration

Loren Veltman
United States
BA Entrepreneurship & Business Administration

Allie Weinberger
United States
BA Government

Menachem Reinitz
United States
BA Government

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

- Business Administration
- Business & Economics (double major)
- Communications
- Computer Science (BSc)
- Economics & Entrepreneurship with Data Science (double major)
- Entrepreneurship & Business (double major)
- Entrepreneurship, BA & Computer Science, BSc (double major)
- Government
- Psychology

ONE SEMESTER / ONE YEAR / FULL DEGREE

GRADUATE PROGRAMS

MA

- Counter-Terrorism & Intelligence Studies
- Diplomacy & Conflict Studies
- Financial Economics
- Human-Computer Interaction (HCI)
- Behavioral Economics

GLOBAL MBA

- Innovation & Entrepreneurship
- AI & Big Data

MBA

- One-Year MBA
- Healthcare Innovation

MSc

- Machine Learning & Data Science

For more information:
+972 9 9602700 +972 54 5628121
rris.registrar@runi.ac.il

www.rris.runi.ac.il

The Best Kept Secret from Diaspora Jewry

and How You Can Shape The Jewish Future

Q&A with Rabbi Doron Perez

What is this big secret?

The **World Zionist Organization (WZO)** is one of the most influential organizations in the Jewish world. Some call the WZO 'the parliament of the Jewish people' as it is the only place where every Jewish Zionist can be a stakeholder.

The vast majority of Jews are unaware that Diaspora Jewry owns 60% of the WZO – the major stakeholder: 40% the Knesset, 30% US Jewry and 30% Diaspora Jewry outside the US.

How is it such a powerful organization?

Very simple. The WZO owns 100% of **Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael (KKL)**, perhaps the most influential nonprofit organization in the world – **KKL remarkably owns the majority of inhabited land in Israel**! In other words, incredibly, the WZO – World Jewry and NOT the Knesset alone – owns the land itself. The development of land across Israel and **the massive budgets associated with these organizations impact a huge array of Jewish life globally and in Israel**. The WZO is also a 50% stakeholder in the Jewish Agency which also plays a major role in Israel-Diaspora relations.

Why has this been such a secret?

Since 40% of the control of this Israeli-based organization is by the Knesset, Israeli politicians have been the dominant force in the WZO. As more Jews make *Aliyah* and play roles in Israeli-based organizations, things are changing. I personally realized the influence of these organizations in recent years and how transformative their impact can be on the Jewish world. This also explains why there are more new slates who have realized the potential impact.

What's really at stake?

The spending of **over $1 billion per year**!

Positions and budgets of tremendous influence **directly affecting Jewish life in Israel and around the world**, such as:

- ☑ **Where** land is developed in Israel (e.g. will it include East Jerusalem and Yehuda v'Shomron)
- ☑ **Which** educational initiatives to support – although KKL is primarily about land development, it has an annual **education budget** today of 250 million NIS.
- ☑ Positions of major influence in the WZO, KKL and Jewish Agency affecting the **type of Jewish values** in all programming of the National Institutions.

Why is the Mizrachi slate in the US called the Orthodox Israel Coalition-Mizrachi?

Because it is a coalition of major Religious Zionist-oriented national organizations across the US including: RZA-Mizrachi, AMIT, YU, OU, RCA, Bnei Akiva, NCYI, Touro University, and Sephardic organizations such as Shvilim and UMJCA.

ORTHODOX ISRAEL COALITION MIZRACHI
ON THE FRONTLINES FOR ISRAEL

AMIT · MIZRACHI RELIGIOUS ZIONISTS OF AMERICA · ORTHODOX UNION · YU · BNEI AKIVA · RCA · שבילים · TORAH MITZION · TOURO UNIVERSITY · UMJCA · YOUNG ISRAEL

What have the OIC-Mizrachi in the US and Mizrachi worldwide done since the last Congress 5 years ago?

Secured **hundreds of millions of dollars** for:

- **Education** – Funding *yeshivot*, seminaries, MASA gap year programs, campus life and global Jewish education.
- **Land Development in Yehuda, Shomron and Key Areas** – Direct influence over construction in Gush Etzion, East Jerusalem, and other strategic regions.
- Dispatching **600** ***Shlichim*** annually to communities, schools, campuses, and youth movements across the globe.

In the 2020 election, OIC-Mizrachi received 22,700 votes out of 123,000. The assessment is that this time more than 250,000 people will vote. This means that **we will need at least 50,000+ votes to maintain and expand our influence**.

Who is eligible to vote in the US?

Every Jewish American citizen or permanent resident whose primary residence is in the US and is over 18 (by June 30, 2025) can vote in the WZO Congress elections once every 5 years.

ORTHODOX ISRAEL COALITION MIZRACHI
ON THE FRONTLINES FOR ISRAEL

Why vote OIC-Mizrachi?

More slates are running than ever, realizing the staggering influence at stake. Competition is always good but highlights the need to work extra hard to **ensure that the unique Religious Zionist voice is heard**.

An authentic Torah voice of integration and unity: integration between Judaism and Zionism; Torah learning and army service; between *Torah u'Madda*; balancing Israel and Diaspora needs.

In a post-October 7 world, Jewish unity is more critical than ever. The Mizrachi movement is deeply committed to the 'covenant of fate' as articulated by Rav Soloveitchik, which was what Hamas attempted to shatter.

Never before has a voice of integration and unity around our common values been more critical for the future.

OIC-Mizrachi is that future.

HOW CAN YOU VOTE AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Vote online from March 10 – May 4.

Pay $5 voter registration fee.

Mobilize all your family, friends and community to vote.

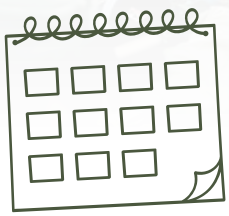
GO VOTE: WWW.VOTEOIC.ORG

ATTENTION ALL AMERICAN JEWS OVER 18*

ORTHODOX ISRAEL COALITION MIZRACHI

ON THE FRONTLINES FOR ISRAEL

From March 10th – May 4th 2025, it's your turn to JOIN THE FRONTLINES by voting for Orthodox Israel Coalition-Mizrachi



Every **5 YEARS** Jews in the United States vote in the World Zionist Congress elections.

5 MINUTES of your time will make your voice heard and benefit the values and institutions you support.

It only costs **5 DOLLARS** to influence billions of dollars of funding in Israel's National Institutions.

Living in Israel and can't vote? YOU CAN STILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Get as many of your friends and family in America to vote in these critical elections. Make sure that anyone and everyone you know in the US votes for OIC-Mizrachi!

VOTE OIC-MIZRACHI SLATE 5 TODAY!

WWW.VOTEOIC.ORG

*Jewish US citizens over 18 (by June 30, 2025) who primarily reside in the US

ORTHODOX ISRAEL COALITION MIZRACHI

ON THE FRONTLINES FOR ISRAEL

(BACKGROUND PHOTO: DAVID STEIN)

ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERS

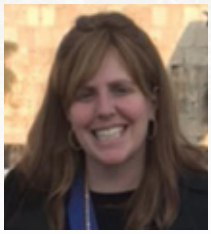
Mitchel Aeder
Orthodox Union

Zev Berman
National Council of Young Israel

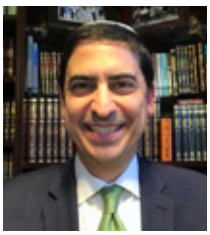
Harvey Blitz
World Mizrachi

Dr. Erica Brown
Yeshiva University

Dr. Rebecca Cypess
Yeshiva University



Bini Dachs
Bnei Akiva of the US and Canada

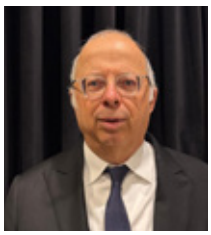


Rabbi Zvi Engel
Rabbinical Council of America

Rabbi Shaul Feldman
Bnei Akiva of the US and Canada

Stephen Flatow
Religious Zionists of America

Andy Goldsmith
AMIT



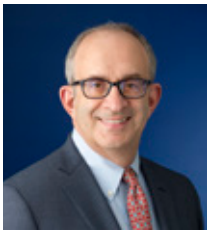
Victor Haddad
Shvilim

Rabbi Moshe Hauer
Orthodox Union

Deborah Isaac
American Zionist Movement

Rabbi Jerold Isenberg
Religious Zionists of Chicago

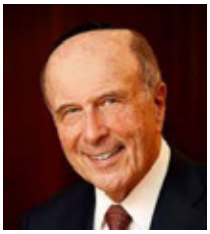
Rabbi Dr. Josh Joseph
Orthodox Union



Dr. Alan Kadish
Touro University

Avi Lauer
Yeshiva University

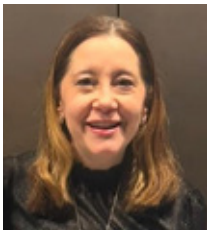
Mark Levenson
Religious Zionists of America



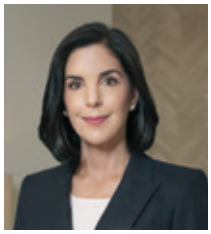
Martin Oliner
Religious Zionists of America

Rabbi Menachem Penner
Rabbinical Council of America

Rabbi Doron Perez
World Mizrachi



Alicia Post
Religious Zionists of America

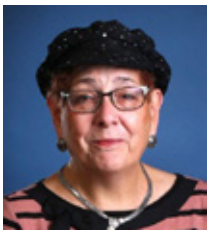


Shari Safra
AMIT

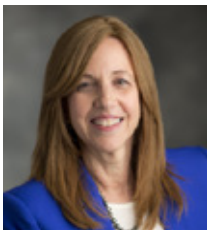
Zeev Schwartz
Torah MiTzion

Chana Holzer Shields
AMIT

Rebbetzin Dr. Adina Shmidman
Orthodox Union



Sondra Sokal
World Mizrachi



Dr. Marain Stoltz-Loike
Lander College for Women & Touro

Shaya Sturm
National Council of Young Israel

Rabbi David Warshaw
National Council of Young Israel

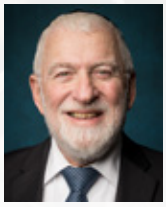
VOTE MARCH 10 – MAY 4, 2025 • SLATE #5 IN THE WORLD ZIONIST ELECTION

5

ORTHODOX ISRAEL COALITION MIZRACHI

ON THE FRONTLINES FOR ISRAEL

RABBINIC LEADERS

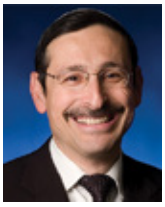


Rabbi Hershel Schachter

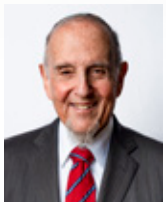
Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Blachman

Rabbi Yosef Blau



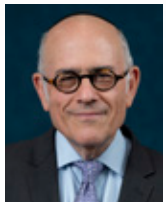
Rabbi Meir Goldwicht



Rabbi Haskel Lookstein

Rabbi Yona Reiss

Rabbi Michael Rosensweig



Rabbi Jacob J. Schacter

Rabbi Moshe Weinberger

Rabbi Kenneth Brander

Rabbi Daniel Feldman

Rabbi Efrem Goldberg

Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz

Rabbi Ezra Schwartz

Rabbi Meir Soloveichik

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

Rabbi Ari Waxman

Rabbi Shalom Axelrod

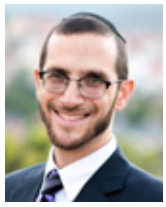
Rabbi Shalom Baum

Rabbi Binyamin Blau

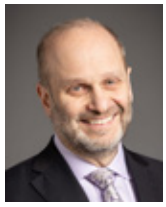
Rabbi Richard Hidary

Rabbi Leonard Matanky

Rabbi Elazar Muskin



Rabbi Shalom Rosner



Rabbi Chaim Steinmetz

Rabbi Dovid Fohrman

Rabbi Shmuel Ismach

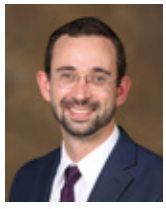
Rabbi Andrew Markowitz

Rabbi Shaul Robinson

Rabbi Avraham Shmidman

Rabbi Shmuel Silber

Rabbi Etan Tokayer



Rabbi Ya'akov Trump

Rabbi Daniel Albert • Rabbi Mosheh Aziz • Rabbi Eli Belizon • Rabbi Yosef Bitton • Rabbi Donald Bixon • Rabbi Reuven Brand • Rabbi Tuvia Brander • Rabbi Noah Cheses • Rabbi Daniel Cohen • Rabbi Tanchum Cohen • Rabbi Michael Davies • Rabbi Jeremy Donath • Rabbi Jonathan Donath • Rabbi Ira Ebbin • Rabbi Zev Eleff • Rabbi Roy Feldman • Rabbi Yechezkel Freundlich • Rabbi Daniel Fridman • Rabbi Shaanan Gelman • Rabbi Yaakov Gibber • Rabbi Mark Glass • Rabbi Zev Goldberg • Rabbi Ezra Goldschmiedt • Rabbi Daniel Gottesman • Rabbi Micah Greenland • Rabbi Joel Gutstein • Rabbi Romi Harcsztark • Rabbi David Hellman • Rabbi Jeremy Joszef • Rabbi Shai Kaminetzky • Rabbi Shaya Katz • Rabbi Judah Kerbel • Rabbi E. Samuel Klibanoff • Rabbi Ari Lamm • Rabbi Binyamin Lehrfield • Rabbi Aaron Leibtag • Rabbi Ian Lichter • Rabbi David Mahler • Rabbi Chaim Marcus • Rabbi Noah Marlowe • Rabbi Binyamin Marwick • Rabbi Steven Miodownik • Rabbi Jonathan Morgenstern • Rabbi Yechiel Morris • Rabbi Yisrael Motzen • Rabbi Dale Polakoff • Rabbi Adir Posy • Rabbi Chaim Poupko • Rabbi James Proops • Rabbi Ariel Rackovsky • Rabbi Benjamin Samuels • Rabbi Shay Schachter • Rabbi Kenny Schiowitz • Rabbi Elliot Schrier • Rabbi Yechiel Shaffer • Rabbi Yosef Sharbat • Rabbi Daniel Sherman • Rabbi Ely Shestack • Rabbi Moshe Shulman • Rabbi Aryeh Spiegler • Rabbi Yitzchak Sprung • Rabbi Adam Starr • Rabbi Chaim Strauchler • Rabbi Jason Strauss • Rabbi Ikey Tawil • Rabbi Efraim Tepler • Rabbi Kalman Topp • Rabbi Brahm Weinberg • Rabbi Moshe Tzvi Weinberg • Rabbi Jason Weiner • Rabbi Elie Weinstock • Rabbi Yosef Weinstock • Rabbi Elie Weissman • Rabbi Dov Winston • Rabbi Benajmin Yasgur • Rabbi Daniel Yolkut • Rabbi Howard Zack • Rabbi Dovid Zirkind • Rabbi Eliezer Zwickler

VOTE MARCH 10 – MAY 4, 2025 • SLATE #5 IN THE WORLD ZIONIST ELECTION

ORTHODOX ISRAEL COALITION MIZRACHI

ON THE FRONTLINES FOR ISRAEL

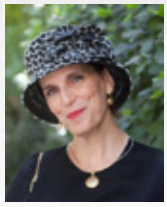
WOMEN LEADERS

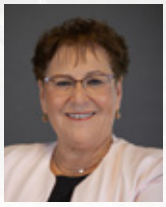
Rabbanit Malke Bina

Dr. Erica Brown

Nitsana Darshan-Leitner

Rabbanit Chana Henkin


Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi

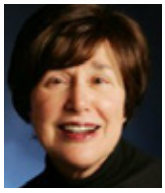

Miriam Peretz

Rebbetzin Dr. Adina Shmidman

Rabbanit Shani Taragin

Jen Airley

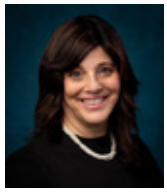
Dr. Karen Bacon

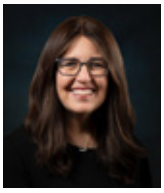

Dr. Rivkah Blau

Elisheva Kaminetsky

Dr. Deena Rabinovich

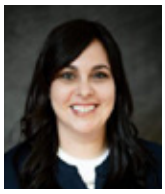
Rabbanit Esti Rosenberg


Prof. Smadar Rosensweig


Prof. Shoshana Schechter

Dr. Rebecca Cypess

Rabbanit Rachelle Fraenkel


Deena Kobre

Sara Munk

CB Neugroschl

Dr. Nechama Price

Dr. Bethany Strulowitz

Dr. Yael Ziegler

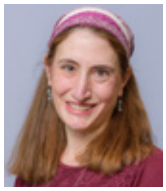
Rachel Besser

Raizi Chechik

Michal Horowitz

Ora Lee Kanner

Bracha Rutner


Rabbanit Lisa Schlaff

Yaffa Setton

Dr. Jordana Topp

Anna Bankier • Lisa Baratz • Leora Bednarsh • Rabbanit Dr. Adena Berkowitz • Dina Blank • Dena Block • Rabbanit Mali Brofsky • Bini Dachs • Dr. Yocheved Debow • Shira Donath • Tami Drapkin • Atara Eis • Sarah Emerson • Rabbanit Pesha Fischer • Rifki Freundlich • Dr. Tova Ganzel • Tziporah Gelman • Stacey Goldman • Dr. Julie Goldstein • Ilana Gottlieb • Mrs. Esther Grossman • Rabbanit Ilana Haddad • Chaya Tova Hartman • Karen Hochhauser • Sharon Isaacson • Michal Jacob • Esti Kaminetzky • Elissa Katz • Lynn Kraft • Rivkie Lamm • Yael Leibowitz • Rabbanit Sally Mayer • Shira Melamed • Myra Mogilner • Laurie Novick • Rachel Orbach • Melissa Perl • Rachel Rabinovitch • Rabbanit Sharon Rimon • Rabbanit Surale Rosen • Rabbanit Dr. Jennie Rosenfeld • Shari Safra • Maren Scharf • Shira Schiowitz • Lisa Septimus • Ruthie Braffman Shulman • Leah Spitz • Rabbanit Dr. Tamara Spitz • Dr. Chana Tannenbaum • Tova Warburg-Sinensky • Alissa Zeffren

From March 10th – May 4th 2025
it is your turn to
JOIN THE FRONTLINES
by voting **SLATE #5**
for Orthodox Israel Coalition-Mizrachi

MIRIAM PERETZ HEADSHOT: NOA LUTSKY BERUT

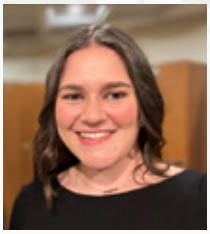
WWW.VOTEOIC.ORG

5

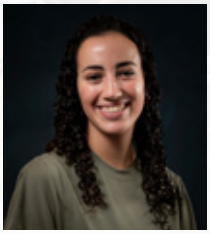
ORTHODOX ISRAEL COALITION MIZRACHI

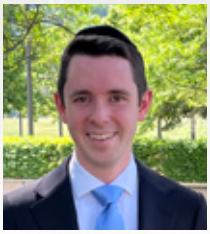
ON THE FRONTLINES FOR ISRAEL

YOUNG AMBASSADORS


Alexis Ackermann

Sydney Altfield


Rachel Amar


Rabbi Meir Avracen

Rabbi Mosheh Aziz

Chloe Baker

Shalhevet Cohen

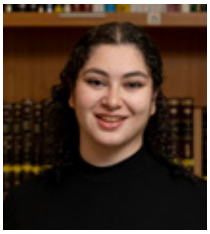
Mordy Dubin

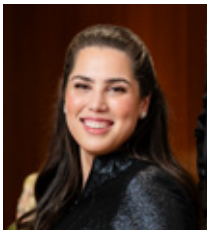
Rabbi Nachi Friedman

Eli Curt Fuld

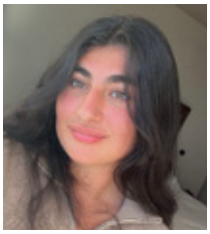
Joshua Girnun

Rachel Girnun

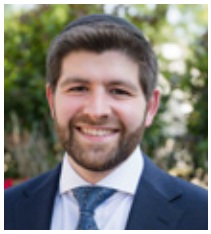

Tzivia Major


Abby Marcus

Rabbi Noah Marlowe

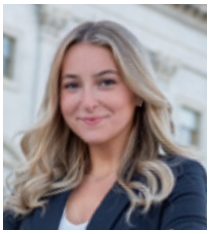

Tamar Marquis

Avi Matanky


Rabbi Yair Menchel

Leora Orenshein

Hillel Pinsky


Yakirah Rosen

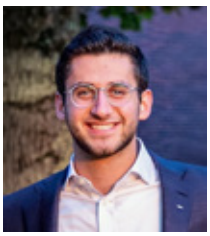
Miriam Seidman

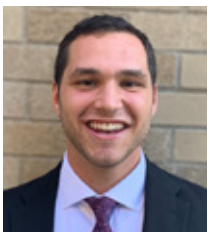
Alison Sokal

Shiri Sokal

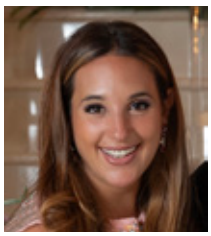
Charly Wartelsky

Emma Watman


Noah Watman


Aytan Waxman

Sam Weinberg


Ashley Weiss

Allegra Arazi • Shoshana Bachrach • Rivka Bitton • Yocheved Sima Bohm • Michael Celler • Shira Donath • Hindy Feder • Ellie Fine
Rena Kwestel • Tamar Meyer • Eli Novick • Assaf Perl • Ezra Rosenbaum • Yael Sabo • Jesse Salem • Rabbi Yossi Schwartz •

VOTE MARCH 10 – MAY 4, 2025 • SLATE #5 IN THE WORLD ZIONIST ELECTION

ORTHODOX ISRAEL COALITION MIZRACHI

ON THE FRONTLINES FOR ISRAEL

5

YOUNG AMBASSADORS

Talia Baruch

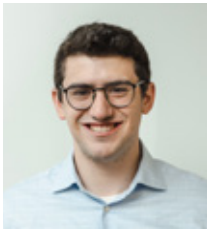
Frumi Berg

Tehila Bitton

Dovid Bluth

Caleb Breda

Shoshi Cantor

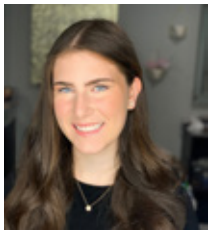

Rabbi Daniel Gottesman

Jared Isaac

Emma Katz

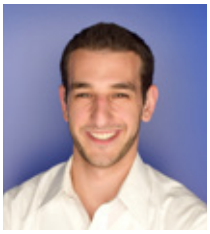
Rabbi Judah Kerbel

Tamar Koslowe


Michal Levine

Yael Miller

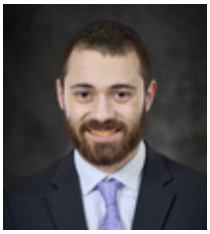
Daniel (Dani) Minkove


David Mirsky

Jessica Mirsky

Yoni Nirenberg

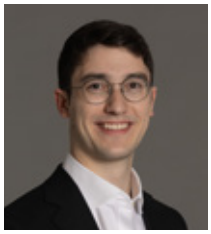
Noah Oberlander

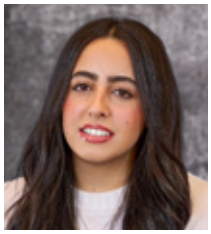

Uriel Sussman

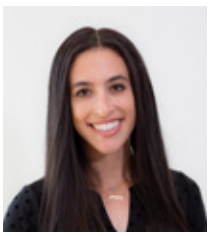
Lexi Szafranski

Rabbi Yehoshua Szafranski

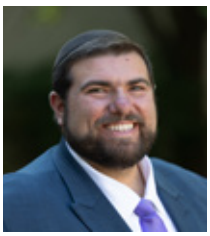
Rabbi Ikey Tawil


Rabbi Efraim Tepler

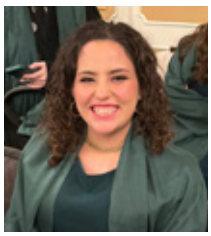

Noa Terenyo


Meira Weiss

Jordana Wertheimer


Rabbi Dov Winston

Moshe Wolff


Shoshy Zahtz

Moshe Zharnest

• Emanuel Hakimi • Lielle Holzer • Rabbi Andrew Israeli • Rabbi Shai Kaminetzky • Adele Katzenelenbogen • Hadassa Korn • Emma Ayelet Shields • Sarina Zoe Shields • Eliana Shimoff • Rabbi Yitzchak Sprung • Sam Wartelsky • Pearl Wexler

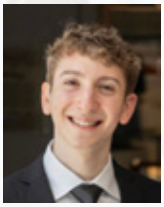
WWW.VOTEOIC.ORG

5

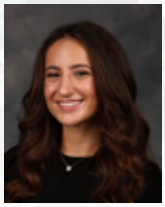
ORTHODOX ISRAEL COALITION MIZRACHI

ON THE FRONTLINES FOR ISRAEL

STUDENT AMBASSADORS

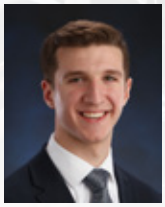


Simon Albert
Yeshivat Orayta

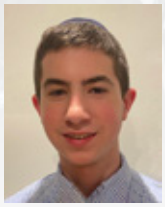


Avigail Amar
Tiferet

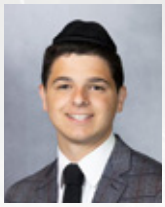
Ezra Baker
Ruach Hanegev



Benji Baronofsky
Yeshivat Hakotel



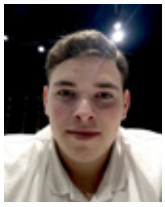
Elie Beer
Yeshivat Orayta



Ezra Berger
Yeshivat Torat Shraga

Nathaniel Bierig
Torah Tech

Noam Goldberg
Yeshivat Har Etzion

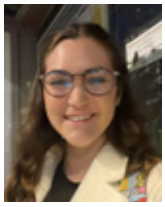


Yoni Greenwald
Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh

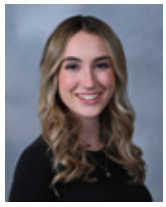
Leah Hornung
MMY

Hannah Klinghoffer
Baer Miriam

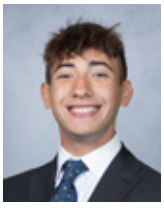
Molly Levin
Midreshet Torat Chessed



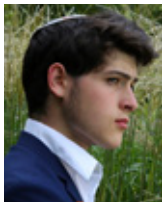
Shaindy Lieberman
Midreshet Lev HaTorah



Sabrina Linden
Midreshet HaRova



Tommy Newman
Yeshivat Torah V'Avodah



Nosson Oirich
Yeshivat Lev HaTorah

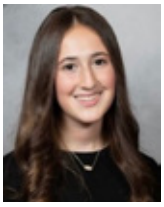
Ayelet Ostrin
Migdal Oz

Yoni Panitch
Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh

Joey Phillips
Yeshivat Torah V'Avodah

Avigail Pinnick
Midreshet Tehillah

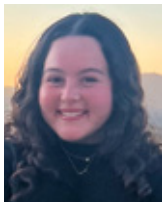
Simona Pitterman
Sha'alvim for Women



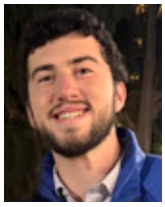
Jaime Schindelheim
Midreshet Torah V'Avodah

Ariella Schneider
Tiferet

Miriam Schreier
Nishmat

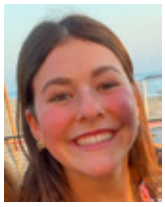


Bailee Schwartz
Tiferet



Matthew Schwartz
Yeshivat Torah V'Avodah

Shelly Shaoul
MMY



Ananya Silverman
Midreshet Torah V'Avodah

Securing

$7.5M

For Masa scholarships for yeshiva and seminary students

Over

10,000

Students attended Mizrachi educational Israel programs

VOTE MARCH 10 – MAY 4, 2025 • SLATE #5 IN THE WORLD ZIONIST ELECTION

ORTHODOX ISRAEL COALITION MIZRACHI

ON THE FRONTLINES FOR ISRAEL

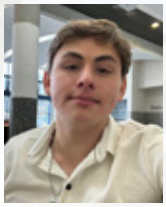
5

(BACKGROUND PHOTO: DAVID STEIN)

STUDENT AMBASSADORS

Harrison Brooks
Yeshivat Orayta

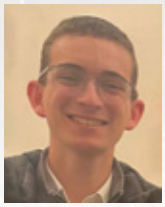
Tara Cantor
Midreshet Amudim



Akiva Davis
Yeshivat Eretz HaTzvi

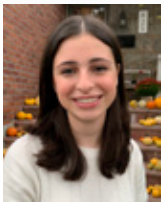
Talia Dubosky
Machon Maayan

Avigail Chana Elazar
Machon Maayan

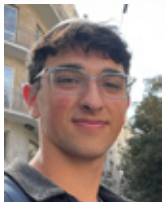


Daniel Ferziger
Yeshivat Torah V'Avodah

Eliana Fromer
Migdal Oz

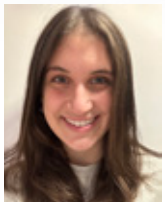


Talya Lippman
Nishmat



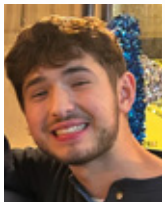
Jed Marcus
Yeshivat Har Etzion

Yitzchak Mishkin
Yeshivat Lev HaTorah

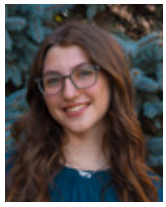


Ella Mordekai
Midreshet Lindenbaum

Ella Morgenstern
Midreshet Torah V'Avodah

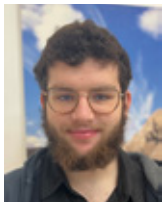


Azriel Moskowitz
Yeshivat Orayta



Bina Newman
Midreshet Lindenbaum

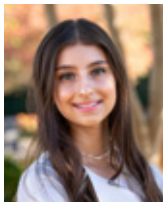
Coby Pollack
Yeshivat Sha'arei Mevaseret Zion



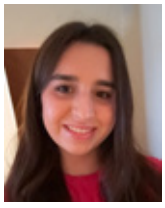
Noach Popack
Yeshivat Migdal HaTorah

Yaffa Pressner
Midreshet HaRova

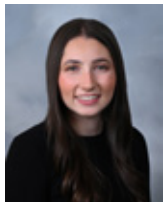
Jeremy (Tzviki) Rosner
Yeshivat Sha'alvim



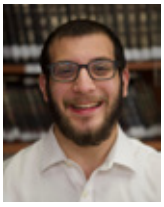
Aviva Rubin
Machon Maayan



Tara Sanieoff
Midreshet Eshel

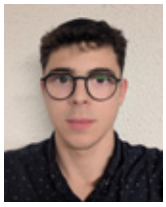


Tamar Scheinfeld
MMY



Kevin (Akiva) Sokal
Yeshivat Lev HaTorah

Sonia Stern
Midreshet Torah V'Avodah



Azaria Sussman
Yeshivat Orayta

Summer Teich
Midreshet Moriah

Talia Wallach
Machon Maayan

Roee Weglein
Yeshivat Orayta

Tova Benarroch
Machon Maayan

Shira Benzaquen
Sha'alvim for Women

Lielle Blinkoff
Tiferet

Eliyahu Fisch
Yeshivat Reishit

Gabriella Lax
Baer Miriam

Over

$30M

Raised through the annual Mizrachi Yeshivot & Seminaries Campaign

Over

40

Yeshivot and seminaries affiliated with Mizrachi

WWW.VOTEOIC.ORG

ORTHODOX ISRAEL COALITION MIZRACHI

ON THE FRONTLINES FOR ISRAEL

THE BIG 5

WHY YOU SHOULD VOTE OIC-MIZRACHI

1

SUPPORTING TORAH SCHOLARS ON THE FRONTLINES AND ALL THOSE WHO SERVE IN THE IDF, INJURED SOLDIERS AND BEREAVED FAMILIES

The Religious Zionist community is at the forefront of Torah learning combined with army service. Sadly, over 50% of the fallen soldiers since October 7th are from our Religious Zionist community highlighting our leading role ON THE FRONTLINES.

Your vote will directly impact the funding for our brave soldiers and their families, bereaved families and injured soldiers, and to establish a center for religious Lone Soldiers and B'not Sherut.

2

SUPPORTING TUITION SUBSIDIES AND ENHANCING A LOVE OF TORAT ERETZ YISRAEL IN OUR YESHIVOT AND SEMINARIES

Since Covid, MASA completely cut scholarships from North American Gap Year Programs. Through Mizrachi's efforts, scholarships for those in need were secured. Additionally, Mizrachi provides life changing Zionist experiences for Yeshivot and Seminaries.

Your vote will go towards ensuring that MASA scholarships and the funding of Zionist programing for Yeshivot and Seminaries is greatly expanded.

3

COMBATING ANTISEMITISM AND STRENGTHENING JEWISH IDENTITY ON CAMPUSES

Since October 7th we witnessed an unprecedented outburst of antisemitism on campuses.

Your vote will go towards securing funds to strengthen the Religious Zionist presence on campus through JLIC, Yavneh and Bnei Akiva shlichim.

4

BUILDING ACROSS THE LAND OF ISRAEL

Post October 7th we understand all too well how critical it is to establish and expand Jewish communities in our homeland.

Your vote will allow us to change the current KKL policy from limited building to building ALL OVER the Land of Israel.

5

ENSURING RELIGIOUS ZIONIST SHLICHIM IN YOUR COMMUNITIES AND JEWISH DAY SCHOOLS

From Mizrachi Leadership Programs, Bnei Akiva, Torah MiTzion, Bat Ami, Amiel-Straus to the Department of Education – Mizrachi supports the finding, funding and training of the main Religious Zionist Shlichim bodies.

Your vote will go to ensure that Religious Zionist values continue to lead the effort of ensuring Shlichim get to your communities and schools.

VOTE SLATE #5 MARCH 10 – MAY 4, 2025 • WWW.VOTEOIC.ORG

Ono International School

Ono Academic College

TheCircus

NOW MORE THAN EVER:

STUDY IN ISRAEL

Enjoy a seamless transition to Israel!

At Ono Academic College, we offer hybrid English-Hebrew academic degrees for Olim with personalized guidance, practical training, and a vibrant, supportive community.

Join us as we celebrate our 30th anniversary at the college ranked as the most recommended college in Israel by the GLOBES 2024 Brand Index.

Tailored undergraduate and graduate programs for Olim. Starting November 2025.

B.A.
Finance and Capital Markets

M.B.A.
Finance and Capital Markets

M.A.
Art Therapies - Visual Art Therapy

B.O.T.
Occupational Therapy

THE COURAGE AT NACHAL OZ

RABBI ARON WHITE

NACHAL OZ IS AN ARMY BASE LOCATED 850 METERS FROM THE ISRAELI BORDER WITH GAZA. IT WAS THE SINGLE WORST-HARMED BASE IN THE HAMAS ONSLAUGHT, BUT THE BRAVERY OF ITS DEFENDERS HAS BECOME LEGENDARY. THIS IS THE STORY OF THE COURAGE OF NACHAL OZ.

On the morning of October 7th, 162 soldiers were stationed at the Nachal Oz base, of which 81 were combat soldiers. The personnel included two tank crews, infantry from the Golani Brigade, female *tatzpitaniot* (surveillance operators), and a handful of senior officers. A lone soldier guarded the entry to the base. Throughout that fateful day, 215 Hamas terrorists would swarm the installation in three distinct waves. By day's end, 53 soldiers would lie dead and 10 taken hostage. Nachal Oz suffered the heaviest casualties of any army base on October 7th, becoming for many a symbol of that day's catastrophic failures. Yet amid this national and military tragedy, young men and women fought with extraordinary heroism against overwhelming odds. This is the story of three such young leaders, all officers – Shilo Har-Even, Yochai Duchan, and Daniel Perez – who fought and fell defending Israel that day.

SHILO HAR-EVEN

Shilo Har-Even served as the *mefaked pelugah* (company commander) of the Golani soldiers assigned to border duty. At 5:30am, he was positioned at the *Chetz Shachor* memorial site near Kibbutz Kfar Azza with his armored vehicle and several of his soldiers.

At 6:30am, the initial assault began when 65 members of the Shejaya brigade attacked the Nachal Oz base, part of a coordinated offensive involving hundreds of terrorists striking all along the border. Shilo immediately took charge of defending Sa'ad, Mefalsim, and Nachal Oz, the *kibbutzim* in his vicinity. Thanks largely to his decisive actions, terrorists failed to infiltrate Sa'ad and Mefalsim. He simultaneously issued critical directives to the soldiers at Nachal Oz, instructing them on repelling the invaders.

Senior IDF command had descended into chaos. In one telling incident, the *Machat* (regional commander) of the entire Northern Gaza region instructed a single tank driver to clear all terrorists from the base – a command utterly disconnected from the reality on the ground. Shilo, despite his junior rank, effectively coordinated the defense of an expansive area encompassing 7 kilometers of border, 5 *kibbutzim*, and multiple military installations. This responsibility fell to him after one of Nachal Oz's highest-ranking officers, Nir Boimflek, was shot and injured by terrorists before 7am. Shilo stepped into this leadership vacuum with remarkable composure and authority.

Positioned in his vehicle near the Gaza border when the attack commenced, Shilo, though a junior commander, took effective control of the defensive effort to prevent terrorists from breaching the Nachal Oz base. He maintained constant communication with the *tatzpitaniot* to track terrorist movements. Patrolling the border areas, he ran down and engaged

terrorists, valiantly attempting to stem the tide of infiltrators.

During one fierce exchange, Shilo sustained a gunshot wound to his arm, which began bleeding profusely. His soldiers applied a tourniquet, but he refused to retreat and continued fighting.

Around 8:20am, he led a contingent of soldiers back to the Nachal Oz base in an attempt to reclaim it. He issued clear instructions for subsequent action: "Head to Kfar Azza, there is a killing spree happening there." During this heroic counter-offensive, he and his soldiers were ambushed yet managed to eliminate dozens of terrorists who had already infiltrated the base. His WhatsApp status read "*Ani leDodi veDodi li*" (I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine) – words his mother later described as emblematic of how he lived and died, devoted to serving others.

YOCHAI DUCHAN

Yochai Duchan's life was shaped by terrorism from an early age. When he was just five years old, his father Alexander was killed while serving as a member of the *kitat konenut* (rapid response team) in Chevron, murdered outside the *Me'arat HaMachpela*. After studying for six years at Yeshivat Eilat, Yochai enlisted in the IDF's Golani Brigade.

Central to Hamas' strategy for capturing the Nachal Oz base was seizing the *chamal*, the operations room – the nerve center from which the *tatzpitaniot* and commanders coordinated troop movements. Twenty-two soldiers were stationed inside the *chamal*, while Yochai and three comrades took defensive positions outside, providing crucial protection. For hours, terrorists attempted to breach their defenses without success. Yochai and his small team repelled wave after wave of attackers. When the terrorists demanded their surrender, Yochai defiantly shouted back, "We will not surrender!" After hours of relentless assault against insurmountable odds, the frustrated terrorists abandoned their direct assault and instead set fire to the operations room. Fifteen soldiers perished including Yochai, but seven managed to escape. The defenders' ability to prevent terrorists from accessing the operations room enabled vital intelligence to continue flowing to other military units for hours and delayed the terrorists' advance to other sections of the base.

DANIEL PEREZ

Hamas' attack strategy began with a barrage of rockets in the opening minutes, designed to drive soldiers into shelters where they would be concentrated and vulnerable. When Daniel Perez and his tank crew sought shelter, however, they were already in full combat gear. "You never know when the war is going to break out," Daniel frequently reminded his soldiers. Once it became evident this was no routine rocket attack, Daniel and his crew immediately mounted their tank and rushed to the border to intercept the incoming terrorists. Subsequently, they received orders to return to the base for an unprecedented mission – to use their tank to engage terrorists who had infiltrated an Israeli installation. After completing this task, they ventured back beyond the base perimeter, where Daniel assumed command of Shilo Har-Even's armored personnel carrier. Though Shilo and many of his team had fallen, the vehicle's driver and two other soldiers remained alive with functioning weapons. Daniel swiftly incorporated them into his forces.

By approximately 8:30am, Daniel recognized that with dozens of terrorists having overrun Nachal Oz, captured soldiers might be transported into Gaza. Without waiting for orders, he informed his crew of their new mission – to prevent any hostages from being taken across the border.

During the heat of battle, Daniel spotted a suspicious figure and prepared to engage. At the last moment, he identified the figure as an IDF soldier, Shilo Carmi – isolated and exposed amid the day's chaos. Daniel dismounted his tank and embraced the soldier. "Suddenly, I felt that I wasn't alone," Carmi later recounted. "He exuded confidence, he exuded calm." Video footage of this encounter shows Daniel with his arm around the soldier, explaining his plan and how the soldier could assist.

The second wave of the assault brought 60 additional terrorists to Nachal Oz, all mounted on motorcycles and armed with RPG launchers, intent on perpetrating further atrocities. Daniel understood the lethal threat each attacker posed and made the courageous decision to engage them directly. In the ensuing heroic confrontation, Daniel and his crew neutralized the majority of these attackers. Tragically, their tank was eventually hit and overwhelmed. Daniel, Itai Chen, and Tomer Leibowitz were killed. The bodies of Daniel and Itai were taken to Gaza and remain in captivity. Matan Angrest, the tank's driver, survived with burns and injuries to his arm but was captured. As of April 2025, Matan has endured nearly a year-and-a-half in captivity.

THE DUAL LEGACY OF NACHAL OZ

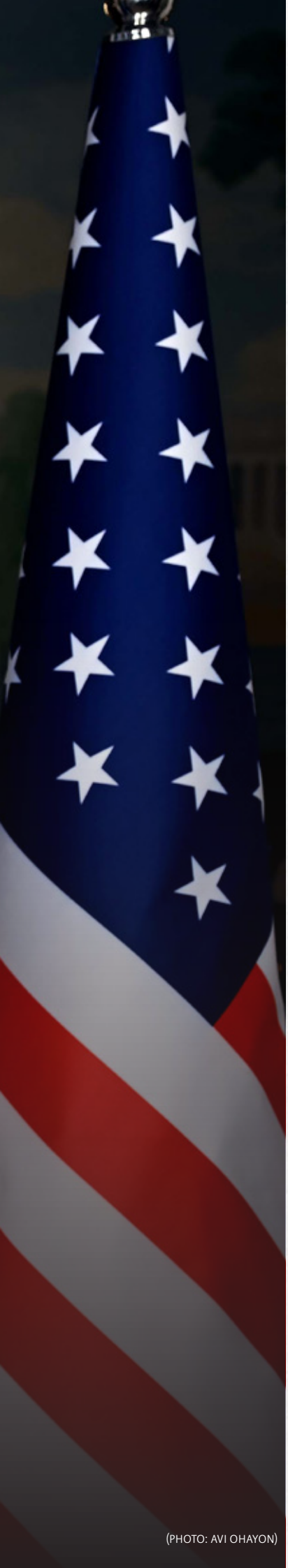
The Nachal Oz base will forever bear two contrasting legacies. It stands as a stark symbol of Israel's failure to protect its soldiers and civilians – an inadequately secured installation that faced an attack previously deemed impossible and which intelligence services failed to anticipate. This was the grim reality that confronted Shilo, Yochai, Daniel, and their fellow soldiers at 6:30am on October 7th.

Yet Nachal Oz will equally be remembered as a testament to the extraordinary selflessness and valor of its soldiers. Faced with an impossible situation they had no hand in creating, these heroes demonstrated remarkable courage, self-sacrifice, and determination. Something in their upbringing and training transformed these young men in their early twenties into exceptional leaders who confronted evil with unwavering resolve, willing to sacrifice their lives in defense of the people and Land of Israel. The chronicle of Nachal Oz remains incomplete without acknowledging this heroic courage. While politicians, military strategists, and intelligence officials must extract crucial lessons from the failures that culminated in October 7th, every Israeli and every Jew can draw inspiration from the courage displayed at Nachal Oz.

● *This narrative is based extensively on the official army investigation of the events of October 7th which was published in January 2025, as well as the Uvda documentary aired in February 2025.*

Rabbi Aron White
is the Managing Editor
of HaMizrachi magazine.

From Personal Loss to National Service: An Interview with Ambassador Yechiel Leiter



(PHOTO: AVI OHAYON)

Yechiel Leiter was recently appointed as Israel's ambassador to the United States, following his extensive career in Israeli public service. Born in Scranton, Pennsylvania, Leiter immigrated to Israel in 1978 and has since served in numerous governmental roles, including as an adviser to former prime minister Ariel Sharon and as chief of staff to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu when he was finance minister. Tragically, his eldest son Moshe was killed fighting in Gaza in November 2023. Rabbi Aron White spoke with Ambassador Leiter to discuss his personal journey, Israel's relationship with the United States, and his vision for Israel's future.

You've come full circle, being born in the United States, moving to Israel, and now returning to the U.S. in this role. Can you tell us about your journey and how you came to this position?

Well, I never had any aspirations to be Israel's ambassador to the United States. I moved to Israel when I was 18 with no intention of coming back. It was an ideological move, not a sentimental one. I served in government but left over 15 years ago – again, with no intention of returning. However, when the Prime Minister called not long after my son was killed in Gaza, I was in a frame of mind of having to live for him as well. His life was cut short, and I felt that I didn't have the right to say no to something I knew I could do well and had an obligation to do.

People say "*mazal tov*" to me, but I don't really understand what they're saying "*mazal tov*" about – it's not like I accomplished something. I have a responsibility. I feel this is a task I can perform well. Apparently, the Prime Minister thought the same thing, and I'm here to do my best and represent Israel at a very historic time in Jewish history.

Can you tell us about your son Moshe who fell in this war?

Moshe was my oldest son, the oldest of eight children. He was born in Chevron – actually the first child to be born in *Chevron Ha'atika*, the Chevron of antiquity. He spent 15 years in *Shaldag*, an elite IDF unit. He was the head of operations for a while and carried out many operations that are still classified. When he was 33, he was sent to the Philippines to oversee the attempt to save people who were buried underground after an earthquake.

He left the army and went to medical school. He got his white jacket in August 2023, shortly before the war, and was supposed to start his rounds as an intern on October 8th. He led forces into Gaza as the point commander of the division. He conducted battles for two weeks that were very successful, and on Friday afternoon, just before *Shabbat Chayei Sarah*, he was given the command to identify a tunnel shaft from which Hamas was shooting missiles to Ashkelon.

He found it, but his command team was being followed by a hidden camera. When he discovered the shaft, he announced on the wireless, "We found the tunnel, *Shabbat Shalom*." As soon as he said "*Shalom*," terrorists inside the tunnel set it off. He was killed together with three other members of his command team: Yossi Hershkovitz, who was the principal of Pelech High School in Jerusalem, a musician and father of five; Matan Meir, a film producer from Odem in the Golan Heights; and Sergey Shmalkin, an immigrant from Russia who lived in Kiryat Shmona. Five others on his command team lost legs – two lost both legs and three lost one leg.

Moshe was brilliant and very special. He bridged gaps between people. He was a loving individual. His best friend said at his eulogy that he was only 39 when he died, but he had lived the life of somebody double his age. He loved the story that Rabbi Steinsaltz used to tell about going to the Lubavitcher Rebbe and asking what he should cut out of his schedule because he was doing too much. The Rebbe told him to add something. Every time I would say to Moshe, "You're doing too much," he would say, "*Abba*, I'm going to add something."

At the time, all my kids were on the front lines except one son who has Down syndrome and another in a support role. Four of my boys were in the line of fire, and my two sons-in-law were in battle. When I got the knock on the door I didn't know who it would be about. When they said Moshe, I stopped breathing for a moment, hoping it wouldn't follow with my other son, David, who was one of Moshe's soldiers and was about 30 meters away from the explosion. He saw his older brother get killed and is dealing with post-traumatic issues, but he's much of the reason why I'm here and doing what I do because he's with me pretty much all the time.

Many families have had to make this decision this year – we've lost close to 900 soldiers. You have to decide in what sense you go on living. You can go on living by just getting through the day, or by adding something to your life. It's a decision you have to make every morning, to pull yourself off the floor, because the longing for somebody you love becomes physical pain. It's not just a pain that

sits in the heart – it becomes like a physical pain. The only way to deal with it is to engulf yourself in meaningful things. I don't think there's anything more meaningful for me than what I'm doing here. That's my way of coping.

How do you see Israel's relationship with America now, especially with the new administration?

Initially, the Biden administration stood with us. They sent over an aircraft carrier, President Biden came to visit, and there were expressions of support. The problem was that many people in the administration later took criticism too far. When I arrived, I discovered bureaucrats in the system were slow-walking munitions. It wasn't an official decision by the administration to employ an embargo beyond the famous incident with the 2000-pound bombs, but there was a functional embargo because bureaucrats just slow-walked everything. Once you start slow-walking something in a bureaucracy, you kill it.

The new administration immediately put things back on track. In some cases, it took time because shifting a heavy bureaucratic system is difficult, but the administration was absolutely committed to doing it. The atmosphere now is one of brotherly love. If we were an estranged brother in the previous administration – we were brothers, but estranged, kept out of the inner family circle – now we're like a younger brother that's come home, and there's a feeling of embrace.

It's not lockstep – there are things we have to iron out and discuss. Sometimes our interests are slightly divergent, but that's only natural between brothers and allies. We're the closest ally the United States has, and this administration realizes that. In the United Nations, we vote with the United States over 90% of the time. There's no other country that comes close to that.

I just came from meetings with the Secretary of Interior and the Secretary of Energy to talk about integrating our innovative skills and technology with the US. It's amazing to witness the extent of cooperation and admiration that exists in this administration for Israel and its leadership. The respect paid to Prime Minister Netanyahu as the first foreign leader to visit Washington, and the way he was received by the President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and Vice President Vance was stellar and very inspiring.

What about Israel's broader role in the Middle East?

Other countries are looking at our success. We have a higher GDP per capita than most European countries. And we're only three generations old – three generations ago, we were in Auschwitz. Three generations later, we've got a higher GDP per capita than countries that were occupying the Land of Israel four generations ago. That's an amazing feat. We're the only developed country in the world with replacement fertility. There's no other developed country that has a long-term future because there simply aren't enough children. Church attendees understand this – they say, "This is a miracle."

It's an absolute miracle that a country three generations after the Holocaust is the only developed country with replacement fertility. I sometimes draw wonder from my *Charedi* friends who don't appreciate the miracle. Ramban made the point that miracles within nature are bigger miracles than those that break with nature, because with a nature-breaking miracle, the awe passes. But observing everyday miracles within the context of nature – these are the bigger miracles.

I spoke in Ethiopia recently, and instead of talking about security in terms of tanks and planes, I spoke about food security. All the solutions to food security – whether in water desalination, seeds, greenhouse technology, or energy – are within a five-kilometer radius of Tel Aviv. With normalization and peace, we could end hunger. There are 900 million people in the 21st century who go to sleep hungry every night. We have the solutions now that we didn't have 30 years ago.

We sit at the intersection of Europe, Africa, and Asia. "*Ki miTzion tetze Torah*" means an awful lot – we can broadcast solutions for hunger, desertification, and other issues on the human development index. Our place in the world could be transformative if others would just stop making war, stop trying to destroy us, stop getting in the way of history, and normalize relations as we did with the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco.

I've spent time in Abu Dhabi meeting with Arab intellectuals and Muslim clerics. I felt more comfortable there with my *kippa* than in many North American cities, certainly European cities. Normalization with Saudi Arabia and the entire Muslim world is possible, but we have to first defang Iran. As long as there's a radical regime sponsoring terrorism, everybody will be intimidated.

Ambassador Leiter during the signing of his credentials with President Trump.

Once Iran is defanged, the possibilities for dramatic change in the region rise dramatically.

Do you have any advice for those considering making Aliyah or for immigrants wanting to succeed in Israeli public life?

I'm not one to give advice on *Aliyah*, but I would say, just learn from Nike – just do it. It's simply the right thing to do. I didn't plan most things in my life. All of my life has been Plan B, C, and D – pretty much like creation. All of creation is Plan B. We weren't supposed to make a mistake between two sets of trees, and we did, and everything became Plan B.

I had no intentions whatsoever of being an ambassador. I don't know how long I'll be here either – it all depends on political developments. But for now, apparently, it's the right fit. I never intended to go to Paraguay to work on economic development for underdeveloped countries either, but one day I got a phone call from a friend while grading papers, and I ended up spending three years learning why underdeveloped countries fail.

Judaism began with *Aliyah*. Three times a day we face Jerusalem. Everything centers around the shining city on the hill – which is a biblical concept having to do with Jerusalem, not something that began with the Puritan Minister John Winthrop.[1]

We have to make it very clear that we are indigenous to the Land of Israel. We're not strangers, colonizers, or interlopers. The people of Israel and the Land of Israel go together. We want peace with everyone and to live side by side with others who live within the land with equal rights. They vote in elections and have representatives in the Knesset. But Israel is Israel. The Land of Israel and the people of Israel form an unbreakable bond.

The theme of our magazine is "Oz L'Yisrael" – strength for Israel. Can you reflect on this idea of strength and courage that Israeli individuals and society are now being called on to find?

We put out a booklet for Moshe's *yahrzeit* called "*Oz v'ha'anava l'chai olamim*, Strength and humility to the Eternal One." Our soldiers and people as a whole are showing tremendous courage. It takes enormous resilience to maintain a war for a year-and-a-half.

Over 1,200 people were killed on October 7th and close to 900 soldiers since then – that's over 2,000 people. In the United States, proportionally that would be 65,000–70,000 people. Could you imagine the United States with 65,000 people killed in a year? Yet we are so resilient that we can even demonstrate against each other over judicial reform. We have bandwidth to argue about the kind of society we want and what the balance of power should be between different branches of government.

We've had over 5,000 soldiers severely wounded. That's tens of thousands of people directly affected by this war, plus hundreds of thousands more affected by having to leave their homes in both the North and South for long periods of time. This has affected businesses and entire communities. The entire nation has been affected by ballistic missiles from Iran, Iraq, and Yemen.

Despite being under siege, our economy is still showing growth in a year of war – over 1% growth. Most countries would have a dramatic contraction, but we're showing growth even under this stress. That's significant.

I'm often asked where this resilience comes from. Let me share a *dvar Torah: Moshe Rabbeinu* strikes the rock instead of speaking to it, and there are dozens of explanations for what his sin was. My son with Down syndrome helped me understand something

The booklet published by the Leiter family for Moshe *hy"d*'s first *yahrzeit*.

interesting. At the burning bush, Moshe essentially says, "You can't send me because I have a disability. I'm a victim, I have a handicap." And G-d answers, "I made you too. I'll determine what you can do."

How does the Torah end? "These are the words which Moshe spoke" (*Devarim* 1:1) – Moshe becomes a speaker! His very handicap becomes his strength at the beginning of *Sefer Devarim*, which is him speaking, in contradistinction to the other four books of the Torah. That's why hitting the rock was so severe – it went against G-d's charge that Moshe must overcome his handicap.

Moshe needed to show the Jewish people that throughout history, they would face many challenges – persecution and exile from country to country. His lesson was crucial: if you define yourself as a victim, you cannot move forward. But when you refuse to be trapped in victimhood and instead choose life, you find the strength to overcome and continue.

The source of our resilience is the conviction that we can overcome. We don't bury ourselves in self-pity and victimhood; we use tragedy and persecution to move forward and create a better future. That's the essence of Zionism. The State of Israel wasn't born in the Holocaust – it was born in overcoming the Holocaust. The same will be true for our heroes from October 7th. We won't wallow in pain and feel sorry for ourselves, but use what we've lost to grow and ensure our future. ■

1. John Winthrop (1588–1649), first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, famously described their new settlement as a "city upon a hill" in his 1630 sermon. While this concept became central to American exceptionalism, it originates in *Yishayahu* 2:2–3, which depicts Jerusalem as elevated and nations coming to it for divine instruction – establishing Jerusalem as the source of wisdom and guidance for all nations, thousands of years before Winthrop's sermon.

Israel Prize recipient Menachem Kalmanson speaking at the award ceremony in 2024. (Screenshot, YouTube: used in accordance with Clause 27a of the Copyright Law)

Blood of Brothers

Menachem Kalmanson's Call for National Unity

The following is a translation of Menachem Kalmanson's emotional speech delivered at the 2024 Israel Prize ceremony. Kalmanson accepted the award posthumously on behalf of his brother, Elchanan Kalmanson, who was killed on October 7, 2023, while rescuing civilians during the Hamas attack on southern Israel. In his speech, Kalmanson reflects on brotherhood, national unity, and the meaning of shared purpose in the face of tragedy.

"May the L-rd open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your praise" (*Tehillim* 51:17).

Honorable President of the State, Mr. Isaac Herzog; Chairman of the Knesset, MK Amir Ohana; Acting President of the Supreme Court, Justice Uzi Fogelman; Minister of Education, Mr. Yoav Kish; Mayor of Jerusalem, Mr. Moshe Lion; Mayor of Sderot, Mr. Alon Davidi; honorable laureates; and with humility before my dear parents and my brother's family, Shlomit and the children.

We are here at a ceremony that concludes the days of Israel's revival, which begin with Pesach night, through Yom HaShoah, Yom HaZikaron, and Yom HaAtzmaut. A ceremony that reflects the great spirit in our nation and answers the question "why" – why are we here? The question we have thirsted for so deeply after the difficult year we have experienced.

This is the question that echoed throughout the country when division burned and threatened to tear us apart from within, when arguments over barriers only created higher barriers. Are we truly brothers? This question cut through the land while sirens cut through the skies on the morning of Simchat Torah. Our enemies, sensing our division, crawled from their tunnels to attack.

On that Shabbat afternoon, Elchanan, my brother whom I miss so deeply today, called Itiel and I to go south with him. He didn't explain why – he simply called, and we followed. "I seek my brothers" (*Bereishit* 37:16). Despite knowing the danger, we chose to enter the war zone repeatedly. We never questioned our actions; the "why" was perfectly clear. By midnight, exhaustion had set in, yet fear couldn't stop us. As Itiel explained so simply: "When you know your brother is in danger, you no longer have freedom of choice."

When we reached the Meir family's house in Be'eri, Michal refused to open the safe room door; she and her sister were too afraid. Michal begged me through the door: "Speak, let us hear your Hebrew," and she didn't open until I shouted to her, "*Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad*" (*Devarim* 6:4) and the door opened immediately. I confess, it wasn't a prayer; it was a cry: "I am a Jew, I am here for you, please open the door."

This declaration of connection resonated throughout the Gaza border area on that day, carried by thousands of fighters acting

from deep mutual responsibility. Workers, educators, and researchers abandoned everything and risked everything – all driven by camaraderie, brotherhood, and shared fate. I'll never forget being asked, "Why did you go? They are *kibbutz* members, and you are 'settlers'?" The pain from this question still reverberates within me. Elchanan, who deeply loved his family and recognized the imperfections of our nation, still chose to enter the inferno because he knew our people were worthy of such sacrifice.

In recent months, as division began stirring again, we gathered – families of hostages and bereaved families from vastly different backgrounds, united by immense pain. The room overflowed with the anguish of worried mothers and grieving fathers. All concerned for our country, for human lives, for the hostages – yet holding profoundly different viewpoints. We listened, we argued, we looked into each other's eyes, and found humility that blossomed into love. With G-d's help, this listening will nurture our society's healing.

We had forgotten how to listen. We permitted ourselves to attack mercilessly. When faced with criticism, we recoiled at being suspected of things we never imagined, then resumed attacking one another. We forgot that our protests and arguments stem from the same source – the fate of our only country burning within us all. We forgot that brotherly love continues to pulse through our collective heart.

You don't separate from a brother; for a brother, you do everything. No matter how often you're asked to explain brotherly love, you cannot fully articulate what makes your brother irreplaceable – ultimately, you love him simply because he is your brother. When pressed to explain this love, all you can do is highlight the unique facets of his character that illuminate the fundamental question: "why" – why we love our brothers, why we love our nation.

Honorable guests, I am humbled to be among you. "He raises the poor from the dust, lifts the needy from the trash heap to seat them with nobles, with the nobles of His people" (*Tehillim* 113:7–8). Before me sit people of spirit, action, counsel, wisdom, and understanding. You who are full of creativity, perseverance, and examples of dedication and values, all together carrying the special torch of light of the people of Israel that answers the question "why" in a loud and clear voice. The torch of light of the people in all its diverse shades, a light unto the nations, passing through all generations and seeking to preserve the dream of repairing the world amid the never-ending struggle for existence of the Jewish people.

You represent diverse fields – scientists advancing Israel toward prosperity and technological excellence, pioneering brain research and medical breakthroughs. The Chief Rabbi whose wisdom reaches every Jewish community. Artists of cinema and culture, journalists who seek truth. The Maccabi sports hero who inspired generations. The woman who extracted justice from unspeakable horror. The individual who provided answers to families of the missing and fallen when uncertainty consumed them. Women who dedicated their lives to countless worthy causes, and champions of social responsibility and mutual aid.

With us sits Eyal Waldman, recipient of the Prize for Entrepreneurship and Technological Innovation. But Eyal is also a bereaved father. Not far from where Elchanan fell, his daughter Danielle *z"l* was murdered. Eyal told me Danielle was an extraordinary young woman who embraced life fully – working diligently toward success while savoring life's joys alongside

Elchanan Kalmanson *hy"d*, Menachem Kalmanson, and Itiel Zohar. (PHOTO: COURTESY)

her partner Noam *z"l*. Danielle touched countless lives with her generosity. Everyone cherished her presence. While celebrating, she was brutally taken by those who seek our destruction. May her memory be a blessing.

Together we will mourn, and together we will rebuild what was destroyed. And together we will continue the journey of this wonderful nation.

Honorable guests, you, together with thousands of anonymous heroes and doers, tell the story of who our brothers of the entire house of Israel are, and thus answer in the deepest way the question "why." We will not abandon our brothers in the south and the north, our brothers who are fighting and their families – our brothers who fought and were wounded, those whose injuries are visible and those whose injuries cannot be seen. We will not forget our brothers, civilians, fighters of the defense forces in the Gaza border area, and security forces who fell in battle, whose acts of heroism will be recorded in the book of the chronicles of Israel. We will not forget our brothers and sisters held hostage by murderers, and every day we will pray and work for their return. No longer will we argue without seeing the good in this nation, for the blood of our brothers cries out to us from the ground – "I *am* my brother's keeper!"

Thank you, Elchanan, for this lesson and many others. To Itiel, for the partnership in fighting, for the composure and wisdom even in the most difficult moments. Thank you to my parents for the education we received in Torah, in love of humanity, and in dedication to repairing the world with patience, as a link in the chain of generations. To Shlomit and the children, who continue his path in action and daily coping. Thank you to Ayelet, my wife, who immigrated to Israel alone and every day tells me anew why we are here.

I will conclude with my brother's final words to Shlomit:

"I believed in the path, I believed in the return of our people to our land, and I believed in small actions that accomplish much, a small detail or decision made with care that will save lives. If I die in the war for this land, let people remember and remind others that this is not just another war or intifada or other nonsense. It's about the same long war for our land and the identity of our people that has been going on for almost 150 years. I wanted and tried to be a mensch, to be a Jew." ■

MIZRACHI WORLD MOVEMENT

Sulamot Stronger United

KUMA: Standing with the Widows of Israel's Defenders

As we commemorate Yom HaZikaron and celebrate Yom HaAtzmaut, we honor those who gave their lives to protect our homeland and recognize our responsibility to care for the families they left behind.

When air raid sirens blared across Israel on October 7th, thousands of IDF soldiers rushed to defend their nation. As the war expanded to multiple fronts, brave defenders continued answering the call of duty. For 317 of these courageous soldiers, that return home never came.

Elchanan Kalmanson was one of those heroes. On the morning of October 7th, 2023, he left his religious settlement in the Hebron Hills to save families in Kibbutz Be'eri – a community with vastly different political and religious viewpoints. In his final act of courage, Elchanan saved 100 families before giving his life, because to him, they were all *Am Yisrael*, one people regardless of differences.

He left behind his wife, Shlomit, and their children – a family whose world was shattered in an instant. Shlomit Kalmanson's story echoes across hundreds of Israeli homes where wives and children now face life without their beloved husbands and fathers.

"These are our invisible heroes," says Rav Yosef Zvi Rimon, Chief Rabbi of Gush Etzion, founder of Sulamot and La'Ofek, and Nasi of the World Mizrachi movement. "The brave women who continue to raise their children with pride and strength after their husbands were killed defending our people and our land."

Beyond the profound grief of losing a spouse, these widows face overwhelming challenges. In most families, the husband was the primary breadwinner. Now, these women must process their grief while shouldering the full responsibility of raising children alone. Many have stopped working entirely, while others work only part-time as their children need their emotional presence. Government stipends provide some assistance but often fall short of covering essential needs.

Recognizing this urgent need, Rav Rimon and his organization Sulamot established KUMA – a comprehensive initiative supporting the widows of the Swords of Iron War – in partnership with Mizrachi Canada and the World Mizrachi movement. The name carries profound meaning in Hebrew: "Rise Up."

Inspired by Elchanan's legacy of unity – seeing beyond political and religious divides to embrace all Jews as one people – KUMA serves widows from all backgrounds across Israeli society. This commitment to national solidarity guides everything Sulamot does, healing not just individual families but the fractures within *Am Yisrael* itself.

KUMA offers a three-tiered support model: monthly financial support for essential expenses not covered by government stipends; emergency grants for urgent needs; and benefits optimization to help widows access their full government entitlements.

"Each of KUMA's support systems are crucial," explains CEO Rabbi Eli Taragin. "Many widows report to us that the bureaucracy involved in accessing government benefits is so overwhelming that they've simply given up the financial battle. KUMA's specialists shoulder this burden, guiding widows through every step of the process."

What makes KUMA exceptional is its personalized approach led by Rav Rimon and a dedicated team including Program Coordinator Shlomit Peretz (widow of Eliraz Peretz, who fell in 2010), Senior Strategic Advisor Shlomit Kalmanson (Elchanan's widow), and an external advisory board comprised of legal, financial and mental health experts. Most critically, KUMA's work is made possible by the support of *Am Yisrael* from communities around the world.

A Legacy of Crisis Response

Sulamot's swift and comprehensive response to the Swords of Iron War builds on Rav Rimon's extensive experience managing crisis situations since his groundbreaking work with Gush Katif evacuees. When war erupted on October 7th, both of Rav Rimon's non-profit organizations – Sulamot and La'Ofek – immediately mobilized its resources and expertise:

Through Sulamot, they equipped hundreds of thousands of soldiers with life-saving gear, supported nine displaced Gaza border communities, and created crucial support networks for the families of reserve soldiers. Through La'Ofek, another of Rav Rimon's organizations, they provided employment opportunities for displaced persons from Israel's north and south. Throughout the conflict, Rav Rimon personally visited bases – often in the line of fire – to provide *chizuk* (strength) to soldiers on the front lines.

As we stand between Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut, we're reminded that caring for these families is not charity but our collective responsibility.

Stand With Israel's Widows Today

These brave women have lost their partners, but they should not lose their future. Your donation to KUMA will provide essential support to widows who sacrificed everything for our homeland.

To donate today, contact: inbar@sulamot.org or visit our website: www.sulamot.org/en/kuma

Tax-deductible in Israel, USA, Canada, UK & Australia.

Join us in honoring the fallen by supporting those they left behind.

GENiUS.

This is what home feels like

Images are for illustration purposes only. E&OE

- Three Distinctive Home Options
- Rabbi Rosner's Established Community
- Excellent Technical Specs
- Prime Location
- Construction Already Underway

This spring, discover the perfect balance of luxury and community at Eucalyptus in Beit Shemesh. Our newest collection offers three buildings to match your lifestyle, where your family's traditions can take root.

EUCALYPTUS LEGACY SUITES RESIDENCE

*8364

+972-54-219-4980
ruthieyudin@gmail.com

YIGAL REALTY עץ השקד N.חבר

JERUSALEM COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY

Building Might: One Student at a Time

By Doni Fogel

"Our soldiers are in the field. This is the tech we need. Can you get it to us?" – IDF

"That doesn't exist... We're on it." – Miriam

During this war, Jerusalem College of Technology (JCT) alumna Miriam (identity protected), who heads a major engineering division for Elbit Systems, is playing a vital role. Her division developed technologies deployed by the IDF on land and in the air. Fielding new technology typically takes at least two years. During this war, under her leadership, they've shortened that timeline to three months. In 2005, Miriam graduated as part of the first Electro-Optical Engineering cohort in JCT's Machon Tal.

This year, Miriam addressed Machon Tal engineering and computer science graduation as the guest of honor. A devoted mother of four, she has worked tirelessly through 15-20 hour days to ensure her division delivers critical resources to the IDF and security forces. Her dedication is even more remarkable as her husband – whom she met while they were both students at JCT – has been serving in the IDF throughout nearly the entire war.

When Professor Ze'ev Lev founded JCT – widely known in Hebrew as Machon Lev – in 1969, his vision was prescient: Train religious men in cutting-edge engineering studies to create technologies that would defend the Jewish people and equip them to lead the Jewish State. That is precisely what happened. JCT alumni entered the defense field as superbly trained engineers and innovators, playing trailblazing roles in creating Israeli technology that keeps Israel safe and secure.

עוז והדר לבושה – Oz V'Hadar Levushah

By 2000, JCT founded Machon Tal, responding to a unique opportunity to create a leading academic program that would empower religious women. Since then, Machon Tal graduates have entered Israel's defense, high-tech, and healthcare sectors with outsized impacts in each field.

On Oct. 7, 2023, Odelia Roos was a third-year nursing student in JCT's Selma Jelinek School of Nursing when she rushed to the Gaza border. She aided wounded soldiers and civilians and helped evacuate the bodies of fallen IDF tank-crewmen. As the nation mobilized, she spent months deployed by Israel's Emergency Medical Services in the North, treating wounded warriors and civilians. Just months ago, Odelia graduated with honors from Machon Tal's nursing program. Despite being away for months, and thanks to the academic, psychological, and social support JCT provided to students who are serving our nation, Odelia was able to graduate on time.

JCT alumna Miriam (identity protected) addresses Machon Tal's 2025 Engineering and Computer Science Graduation. (Photo: Avi Hayun)

ה' עוז לעמו יתן, ה' יברך את עמו בשלום
Hashem Oz L'Amo Yiten, Hashem Yivarech Et Amo V'Shalom

At JCT we strive to fulfill our role in partnering with Hashem in harnessing talent to create Jewish might. Our dual curriculum of rigorous academia coupled with high-level Torah study (both on the Machon Lev Campus for men and Machon Tal Campus for women) lets us live our joint values of Torah and Mada (science).

JCT trains about 13% of all nursing graduates in Israel, and 12% of all women in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) studies in Israel are at Machon Tal. An astonishing 16 JCT alumni have been awarded the Israel Defense Prize in the past two decades for technologies ranging from armored personnel carriers to Iron Dome, David Sling, Arrow 3, and Ofek Satellite technology. Today, with nearly 5,000 students - split almost exactly between men and women - and a higher percentage of olim than at any other Israeli college or university, JCT's impact is vastly larger than one might expect.

If Miriam hadn't studied engineering, if Odelia hadn't studied nursing, Israel would be weaker today. JCT is building a $135 million future campus for Machon Tal precisely because we know it will be the launching pad for Israeli innovators, medical professionals, computer scientists, and engineers. Partner with us in building Israel's might into the next century, today.

Doni Fogel is the Vice President of the Jerusalem College of Technology.

נפש Nefesh
בנפש B'Nefesh

ALIYAH: THE TIME IS NOW

WWW.NBN.ORG.IL

נפש Nefesh
בנפש B'Nefesh

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO BUILD A STRONGER ISRAEL THROUGH ALIYAH

Ministry of Aliyah and Integration

THE הסוכנות היהודית
JEWISH AGENCY לארץ ישראל
FOR ISRAEL

קק"ל קרן קיימת לישראל KKL-JNF

JEWISH NATIONAL FUND USA

ORTHODOX ISRAEL COALITION MIZRACHI

ON THE FRONTLINES FOR ISRAEL

MIZRACHI 360

INSPIRATION FROM ISRAEL'S FRONT LINES

Between Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim, Mizrachi360 brings leading speakers from Israel to communities all over the world. Find out what is happening in your community at **mizrachi.org/mizrachi360**

Rabbi Doron Perez
UK

Mrs. Jen Airley
UK

Rabbi Yuval Cherlow
Kingsway Jewish Center, NY

Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Brody
Young Israel of Teaneck, NJ and Congregation Keter Torah, NJ

Orit Mark Ettinger
UK

Rabbi Professor Adam Ferziger
Young Israel of West Hartford, CT and Jewish Center of Atlantic Beach, NY

Rabbi Elli Fischer
UK

Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider
Congregation Beth Tefillah, NJ

Rabbi Yehoshua Grunstein
Baron Hirsch Congregation, TN and UK

Dr. Carl Hochhauser
UK

Rabbi Doron Chitiz
UK

Rabbi Netanel Elyashiv
East Denver Orthodox Synagogue, CO

Rabbi Yishai Engelman
UK

Mrs. Devorah Kay
UK

Rabbi Joel Kenigsberg
UK

Rabbi Bentzi Mann
UK

FROM ISRAEL'S FRONT LINES

Mrs. Sivan Rahav-Meir
Young Israel of East Brunswick, NJ

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon
Congregation K.I.N.S. of West Rogers Park, IL and UK

Rabbi Shalom Rosner
Congregation AABJ&D, NJ and Young Israel of New Rochelle, NY

Rabbi Hershel Schachter
Young Israel of West Hempstead, NY, Cong. K.I.N.S. of West Rogers Park, IL and UK

Rabbanit Shani Taragin
Kemp Mill Synagogue, MD

Dr. Yael Ziegler
UK

Rabbanit Rachelle Sprecher Fraenkel
UK

Rabbi Menachem Leibtag
UK

Mrs. Miriam Peretz
Young Israel of Lawrence-Cedarhurst, NY

Rabbi Shay Schachter
Young Israel of Scarsdale, NY

Rabbi David Stav
Young Israel of Great Neck, NY

Rabbi Moshe Taragin
Congregation Beth Abraham, NJ and Congregation Ahavath Torah, NJ

Rabbi Leo Dee
Congregation Torah Ohr, FL

Rabbi Binny Freedman
UK

Mrs. Karen Hochhauser
UK

Rabbi Alex Israel
Rinat Yisrael, NJ and UK

Rabbi Ari & Naomi Kahn
Young Israel of Fort Lee, NJ

Rabbi Anthony Manning
UK

Rabbanit Pesha Fischer
UK

Rabbi Yamin Goldsmith
UK

Dr. Julie Goldstein
Congregation Shaarei Tefillah, MA

Rabbi David Milston
UK

Jonathan Rosenblum
Young Israel of Memphis, TN

Rabbi Reuven Taragin
Young Israel of Fair Lawn, NJ and UK

Mr. Gil Hoffman
Durham Orthodox Kehillah at Beth El, NC

Rabbi Jesse Horn
Congregation Beth Sholom, NY and UK

Rabbanit Noa Lewis
UK

Rabbi Danny Mirvis
UK

Rabbi Steven Pruzansky
Congregation Bais Tefilah of Woodmere, NY

Rabbanit Surale Rosen
Ahavat Achim, NJ

Rabbi Shimshon Nadel
UK

Ari Sacher
Congregation Ahavas Achim, NJ

Michal Santhouse
UK

Rabbi Eliyahu Silverman
UK

Rabbi Aviad Tabory
Young Israel of Oceanside, NY

Rabbi Binyamin Zimmerman
UK

SIVAN RHAHV-MEIR HEADSHOT: ARNON BUSANI; MIRIAM PERETZ HEADSHOT: NOA LUTSKY BERUT

Finding Jewish Love in the Modern World

A Conversation with Aleeza Ben Shalom

Aleeza Ben Shalom is a matchmaker, relationship coach, and author who gained international recognition as the star of Netflix's hit series "Jewish Matchmaking." With a passion for helping Jewish singles find love, Aleeza has dedicated her life to ensuring Jewish continuity through meaningful marriages. Rabbi Aron White spoke with Aleeza about her journey to becoming a matchmaker, her Netflix show, and her new partnership with World Mizrachi in the Jewish Matchmaking Movement.

For those who haven't seen your Netflix series or read your book, can you tell us about your background and how you became a matchmaker?

I grew up in a secular Jewish conservative household in Philadelphia. In my mid-20s, I went to a Jewish singles retreat that completely transformed my relationship with Judaism. After that experience, I embraced Judaism more deeply, taking on Shabbat, *kashrut*, modest dress, and prayer. About eight months later, I got married at 25.

After having two kids and being in what I call "baby land," I was looking for some adult interaction. A friend mentioned she was a matchmaker on a dating website, and I immediately wanted to do that too. She connected me with Saw You At Sinai, and when they asked if I was willing to work with older singles or those "out of town," I enthusiastically said yes to everything, not knowing what any of it meant!

I quickly learned what those terms meant in the matchmaking world – how difficult it is for people who are older singles, second-time singles, or have kids in the mix. I was dealing with the more challenging cases from the start without realizing these were considered the hardest situations in *shidduchim*. I fell in love with it.

What did you learn from your early experiences in matchmaking?

I realized that people would say yes or no to potential matches very quickly. I'd think, "You don't even know what you're saying no to. I spent hours searching for this match, and in half a second,

you say no." So I started calling people before even suggesting a match. I would coach them informally, and then I developed a coaching and matchmaking model where they went hand in hand.

I wouldn't matchmake someone unless I was coaching them. If someone said, "I don't need coaching, everything's fine, just send me a match," I wouldn't work with them. From there, I started training other matchmakers and coaches and built my own internal team.

I wrote my first book, "Get Real, Get Married," which I self-published. This became my passion, my dream, my *avodat Hashem*. Nothing is more exciting to me than helping to create Jewish families – I wake up excited about it and go to sleep excited about it.

How did you go from matchmaking in America to starring in a Netflix series?

Over the years, I had several television opportunities, but I turned them down because I was concerned they wouldn't represent Judaism positively. I remember once turning down a big opportunity, and turning to Hashem, "Hashem, that was a really big one – please send me something good!"

In summer 2020, during COVID lockdowns, a matchmaker friend named Laurie Young called me after declining an interview with Netflix for a Jewish matchmaking show. She gave them my number, so a *shadchan* literally made the *shidduch* between me and Netflix!

This happened right when my family had decided to make *Aliyah*. The borders were closed due to COVID, and I said to my husband, "If they lock a Jew out of Israel, that is unacceptable. If I'm going to be locked, I'm going to be locked in, not out!" So we committed to moving as soon as Nefesh B'Nefesh were able to process our paperwork.

While preparing for *Aliyah* in the summer of 2020, I continued interviewing with Netflix – even though it was going well, they still had to get the show approved, and there is a whole process. We made *Aliyah* in March 2021, and just 11 days later, after quarantine, I went to the Kotel. It was an incredible feeling, that we had made it to Israel, myself, with my husband and our five kids (plus our pandemic puppy). While I was finishing my prayers and wiping my tears, the producers called me, "We just got the greenlight for the show!" It felt like G-d was saying, "You made *Aliyah*, you're standing at the Kotel, and now you have a show!"

I had to keep it a secret the whole time because they announced the show was coming but didn't reveal who the matchmaker would be. We filmed for seven months in 2022, from February to October, and the show was released in May 2023. I kept disappearing, and people would ask questions. All the teachers at my children's schools would say, "Aleeza, we don't understand. You made *Aliyah*, you work in *shidduchim*, but you have to go to the States so much? Why are you gone so often? We need meetings with you about your children." I couldn't explain that I was filming for a show – I couldn't say anything.

What was the reaction like when the show came out?

The producers prepared me for a 50-50 split of lovers and haters, and they told me not to read all the reviews that came out. I couldn't help myself, and did read a lot of the reviews! What I experienced was about 98–99% positive reactions from

Aleeza and her husband at their wedding, and now. (PHOTOS: COURTESY)

around the world – from Jews and non-Jews, religious and secular. The few criticisms often came from people and sometimes those people hadn't actually watched the show.

What came out so great in the show was the diversity of participants, representing such a broad picture of the Jewish people – completely secular, traditional Jewish, Sephardi, Ashkenazi, and even people who didn't identify with any of these categories. They represented different parts of Israel too, from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. They included singles from their 20s to their 50s.

I was also told the momentum would last maybe 60 days before fading, and then the next big thing comes along. Instead, I've been on tour for two years, flying out of the country 18 times. I've visited over 80 cities worldwide – in Australia, Chile, Argentina, London, Germany, all over the United States and Canada. The excitement about Jewish matchmaking and marriage hasn't ended.

Tell us about the Jewish Matchmaking Movement with Mizrachi. What is it doing as a next step?

The Jewish Matchmaking Movement is a community-based initiative with the goal of guaranteeing our Jewish future. One problem I've encountered is people telling me, "If Aleeza can't make my *shidduch*, nobody can. You're my last hope, or I'm marrying a non-Jew." Dozens of people have told me this, which is an unacceptable burden for one person.

I spoke with World Mizrachi about creating a global, community-based matchmaking initiative. I want every community to have a lead matchmaker who doesn't just make matches but makes matchmakers – training the entire community how to make *shidduchim*. My vision is that any lay person should be thinking about others and making match suggestions at least once a month. That's 12 times a year that you should suggest a match to somebody, regardless of their age or your relationship to them. Everyone should be helping everyone.

The most common excuse I hear is "I don't know anybody." Really? We're the Jewish people – we talk enough to know plenty of people! It's like when your kids come home from school and you ask, "How was school?" and they say, "Fine." "What did you do?" "Nothing." It's a kop-out excuse, but not the real truth!

We recently had two 90-year-old mothers playing mahjong who set up their children. The "kids" are in their 70s and have been dating for the last six months – all because the mahjong mothers

made a match! This is exactly the kind of community involvement we're trying to foster.

How do you envision this movement operating on a global scale?

I want to have at least 12 epicenters around the world, each in charge of a region. Every community needs to take responsibility for this work.

For example, if Germany becomes an epicenter, they would be in charge of the European region. We have contacts there and are in discussions with them. They would get trained first and know how to lead a community and a region, in the same way that Mizrachi has different regions. South America would be its own region, Central America would be another. In the US, we need epicenters in major cities like New York, Miami, Chicago, and LA. Canada would be its own region – we have a lead rabbi, Rabbi Yisroel Bernath in Montreal who could be the epicenter.

In my ideal world, every community would have a rabbi on staff, an educational director on staff, and a matchmaker on staff. Every community should have a paid Yenta whose job is to run singles events, community gatherings, and train more matchmakers. It shouldn't be on one person to be the savior of the community – it should be a community-led effort. Nothing is better for helping your community grow than continuing to build Jewish families!

We want communities to run between six to twelve programs a year for singles – at minimum every other month, ideally once a month. These events can break even financially or even generate income to pay for the matchmaker's salary. You can find donors too – matchmaking is hot right now and brings more members into communities.

We've already run two International Jewish Matchmaking conferences in Jerusalem, and I'm reminded we need to plan our 2025 conference soon! We usually hold them right after the *chagim*, when people from around the world are still in Israel. We get between 100 to 200 people who want to talk about what we're trying to do.

The goal right now is to get the information out there: What is the Jewish Matchmaking Movement? What are we trying to do? What does it mean to create a movement? Then we want communities to start buying in one at a time. I will go to those locations, train them, help them establish staff, and connect them to the broader movement through WhatsApp groups and regional networks.

I believe it will grow very organically and probably very quickly because people will have FOMO – a fear of missing out. They'll be asking, "Didn't Aleeza come to your community? Why don't you have this program?" We want singles and community members demanding, "Where's our Yenta? Why don't we have regular programming?"

The intermarriage rate in America is over 70%. Not even 50%, which would be bad enough – 70%! As much as Hamas, Hitler, and others have done to us, we haven't been good to ourselves. So many Jews outside Israel, especially in America, don't even know who they are.

Other communities worldwide are more traditional. Even if they're not religious, they're still involved in synagogue and

Rabbi Danny Mirvis, CEO and Rabbi Doron Perez, Executive Chairman of World Mizrachi, together with Aleeza are partners in the Jewish Matchmaking Movement. (PHOTO: KRIFKIND PHOTOGRAPHY)

community, and their kids are 80% more likely to marry Jewish. But every Jewish community is facing challenges with intermarriage.

I'm getting calls from leaders all over the world saying, "You're the one who knows this best. You're the one invested in this the most, with the most energy, drive, passion, and wisdom about what to do. Please come help our communities."

We also ran a conference in Philadelphia called "Yenta-con," where we brought 50 matchmakers from around the world, including some non-Jewish matchmakers who had Jewish clients. We were motivating them to help Jews marry Jews. Some would say, "But my clients don't mind if they marry anybody," and we'd respond, "Right, but they should be with Jewish people."

What do you think educators of teenagers should be teaching about relationships and marriage?

The most important message is that being Jewish matters, and raising a Jewish family is important. The single best way to do that is with a Jewish partner.

If young people don't value Judaism or have a connection to Judaism, G-d, or their community, they'll ask, "What does it matter if I marry Jewish?" We have statistics showing that if

a Jewish person marries another Jewish person, there's a 93% chance their kids will be raised in a Jewish home. If they marry someone non-Jewish, that percentage drops dramatically.

Judaism has to feel special and important. Antisemitism can't be our identity. We have to have a much stronger Jewish identity that comes from a place of love and beauty. If we only share that Jews are hated and wanted dead, our kids won't want to be part of this.

What advice do you have for people bridging cultural divides when dating outside their community?

I've been all over the world and met people from many cultures. Sometimes we have very little language connection, but there's non-verbal communication. In Judaism, we believe words from the heart enter the heart. There are many ways to bridge gaps.

We might have different Jewish customs, but at the root of it, we're Jews who love the Jewish people. Will you learn a new language? Sure. Will you learn new customs? Sure. Different doesn't equal bad – it's just different from what you're used to.

Getting comfortable with being uncomfortable is key. Curiosity needs to be our best friend. Many people fear, "You're going to take my children away from me. They're going to move to another country." Maybe they will, but the Jewish world is really small. With modern technology, you can see family members frequently, even if they live far away. And we have travel, which even though it isn't always cheap, is still a world of difference from how it was 50 years ago.

Don't be afraid if your child wants to move to Israel. Let them be surrounded by Jews from all over the world. Israel is the biggest melting pot – Russians, Italians, French, Germans, South Americans, South Africans, Americans, Canadians! Sometimes we have language barriers or cultural differences, but it's actually gorgeous – like the most beautiful painting of different colors and flavors. It's something spectacular. ■

Matchmaker Matchmaker is the ultimate companion for anyone serious about finding and nurturing lasting love and can be purchased on Amazon. Matchmaker Matchmaker is also available as an audio book read by Aleeza Ben Shalom!

Aleeza Ben Shalom with participants at the 2nd International Jewish Matchmaking Conference, a collaboration with Shagririm Balev and World Mizrachi that was held at the Nefesh B'Nefesh center in Jerusalem, December 2024. (PHOTO: JAMIE GORDON)

After 40 years in the desert, this is everything you've been waiting for.
easyshul
Cloud-Based Synagogue Management Software
Exclusive Discounts for HaMizrachi Readers of up to $1,200.
See a demo today at
easyshul.com

"It just makes a lot of sense—YU, *in* Israel. It's unlike any other program available in Israel or in America."

Joey Zelig, Teaneck

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY IN ISRAEL
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

Achieve Excellence in Torah While Earning a YU Degree in Partnership with Top Israeli Universities

Immersive Torah Studies in a World-Class Beis Midrash Environment with Renowned Rabbeim, Open 24 Hours.

Academic Degrees in Partnership with Leading Israeli Research Universities

Vibrant Student Experience and Residence Life

YU IN ISRAEL
Apply now

LEARN MORE AT YU.EDU/YUI

Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism

MOSAIC UNITED

In partnership with Israel's Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Mosaic United, our university offers students enriching cultural experiences and opportunities to explore Jewish heritage and Israel alongside their academic studies.

Yeshiva University

Bless the People Who Do Not Give Up

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks זצ"ל

This address was delivered in 2001 in Finchley Synagogue, as part of Bnei Akiva's annual service for Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut.

Friends, with young people like the *chaverim* and *chaverot* of Bnei Akiva, we look forward to our future with confidence. And to you, the *chavrei* Bnei Akiva yourselves, I say to you: never lose that fire, that passion and that faith. We need it now and we see it in you.

Friends, the *Gemara* in *Berachot* says a very difficult and profound thing. It says that "*shalosh matanot tovot natan Hakodesh Baruch Hu leYisrael*": that G-d gave three precious gifts to the Jewish people – "*vekulam lo nitnu ela al yedei yissurim*" – and each one of them was given in and only through suffering. "*Ve'eilu hen*" – and these are they – "*Torah*" – our marriage contract with G-d; "*Eretz Yisrael*" – the Land of Israel; and "*Olam Haba*", the world to come (Berachot 5a).

The question is: Why? In a book published relatively recently, a full 60 years after his death, Rav Kook *zt"l* gave a very simple explanation. He said that anything natural, anything – *bederech hateva* – does not need to be acquired through pain. But anything which is – *mei'al chukei hateva* – which is above nature, which is supernatural, by definition strains against the limits of nature or of history and therefore it involves pain. It is obvious that Torah and *Olam Haba*, by their very definition, are supernatural. But what we recognize today is that that applies no less to the Land and to the State of Israel.

The existence of *Medinat Yisrael* is certainly *mei'al chukei hateva*. When in all of history did a people return to its land after an exile of 2,000 years? When in all of history did a people gather to itself the reins of independence and of power after two millennia of powerlessness? When did a people return to *zirah shel historia* – to the arena of history – after a distinguished historian, Lord Toynbee, called us as a people "one of the fossils of history"? This is *mei'al chukei hateva*. This is above and beyond the natural.

When did so small a country, surrounded by so many enemies and so much hostility do what Israel has done? Transform an entire people, our people, *mishvut legeula, u'mimavet lechayim* – from exile to redemption and even from death itself to new life. When did a people rescue so many threatened communities? When did a nation the size of Israel absorb so many human beings? When did a people like Israel show so much indomitable courage, not only in waging war, but also in pursuit of peace? All this is *mei'al chukei hateva*. It is beyond the natural.

Tonight we say – and not only say but also feel to the depths of our soul – what we will say in a moment in *Hallel*: "*Even ma'asu habonim*" – the stone the builders rejected – the nation despised by the world – "*hayeta lerosh pinah*" – today stands tall and proud. We say: "*mei'ayt Hashem hayeta zot*" – this can only be from G-d. "*Hi niflat beayneinu*" – and it is wondrous in our eyes (*Tehillim* 118:22–23).

Sadly, tonight we see the other side of that Talmudic equation: "*kulam lo nitnu ela al yedei yissurim*" – these great and supernatural gifts.

In the last year, Israel has paid a very high price in suffering. We have seen a seven-year pursuit of peace collapse into violence and terror. In the last 12 months alone, 182 Israelis have been killed and so many thousands injured. Israel has found itself, after offering more concessions than anyone believed possible to achieve peace with its neighbors, at a time of distress for the Jewish people and to our brothers and sisters in Israel, we say – *imachem anachnu betzara* – we are with you and we will always be with you in your distress as well as in your joy.

At a moment like this, a message should go out, not only to us but from us to the world: Who is suffering as a result of the rejection of Israel's offer of peace? Of course, her people, her economy, her children, suffer. But does anyone gain? Do Israel's enemies gain by violence and terror? By rejection and rage? Nobody gains! Do the Palestinians gain through seeing their people die, their economy wither, their children poisoned by hate, their very hope destroyed for a generation if not for more? Does the Arab world gain by rejecting peace, by rejecting Israel's right to exist, by rejecting all that Israel has to offer?

And let me ask: Does the world gain by cold-shouldering a country that has more to teach and offer the developing world than perhaps any other in the world? What nation formed since the Second World War has done more to teach humanity about how to develop agriculture or medicine or technology or education?

What country of Israel's youth and size has done more to help nations in distress through famine or natural disaster – whether in Bosnia, or Turkey or Kosovo? What country has more nobly sustained under incredible pressures and a wholly inhospitable environment the principles of democracy, a free press and an independent judiciary?

You know, they used to tell a story of a Rebbe who, in a time of great distress and poverty, went from community to community, teaching the principles of *tzedakah*. When he came back, the *chassidim* asked him:

"How did you do? Did you succeed?"

And he said: "I half succeeded."

"What do you mean, you half succeeded?" said the *talmidim*.

"Well," said the Rebbe, "I persuaded the poor to take. Now I just have to persuade the rich to give."

Can you imagine this irony? Israel wants to give – and we have to persuade the world to take!

Friends, "*sinah mekalkelet et hashurah*, hatred distorts the human heart" (*Bereishit Rabbah* 55:8). It destroys our capacity for rational decision. To our great sadness, we have to say: More than Israel's enemies inflict suffering on Israel, they inflict suffering on themselves.

Yet today, precisely as we feel those *yissurim*, that suffering and that pain, so do we feel the *matana tovah* – this great gift which G-d has given us in the form of the State of Israel, which has transformed Jewish life in Israel and on every continent.

What challenge lies ahead for the people of Israel? This is a very simply-answered question. It goes to the very heart of what Bnei Akiva and what Religious Zionism represents.

There were times in the past when the strength that Israel needed was economic strength. There were times when it needed military strength. Times when it needed political strength. Today, *Baruch Hashem*, it has all those things. I have to tell you: what have Israel's enemies been saying all along? I'll tell you. They say: Look at Israelis. Have you ever looked at Israelis? *Baruch Hashem*, Israelis are wonderful people, they say, but they have no patience – no *savlanut*, no *sitzfleisch*. They drive like *meshugannes*! The rarest thing in all of nature is an Israeli queue! So what shall we do? We'll make life hell for them for 53 years and then we'll make life hell for them for another 50 years and they'll say: Nu, let's go to Miami. Or *Mei-ami* – as it is said in *Ivrit*.

A people who waited 2,000 years for its Land, a people who has been waiting more than 2,000 years for its *Mashiach* – does not give up. A people who gave the world the concept of hope, a people that names its national anthem *Hatikvah*, does not give up. A people that knows that *matanot tovot* – those great gifts – only come through suffering, does not give up.

And we say to the Jewish people in the Jewish State – *Am Yisrael b'Medinat Yisrael* – "*Chazak, chazak venitchazek*": You be strong; we will be strong, and let us strengthen one another (traditional phrase recited after completing a book of Torah). And to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* we pray: *Ribbono Shel Olam*, You who in the last 53 years have answered so many of our prayers, please answer the last and greatest prayer of all: Bless Your people, Israel.

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.

From Strength to Strength on Israel's "Oz" Birthday

Rabbi Reuven Taragin

Physical and military strength deters adversaries and allows for fearless living, yet even the strongest have vulnerabilities – a reminder of our dependency on Hashem. As Jews meant to feel especially close to Hashem, we've experienced heightened vulnerability throughout history: from Egyptian threats at *Yam Suf* and Amalek's attacks after leaving Egypt, to continued dangers in the Land of Israel, culminating in two exiles.

Over our many centuries in exile, we constantly lived in fear. Even in peaceful times, we feared that trouble could be right around the corner. The Golden Age in Spain ended with the Inquisition and expulsion. Later, centuries of thriving Jewish life across Europe ended abruptly with the Holocaust.

The Zionist movement hoped that returning the Jewish people to *Eretz Yisrael* would finally put an end to our persecution. Getting us out of "the hair" of the European and Arab nations and relocating us to a desolate land of sand dunes would finally bring us peace.

The history of the State of Israel has, of course, been very different. In addition to the many bloody existential wars we were forced to fight, the recent Hamas genocidal massacre, followed by the attack and demonization of the State of Israel and Jewish people worldwide, have reminded us once again of our vulnerability. The State of Israel has built a powerful army, but we are still attacked. No Jew feels safe in Israel or around the world.

As we approach Israel's 77th birthday, a number associated with the word *oz* (strength), feeling unsafe and vulnerable, we wonder how we and the state can achieve the strength we have found so elusive.

The Gemara offers an interesting answer: *tefillin*. The Gemara teaches that "*tefillin* are strength" for the Jewish people (*Berachot* 6a). Indeed, proper fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *tefillin* is a condition for going out to war (*Sotah* 44b), and the sight of us wearing *tefillin* is meant to instill fear in the hearts of other nations.

Moshe Rabbeinu explained in *Parashat Bo* that *tefillin* remind us of the "strong arm" Hashem used to take us out of Egypt and serve as an "*ot*" (sign) of our relationship with Hashem. Our commitment to Hashem as the source of our strength merits His care and empowerment.

We wear *tefillin* on our weaker arm to remind us that our strength comes from Hashem, not ourselves. Remembering this not only merits us Hashem's support but also inspires confidence. One who believes their strength comes from Hashem knows they have no reason to fear, as *David HaMelech* expressed: "Even when I walk through the valley of death, I will not fear because You are with me" (*Tehillim* 23:4).

The next *parasha*, *Beshalach*, reinforces *Parashat Bo*'s *tefillin* message. The Jews left Egypt "*b'yad ramah*," feeling confident after vanquishing the Egyptians, only to have their confidence shattered when threatened again at *Yam Suf*. They needed Hashem's "arm" to save them.

Of course, Hashem wants us to fight for ourselves and blesses us with the physical strength and the heavenly assistance needed. We see this at the end of *Parashat Beshalach* in the wake of Amalek's attack.

Moshe responded to the attack by having Yehoshua organize an army while he climbed a hill with the heavenly staff. When Moshe raised his arms heavenward, the Jews prevailed; when he lowered them, Amalek gained the advantage.

The *Mishnah* asks: "Do Moshe's hands make or break a war?" It answers: "When the Jewish people directed their sight heavenward and committed their hearts to their Father in heaven, they were victorious" (*Rosh Hashanah* 3:8). Ultimately, Hashem intends for us to fight for ourselves and strengthens our efforts, but only if we recognize that our strength comes from Him.

By raising his arms heavenward during war, Moshe followed *Avraham Avinu*'s example. When offered spoils of war by the king of Sedom, Avraham raised his arms, refusing to credit the king or himself for the victory that was truly Hashem's (*Bereishit* 14:22). *Chazal* teach that Avraham's acknowledgment of Hashem as the source of his victory earned the Jewish people the *mitzvah* of *tefillin*. Like our ancestor Avraham, we, too, are blessed with divine empowerment when we recognize Hashem as the true source of our strength.

The State of Israel has developed magnificently over seventy-seven years, blessed with millions of religious Jews living Torah-rich lives alongside material and military strength. However, the religious and material sectors often remain disconnected. Our true strength lies in appreciating their connection.

In recent decades, Religious Zionists have sought leadership in the army and economy. We must strengthen this effort, recognizing that only when success in these spheres is seen as heaven-inspired will they afford us their full strength and security.

May fighting our wars and living our lives with this "*tefillin* mentality" merit us Hashem's empowerment and the associated strength and success.

Scan here to join Rabbi Taragin's daily Divrei Torah WhatsApp group

Rabbi Reuven Taragin
is Educational Director of Mizrachi and Dean of the Yeshivat Hakotel Overseas Program. His new book, Essentials of Judaism, can be purchased at rabbireuventaragin.com.

A member of the Mizrachi Speakers Bureau
mizrachi.org/speakers

THE LAX FAMILY
TZURBA
VISITING SCHOLARS

FROM THE BATTLEFIELD TO THE BET MIDRASH

QUESTIONS FROM THE FRONT LINES

with Rav Tamir Granot

Rabbi Dr. Tamir Granot is the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Orot Shaul in Tel Aviv, an author specializing in Sefer Devarim and Jewish thought on the Holocaust, who lost his son, Lt. Amitai Tzvi Granot, in a Hezbollah missile attack on October 15, 2023.

TUESDAY, MAY 6

12PM EASTERN TIME / 7PM ISRAEL TIME

Register for the Zoom session by using the QR code or visiting https://tzurba.kit.com/ya-5785 and get a free digital edition of volume 21!

TZURBA
THE LAX FAMILY EDITION

FOR MORE INFO

To learn more about Tzurba or to make a donation go to tzurbaolami.com

available at amazon

MIZRACHI

There's No Place Like Home: The Oz of Israel's 77-Year Journey

Rabbanit Shani Taragin

Throughout *Tanach*, the Hebrew word עֹז (*oz*) resonates as a profound expression of strength, resilience, and divine fortitude. This concept appears repeatedly in Biblical text as a description of G-d's might, as a quality bestowed upon leaders, and as the inner spiritual resilience that sustains both individuals and the nation of Israel. As Israel marks its 77th year of independence, particularly in the shadow of the trials following October 7th and the ongoing war, the theme of עֹז carries extraordinary significance.

In *Tehillim* 68, the motif of עֹז reaches its crescendo, particularly in the concluding verses 34–36:

לָרֹכֵב בִּשְׁמֵי שְׁמֵי קֶדֶם הֵן יִתֵּן בְּקוֹלוֹ קוֹל **עֹז**.

To Him who rides the ancient highest heavens, Who thunders forth with His mighty voice.

תְּנוּ **עֹז** לֵאלֹקִים עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל גַּאֲוָתוֹ **וְעֻזּוֹ** בַּשְּׁחָקִים. נוֹרָא אֱלֹקִים מִמִּקְדָּשֶׁיךָ אֵ-ל יִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא נֹתֵן עֹז וְתַעֲצֻמוֹת לָעָם...

Ascribe strength to G-d; His majesty is over Israel, and His strength is in the skies. Awesome is G-d from His sanctuary; the G-d of Israel – He gives strength and power to the people...

These verses illuminate a profound truth: while Hashem's עֹז extends throughout creation, it manifests with particular intensity in the Land and People of Israel as He wages war on their behalf against their enemies (Radak). The phrase "His majesty is over Israel" suggests that the divine presence and heavenly strength find their complete expression in this sacred and most precious Land as a protective force enveloping Israel (Ibn Ezra).

Similarly, *Tehillim* 29, which we recite every Shabbat to declare Hashem's omnipotence, concludes with the powerful declaration: "Hashem gives strength (עֹז) to His people; Hashem blesses His people with peace" (*Tehillim* 29:11). This verse captures the duality of עֹז: it is both the capacity granted by Hashem to the nation of Israel to stand firm in adversity, and the divine blessing that ultimately enables peace.

The *gematria* (numerical value) of עֹז is 77, which reinforces the theme of divine strength transcending the natural order, which has been foundational to Israel's destiny and survival throughout history. The numerology is striking upon this 77th anniversary of *Medinat Yisrael*, invigorating us with fortitude to rebuild. עֹז consists of two letters – *ayin* (70) and *zayin* (7). Together, they mirror the struggle and victory emerging from the devastation of October 7th, and 70 years of planting anew following destruction (*Ta'anit* 23a). Moreover, in the "*At-Bash*" numerology system,[1] the letter ע aligns with the letter ז, suggesting that the concept of strength forms a bridge connecting our ancestral stories, present circumstances, and hopes for the future – providing an enduring foundation of resilience and renewal.

The historic Battalion 77 ("עז" גדוד) of the IDF embodies the very essence of עֹז – resilience and fortitude, qualities crucial to Israel's survival and growth. Established in 1969 within the 7th Brigade, it was designed to train soldiers to function as cohesive units, emphasizing the power of unity over mere individual strength. The battalion played a crucial role during the Yom Kippur War under the command of Avigdor Kahalani in the Golan Heights, where it stood as Israel's shield in the "Battle of the Valley of Tears," fought from October 6–9 1973. Facing overwhelming odds – approximately 160 Syrian tanks – the warriors of Battalion 77 displayed extraordinary courage, halting the enemy advance and ensuring the survival of the northern front. Their tenacity led to the battalion's famed nickname, "Oz 77," forever associating their valor with the Hebrew concept of strength.

Exactly fifty years later, the story of Captain Daniel Perez, *Hy"d*, echoes that of the brave warriors of the past. Fighting heroically as platoon commander in Battalion 77 in Nachal Oz on October 7th, he exemplified the same legacy of courage, self-sacrifice, and unwavering dedication to *Am Yisrael*. His bravery stands as a modern-day reflection of the enduring spirit of עֹז in Israel's history.

The 77th anniversary of Israel's independence is not merely a commemoration of survival; it is a testament to the power of resilience and faith. As we reflect on this milestone, we draw inspiration from *Tanach*'s depiction of עֹז, from the heroes of Oz 77, and from those who continue to defend Israel today. Just as the warriors of the past drew strength from their convictions, today's generation continues to embody that same unyielding spirit.

In a world that often tests Israel's endurance, the legacy of עֹז – both divine and human – remains its guiding force. Unlike the fictional "Oz" where the wizard's power was an illusion, Israel's עֹז is authentic and derives from the "G-d of Israel – He gives strength and power to the people" (*Tehillim* 68:36). May He continue to bestow עֹז upon us and bless us with peace in the Land where resilience meets faith, in the only and holy Land we call "home."

1. *At-Bash* (א-ת, ב-ש) is an ancient Hebrew numerology system where the first letter of the alphabet (א/aleph) is substituted with the last letter (ת/tav), the second letter (ב/bet) with the second-to-last (ש/shin), and so on. This creates pairs of letters with special mystical significance. In *At-Bash*, the letter ע (ayin) corresponds with ז (zayin), both components of the word עֹז (strength).

Rabbanit Shani Taragin
is Educational Director of Mizrachi, Mizrachi-Lapidot and Matan Eshkolot Programs for Educators, and the Rosh Women's Beit Midrash for Yeshiva University in Israel.

A member of the Mizrachi Speakers Bureau
mizrachi.org/speakers

Yeshivat Eretz HaTzvi is Advancing to its Next Stage of Growth — and We're Looking for a Torah Visionary!

NOW HIRING: ROSH YESHIVA

As we enter an exciting new chapter, Yeshivat Eretz HaTzvi is seeking a **charismatic, inspiring, and deeply knowledgeable** Torah educator to join our leadership and teaching team.

We're looking for someone who is:

- ✓ A master of Torah and serious learning
- ✓ Experienced in teaching and mentoring talmidim
- ✓ Warm, engaging, and an exceptional role model
- ✓ A visionary with the ability to inspire both inside and outside the Beit Midrash

The Role Includes

- Delivering high-level shiurim
- Building strong relationships with talmidim and alumni
- Shaping the yeshiva's educational and spiritual direction
- Collaborating with a passionate and talented faculty team

📅 Accepting CVs through June 30, 2025
📧 Apply confidentially: jobs@eretzhatzvi.org
📝 Subject: Rosh Yeshiva Application
(We will only respond to relevant applications)

WE'RE BUILDING THE FUTURE OF TORAH. COME BUILD IT WITH US!

Defying the Impossible:
How Israel Proves the Experts Wrong

Rabbi Elie Mischel

The experts are adamant: Israel's aspirations are unrealistic. They insist that we must cave to our enemies' demands, that we will never be able to fully uproot Hamas, and that we must relinquish our presence in our biblical heartland of Judea and Samaria for the sake of peace. They speak with absolute certainty about what Israel cannot achieve.

We've seen this story play out before. In 1896, when Theodor Herzl published *The Jewish State* and launched the modern Zionist movement calling for the establishment of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel, the scornful reactions came fast and furious. The so-called experts mocked and dismissed his vision as an impossible dream.

The famed historian Simon Dubnow held that Herzl's Zionist project was "politically, socially, and economically" impossible. He believed that at most 1,000 people a year could move to the Holy Land, and so it would not help the millions of Jews suffering in Eastern Europe. He wrote, "Political Zionism is utopian by three: the dream to establish a Jewish State supported by international law, the dream to achieve the migration of a substantial element of the Jewish people to that State, and the dream to solve the problem of the entire Jewish people through the establishment of a Jewish state..." (Simon Dubnow, *Zionism, Demographic Realism and Wishful-Thinking: Public Letters on Ancient and Modern Judaism*, March 1898).

Asher Zvi Hirsch Ginsberg, known by his pen name Ahad HaAm, also dismissed Herzl's vision: "Only a fantasy bordering on madness can believe that so soon as the Jewish State is established millions of Jews will flock to it, and the land will afford them adequate sustenance... We must confess to ourselves that the 'ingathering of the exiles' is unattainable by natural means" (*The Jewish State and the Jewish Problem*, in *Ten Essays on Zionism and Judaism*, 1922).

Yet these brilliant experts were wrong. Everything they said could not happen – happened. Today, there are well over seven million Jews living in Israel. The Jewish state is a powerhouse – a global leader in technology and innovation, with one of the world's most powerful armies, a rapidly growing economy, and a population that grows more traditional and connected to G-d with each passing year.

How did these experts get it so wrong? Because they forgot the words of the Torah: "Behold I am Hashem, the G-d of all flesh. Is anything too wondrous for Me?" (*Yirmiyahu* 32:27).

The Malbim explains: "Hashem informed [Yirmiyahu] that although the city would now be destroyed and Israel would be sent into exile as the first among exiles, through personal providence to punish them for their sins, nevertheless His original plan would not change – the plan that determined the Land would be an inheritance for the children of Israel. This is necessary because He is the G-d of all flesh, through His overall governance that connects all generations through many cycles and combinations, 'and nothing is too wondrous for Me.'"

As the "G-d of all flesh," Hashem's providence extends across all generations, weaving together seemingly impossible circumstances to fulfill His promises. What seems utterly impossible to human eyes is simply another step in Hashem's master plan.

Somehow, the miraculous growth of the State of Israel did not convince the world that G-d is not bound by what is "realistic." In 1974, in the wake of the Yom Kippur War, Gush Emunim – a movement promoting Jewish settlement throughout Judea and Samaria – was established. At the time, most people, Jews and non-Jews alike, were very skeptical about whether it was realistic for Jews to settle Israel's biblical heartland.

Yaakov Sharett, son of Israel's second prime minister Moshe Sharett, said: "None of the settlers intend to really settle these territories. It's doubtful whether even one permanent settlement will result from this" (cited in Yigal Kenaan, *Mekor Rishon*, April 1, 2011). Today, well over 500,000 Jews live in Judea and Samaria – and the number is growing at a rate that is faster than the rest of Israel's Jewish population.

We are told that uprooting Hamas is not realistic, that annexing Judea and Samaria is unattainable, and that rebuilding the *Beit HaMikdash* is merely a fantasy. But we believe in a G-d Who fulfills His promises – and transforms the seemingly insurmountable into reality. "Is anything too difficult for Hashem?" (*Bereishit* 18:14). The answer then, as now, is clear: nothing stands beyond the reach of the G-d of Israel.

Scan here to purchase R' Mischel's book.

Rabbi Elie Mischel
is the Editor of HaMizrachi magazine and the author of *The War Against the Bible: Ishmael, Esau and Israel at the End Times* (2024), available by scanning the QR code above.

OLIM IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Growing up, everyone knew that my life's goal was to live in Israel. In 2022, while I was in seminary at MTVA. I finally accomplished my dream and made Aliyah!

Serving in Sherut Leumi was genuinely one of the best years of my life. I worked at the Variety Center in a Gan with babies. I did activities with them, played with toys and games, and gave them hugs. I watched them say their first words, take their first steps, and really helped their tremendous growth throughout the year.

My favorite moment that I really cherish was with one of the youngest babies. She hadn't begun walking yet, and we kept trying to encourage her. Then, one day, she stood up and took her first steps right into my arms. It is such a precious memory that I hold really close to my heart. After my year of Sherut Leumi, the war started and I began volunteering. I raised money, farmed, and did pretty much everything else I could. I now help run @binyaminsbbq, created in memory of Binyamin Airley z"l. It's truly the most rewarding feeling to go visit and feed these Chayalim who are so bravely serving our country.

I'm currently in my second year studying Communications in the "Digital Influence and Perception" track in Reichman's international school. I chose this program because it is something I am interested in and I felt most comfortable studying in English. We learn various subjects from Journalism and PR to creating videos from start to finish. I'm also on the @jlic.ru.herzliya board as the Head of Chessed. I organize events that bring everyone together in a meaningful way, from blood drives to tying Tzitzit for soldiers. It's the best community in the world, and I have the most incredible friends here!

The way our country has united and stayed together is something you cannot find anywhere else in the world. You feel it when you walk through the streets; we are all going through it together. The uplifting moments that follow the difficult times make it all worthwhile. I can't see myself living anywhere else."

Dahlia Mohl

"I came to Israel in August 2019 to study at Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya. After about a year, I made the decision to stay, officially make Aliyah and turn Israel into my new home. Little did I know, my life was about to change even more for the better when I met my soulmate on Corona Crush!

It all began with a Facebook post on the Corona Crush group in April 2020. Aaron's friend in Tel Aviv made him a surprise shidduch resume in anticipation of his eventual Aliyah to Israel. My friends saw it and immediately told me they had found my soulmate. Of course, I sent him a message. Like any sensible person, Aaron flew across the world to meet me, traveling from Brisbane, Australia, to Jerusalem, Israel, and enrolling at Shapell's Yeshiva. It was love at first sight! After a nearly 8-hour first date at Beer Bazaar, we both knew we had met our soulmates.

The road wasn't easy. The aftermath of the international lockdowns and the bureaucratic challenges of Aaron's Aliyah tested our patience.

In June 2022, Aaron proposed, and we got married in January 2023 at Gavna, surrounded by close friends, family, and the people who had become family through the Aliyah experience.

Today, Aaron and I live in the Baka neighborhood of Jerusalem with our two dogs and two cats. As we prepare to celebrate our second anniversary, I can't help but reflect on this incredible journey that brought us together!"

Andi Stein

FOR MORE ALIYAH TESTIMONIALS FOLLOW: @NEFESHBNEFESH

Fighting to Live:
Reexamining the Warsaw Ghetto Rebellion

Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Brody

In the early years of the State, many Israelis viewed the Warsaw Ghetto rebellion as exemplifying the model of a "new Jew," brave and fierce. The calendar date chosen to remember the *Shoah*, significantly called "Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day," was chosen because it was close to the date of the outbreak of the ghetto rebellion. Even then, however, some did not see the revolt as a model to emulate. The poet Natan Alterman, for example, argued that any quixotic mission which did not save lives was wrong because it deprived ghetto residents of any opportunity to survive, as others did in other locations. One might say, in fact, that this was the model of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai, the famed 1st-century Sage who surrendered to the Romans and revitalized Judaism in Yavneh, in contrast with the zealots who died in Jerusalem or Masada. Some eighty years later, it pays to examine the moral and *halachic* arguments made, then and now, to see what we can learn from this watershed moment.

In 1942, as Jews in the Land of Israel were trembling over the prospects of a Nazi invasion, three hundred thousand Jews in Warsaw were easily transported to death camps. Those that remained behind soon wondered whether they had acted foolishly – or even cowardly – to not resist these mass transports. Nonetheless, many ghetto leaders and residents, religious and secular alike, opposed any uprising as a hopeless act that would just hasten their deaths. Several asserted that it was better for Jews to die passively. A few prayed for miraculous salvation.

Ultimately, rebel supporters won the debate. On Passover Eve, 1943, some 700 ghetto residents launched an organized rebellion which lasted for 27 days. The strength of the rebellion took the Nazis by surprise, yet they quickly reinforced their troops to suppress the rebellion. The number of Jewish casualties was high: 7,000 Jews died fighting or in hiding in the ghetto; another 7,000 were captured by the SS and deported to the Treblinka killing camp; and another 42,000+ were later sent to camps or murdered. Given the high costs of the rebellion, was it justified?

Two of the few survivors later explained the logic of the rebellion: "Death was a given. How to live in the interim was not." In the ghetto, the Jewish Military Organization distributed a courageous flyer, boldly asserting, "Know that escape is not to be found by walking to your death passively, like sheep to the slaughter. It is to be found in something much greater: in war!" Besides invoking Jewish honor, the rebels further argued that an uprising would at least take vengeance on some Nazis and lead other Jews elsewhere to also stand up and rebel. Taken together, these factors should trump the normally preeminent value of preserving life.

Rabbi Menachem Zemba was the most senior rabbinic figure in the ghetto. In the fateful meeting in which the decision to rebel was taken, he reportedly argued that in times of old, Jews became martyrs by electing to die rather than convert. Now, however, when the Nazis seek to annihilate the Jewish people, the only way to sanctify G-d's name is to rise to arms and fight

to the death. He would be killed alongside the other residents of the ghetto.

After the Nazis torched and liquidated the ghetto, the Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper declared, "The Masada of Warsaw Has Fallen – The Nazis Have Set Fire to the Remnants of the Warsaw Ghetto." Zionist leaders exclaimed that the rebels glorified our people and "renewed the tradition of the Zealots of Jerusalem and Masada, the heroes of Bar-Kochba and other Jewish struggles."

Yet not everyone was so enamored with the rebellion. Rabbinic leaders of the non-Zionist Agudath Israel argued that this was an anti-religious decision which hastened the deaths of Warsaw's Jews and went against the traditional passive response to persecution. (Others would later deny that Rabbi Zemba could ever make such statements in support of the rebellion.) Even one of the great Religious Zionist leaders, Rabbi Moshe Tzvi Neriya, had a tempered response. The uprising was defendable, he asserted, because at that stage, when there was no hope to live, one should follow Samson's model of a suicide mission that kills as many enemies as possible. In that situation alone, it was a *kiddush Hashem* to fight and die, even as he wondered aloud whether more would have survived had the rebellion never taken place. Most significantly, he worried that the rebels were becoming dangerously idolized. Our will to exist is our source of honor. The greatest form of heroism is to survive in spite of the persecutions.

Rabbi Neriya is correct that there is something very dangerous about adulating patriotic "glorious deaths," since it may lead to unnecessary bloodshed. Why kill when you are bound to lose? Why die when you could live on? Generally speaking, one shouldn't fight, or continue fighting, a lost cause.

Yet there are times, as even Rabbi Neriya begrudgingly admits, when fighting to the bitter end is necessary to preserve national honor. In retrospect, we can see now that the Warsaw rebels were correct that their uprising would inspire Jews around the world to take up arms and defend themselves, during the Holocaust and afterward. As the Mizrachi leadership asserted in May 1943:

"From behind the Warsaw Ghetto's sealed walls rises the muffled cry of the Jewish remnant which fights for its life with wondrous, awe-inspiring bravery… The sublime holy war for their lives waged by the remnants of Polish Jewry sanctifies the divine name and the name of Israel in an alienated world that stands aloof, revealing the tremendous powers that once animated – and still animate – this proud Jewry."

In the short-term, perhaps a few more Jews died than would have otherwise. Or maybe they would have all perished in the death camps. It is impossible to know. But in the long run, the decision to "go down fighting" inspired many more Jews over the coming years to take the necessary actions to protect Jewish lives.

Good perspective on this question was provided a decade later by Rabbi Yechiel Ya'akov Weinberg who was sent to the Warsaw Ghetto but survived because he was interned alongside Russian prisoners of war. Rabbi Weinberg strongly chastised Zionist critics of European Jews who were taken passively, contending that these critics greatly underestimated the physical terror and psychological warfare done by the Nazis. He further lauded those who were killed after horrific suffering yet remained stalwart in their faith. At the same time, he saluted all of those brave fighters who somehow found the strength and fortitude to fight back, thereby restoring a sense of national honor.

This perspective avoids the excesses of Zionist bravado, exilic passivity, and Masada's suicidal resolution. While recognizing that Jewish martyrs over the centuries died for our holy religion, it reminds us that when all hope is lost, it's best to go down swinging. Yet perhaps after more than eight decades, we can recognize as well that the Warsaw Ghetto rebellion is not the ideal. As Rav Shlomo Goren would later argue regarding the story of Masada, *kiddush Hashem* must be achieved by life, not by death. As he put it, "The season of *kiddush Hashem* by death is finished."

Unfortunately, we've suffered many losses of those who died *al kiddush Hashem* since the State was founded and, most recently, since October 7th. Yet we should never lose perspective that our contemporary battles are not quixotic missions. We are now fighting to defeat our enemies – and to live. That change alone is a great *kiddush Hashem*.

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.

A member of the Mizrachi Speakers Bureau
mizrachi.org/speakers

The Glass Breaks, and We Dance:
Living with Loss and Joy in Israel

Jen Airley

Throughout the year, and especially on Yom HaAtzmaut, I find myself basking in the beauty, diversity, and relentless progress of our holy Land and its people. The determination, growth, resilience – it never ceases to amaze me. Yet, for the first 17 years of living in Israel, I felt undeserving of such a gift.

We just "showed up." We arrived on the wings of a dream, stepping onto a land built by the sweat and blood of others. Hundreds of thousands of people sacrificed, struggled, and fought to establish and defend this country. And we? We made *Aliyah* on a flying carpet they had woven. I felt indebted. I didn't have to fight for the mountain upon which we built our home. I didn't have to pay the price they paid. We were simply beneficiaries of their labor.

For years, our son Binyamin fought. He risked his life in the fields, in training, and on the front lines to protect this land. But it wasn't until November 18th, 2023, when he was killed defending *Am Yisrael*, that I fully understood how much he had been securing and sacrificing. It was then that I felt, in my bones, that we too had now given our own blood to this Land. It was then that I knew: I am no longer just a grateful recipient. I am a full-fledged Israeli. I have earned my *Teudat Zehut* with investment.

Every year on Yom HaZikaron, I would cry like a baby, mourning the sacrifices made so that we could live this miraculous dream. And every year, as Yom HaZikaron transitions into Yom HaAtzmaut, we, as a nation, shift from pain and loss to gratitude and celebration. We remember our fallen, and then we honor their sacrifice with joyous appreciation for the Land they fought for – and continue to fight for.

For me, that transition has never been easy. The shift from grief to joy takes time. The tears don't dry immediately. It always felt abrupt – like trying to flip an emotional switch when your heart hasn't caught up. But this year, I've been blessed with a new perspective. Just a few weeks ago, we celebrated the wedding of our son Yehudah. The *chuppah* was electric. Hundreds of people surrounded us, celebrating with all their hearts. It was pure, unfiltered joy.

And then, as is the custom, the music slowed and softened. "If I forget you, O Jerusalem." In that moment, under the *chuppah*, we didn't only mourn the destruction of Jerusalem and the *Beit HaMikdash*. We mourned our own loss. We mourned Binyamin. We mourned for all the broken families. A glass was placed beneath Yehudah's foot. He lifted his leg, and in an instant, the glass shattered – a reminder that our joy is never complete while Jerusalem remains in ruins, while redemption is incomplete.

But then – without missing a beat – the entire crowd erupted. Mazel Tov! The band struck up, the guests burst into song, and the dancing began. The sadness of a moment before transformed into pure, exuberant joy. A *bayit ne'eman b'Yisrael*, a new home in Israel, was being built.

How is it possible to move so quickly from sorrow to celebration? How do we, as a people, hold pain and joy in the same breath? Perhaps it's similar to how the holy ark contains both the shattered and intact tablets. They complete each other, and we need both.

We break the glass because we refuse to be joyous without remembering our losses. We observe Yom HaZikaron not weeks before or days later than Yom HaAtzmaut, but side by side. We cry, and then we dance. We mourn, and then we build. We plant with tears and reap with joy. *Hazor'im b'dim'ah, b'rinah yiktzoru*. They complete each other. They are inseparable. We are a relentlessly hopeful people, always striving for something so much greater.

There are two explanations for this. First, we must invest to appreciate. That's human nature. And this is the rhythm of our people. This is what it means to be Israeli. This is why we love our home so dearly! We would be a different nation and country if Israel had been handed to us on a silver platter. The same applies to the *Beit HaMikdash*. We need to exert our energies to improve as a people and individuals to rebuild Jerusalem and restore the *Beit HaMikdash* in all its glory. There is crying before the joy.

The second understanding is the concept of the birth pangs of the Redemption. We, the Airley family, like many others, have been chosen by Hashem to be an intricate part of the process.

The glass breaking under the *chuppah* and the explosion of joy that follows. The pain of losing a son and the overwhelming blessing of marrying off another. We recall the sacrifices on Yom HaZikaron and celebrate our independent, thriving State on Yom HaAtzmaut. It is all one story, the story of our nation. The story of those who fought before us, those who fight now, and those who will continue to build. We cry, and then we dance.

B'ezrat Hashem, we will one day join together in the ultimate celebration, with Hashem's Divine Presence illuminating and dwelling throughout our holy home of *Medinat Yisrael*.

Jen Airley
made Aliyah in 2006 to Bet Shemesh with her husband and children. When their son Binyamin was killed Nov.18, 2023 fighting in Gaza, she went from being an exercise physiologist and personal trainer to international speaker and ultimately founder of Beit Binyamin, a retreat center in Tzfat for those directly affected by the war. She can be reached through the website BeitBinyamin.org

MIZRACHI

EDUCATIONAL TOURISM

MISSIONS 2.0

HEALING & REBUILDING

Israel is healing and rebuilding, growing stronger than ever before! Mizrachi's Missions 2.0 are an opportunity to receive an injection of Jewish identity, Zionist pride and tangible hope for Israel's future.

COMMUNITY MISSIONS

Bring your community to Israel for an inspiring 3/4-day mission focusing on the future.

OPEN MISSIONS

Mizrachi invites individuals and family groups to a 3/4-day Israel trip – healing, rebuilding and hope.

SCHOOL MISSIONS

Bring your school to Israel with Mizrachi! Connect your students to Israel's heart, spirit and soul.

Coming to Israel with Mizrachi offers you the opportunity to live Torat Eretz Yisrael, meet inspirational speakers and visit places off the beaten track.

TO JOIN OR ORGANIZE A MISSION VISIT

MIZRACHI.ORG/MISSIONS

Yom HaAtzmaut:
Moderating Expectations and Restoring Our Story

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

We are in the middle of a war, and our nation is still suffering from the barbaric attack of October 7th. There are manifold layers of grief. 59 hostages are still held in Gaza by homicidal maniacs. Thousands of Israeli families are mourning heartbreaking losses. Thousands of our soldiers are recovering physically and healing emotionally from their war wounds. Tens of thousands of residents are still displaced from their homes, with no clear date for a return. We face military aggression, as well as a wave of rabid antisemitism.

Our future feels uncertain. Celebrating Israeli independence while ignoring or even momentarily setting aside our anguish is insensitive and callous. How can we approach Yom HaAtzmaut during a period of such mourning, hardship, and uncertainty? Perhaps this year, Yom HaAtzmaut should not only be a day of joyous celebration but also a time for historical reflection – pondering the meaning of Jewish sovereignty and how the war has reshaped our collective identity.

This Yom HaAtzmaut, we savor Jewish sovereignty more deeply than in the past, when we may have taken it for granted. October 7th demonstrated how vulnerable we continue to be, and how vital Israel is to our future security and survival. Jew-hatred isn't going anywhere, and, in the long term, no Jew is safe without a Jewish state. If anything, October 7th infuses this year's Yom HaAtzmaut with more profound meaning.

The first pogrom in history to be followed by a war

October 7th wasn't the first pogrom in history. It was, however, the first pogrom in history to be followed by a war. In the hours after the initial attack, soldiers, police, security teams, and ordinary citizens rallied to defend our country, thereby preventing a potentially apocalyptic catastrophe. In the months since, we have courageously waged a just and moral war to dismantle the murder machinery of our enemies.

We have doggedly persisted, even though much of the world cannot see through the smoke screen of hatred and antisemitism. Despite the swirling uncertainty, we remain strong and resilient. We will defend our country. We will defeat terror and eliminate the subhuman murderers who burned, raped, and mutilated. We will build a brighter future.

On Yom HaAtzmaut, affirm Jewish sovereignty and affirm our future.

Where was G-d?

Religiously, we continue to struggle with many vexing questions. How did this happen? How could G-d allow a sadistic attack on our people in our homeland? Weren't these grisly, horrific scenes relics of our tortured past in exile? How could our enemies weaponize the day of Shabbat and Simchat Torah against our people?

Intervals of confusion during which the hand of G-d isn't evident are called periods of *hester panim*. In exile, we endured thousands of years of the obscuring of G-d. We have just lived through a year-and-a-half of this murky obscurity.

However, our current period of divine concealment is very different from the past. Despite the darkness, we have repeatedly seen G-d's hand.

The tragedy of October 7th could have been much worse, had the genocidal plans of our enemies succeeded. Despite their attempts to ignite a regional war and ongoing tensions in the north, we did not become entangled in a more deadly and dangerous multi-front war. On the eve of October 7th, our society was badly fractured by a year of nasty and venomous social discord. Had this attack occurred a few months later, would we have been too badly splintered to mount a united defense?

Twice during the war, we faced a deadly barrage of Iranian ballistic missiles. After nights filled with fear and uncertainty, we awoke to quiet mornings, grateful for the technology that saved thousands of lives. Despite the hardships and losses of war, we struck a crushing blow against our enemies in the north.

Sometimes G-d's presence is visible in the big picture. Sometimes, though, the larger calculus doesn't make sense, but we can still discern His presence in the smaller details.

Moderating expectations

Yom HaAtzmaut should also be a time to step back and grasp the significance of our moment in Jewish history. Never before has an entire nation migrated from across the globe, returning to its ancient homeland. This extraordinary voyage is exactly what our enemies cannot comprehend. Their only reference point is the exploitative colonialism of the past. Our national pilgrimage back to Israel is a fulfillment of a divine promise delivered thousands of years ago. It is our historical destiny.

Viewing our return as a religious and historical destiny, though, can also trigger unrealistic and simplistic expectations. We haven't been warmly embraced by our neighbors, and local populations aren't just disappearing. Sadly, we still must convince much of our world of the need for a Jewish homeland.

This war has reminded us that our epic historical project may be slower and more complicated than we expected. Our historical undertaking will take much longer than anticipated and will not conform to our simplistic expectations.

Discovery

The war has revealed profound truths about our people – affirming our strengths and uncovering hidden depths. What we have learned should inspire hope for the future, offering clear answers to pressing questions about the resilience of this generation. How would a TikTok generation respond to adversity? How would a Start-Up Nation of prosperity react to hardship and sacrifice? Could our children match the courage and dedication of the pioneers?

Herzog College
Founded by Lifshitz College and Herzog College
Alon Shvut ▪ Jerusalem ▪ Migdal Oz

Master Tanakh

with a Master's Degree in Teaching Tanakh & Parshanut

- Learn online with international Tanakh experts from Herzog College in Israel
- Study in your own time plus join a two-week semester in Israel in July 2026 for Tanakh & Archaeology courses
- Courses include Sefer Shemot, David HaMelech, Yechezkel, Shivat Tzion, Hassidut, Parshanut, Ethics & Morals, Intrinsic Motivation, and Student-Centered Learning
- Earn an M.A. in 2 years at a special low price

Expert teaching faculty includes:

Rabbi Prof. Daniel Reiser

Dr. Yael Ziegler

Dr. Yosefa Fogel Wruble

Rabbi Dr. Shuky Reiss

Find out more at global.herzog.ac.il/MA
Deadline for applications: August 31st, 2025

The war has proven that love for our people and sacrifice for our land are woven into our national DNA regardless of ethnic, religious, or political divides. Our future is in good hands.

Restoration of our story

October 7th has also thrust unity upon us. Fighting for survival, we were forced to band together to stem the initial wave of violence and to launch our counterattack. We were drawn together by the urgency of the crisis, bound by shared grief and a collective determination to defend our people. Yet, as the immediate danger fades, so too can the bonds forged in its wake. Lasting unity cannot rest solely on fleeting moments of hardship; it must be anchored in a common story – one that transcends war and tragedy, weaving together our past, present, and future into a shared national destiny.

During the initial decades of our state, we shared a powerful, captivating, common story. Our nation was chosen to inspire humanity by living a moral and religious lifestyle. Our failures cast us into exile. After 2,000 years of roaming the wastelands of history, we suffered the worst crime ever perpetrated against humanity. In the wake of this national horror, we returned home, cobbled together a robust democracy, crafted a free-market economy, and absorbed Jews from across the planet, while facing unending violence.

As Israel became successful, our story began to fade. The memory of the Holocaust gradually dimmed, as did our story. This war has resurrected our common story. We may have forgotten our story, but our enemies certainly haven't, and they never fail to remind us. This war has reopened the book of Jewish history. We are living through a crucial chapter in that book.

An international community

The war has also strengthened the bonds of our international family. Fanatical antisemitism has reminded Jews around the world just how critical Israel is to their survival. The Jewish international community provided our people with billions of shekels of aid, loving emotional support, and crucial political backing. More important than the financial aid and support that Jews across the world mobilized was the way October 7th stirred and fortified Jewish identity across the globe.

This year, Yom HaAtzmaut is more than a day of celebration. Amid the shadow of war, it must also be a day of gratitude for our resilience, introspection on our journey, and hope for the dawn that will follow these trials.

● *Adapted from Dark Clouds Above, Faith Below vol. II*

Rabbi Moshe Taragin
is a rabbi at the hesder Yeshivat Har Etzion/Gush. He was ordained by YU and has an English literature MA from CUNY. He is a weekly columnist for the Jerusalem Post and for the OU's Torah Tidbits. His most recent books include: "Reclaiming Redemption": Deciphering the Maze of Jewish History (Mosaica Press), and "To be Holy, but Human": Reflections Upon My Rebbe, HaRav Yehuda Amital are available in bookstores and at www.mtaraginbooks.com

A member of the Mizrachi Speakers Bureau
mizrachi.org/speakers

A Broom, A Flag, and A Prayer

Rabbi Leonard Matanky

In his commentary to the Talmud Yerushalmi (*Sheviit* 4:7), *Alei Tamar*, Rabbi Yissachar Tamar tells the fascinating and inspiring story of the third Sadigura Rebbe, Rabbi Avraham Yaakov Friedman *zt"l*.

Every year on Yom HaAtzmaut, the Sadigura Rebbe would visit the Great Synagogue of Tel Aviv to *daven* and recite *Hallel*. When celebrants filled the streets with dancing, he joined with remarkable fervor, his joyful participation making clear that this day was deeply meaningful to him. This was a striking scene, particularly for a distinguished member of *Moetzet Gedolei Torah* of Agudath Israel!

Once, one of his *chassidim* mustered the courage to ask his Rebbe about this Yom HaAtzmaut custom. The Sadigura Rebbe told him that in 1938, during the Anschluss, the Nazis entered Vienna. Their first move was to abuse and degrade the Jews, and as the rabbi of the Jewish community, they chose him to sweep the streets of Vienna. As he did that work, he prayed: "Master of the Universe, may it be Thy will that I merit to take a broom and sweep the streets of *Eretz Yisrael*."

Next, they shoved a Nazi flag into his hands and made him climb to the top of a tall building and place their swastika atop the roof. As he climbed, he turned to the Creator and said: "Master of the Universe, may it be Thy will that one day I merit to wave the flag of Israel from a high place in the Land of Israel."

When he made *Aliyah*, the Rebbe wanted to fulfill his promise but knew it was improper for him to be seen sweeping the streets of Tel Aviv in front of everyone. So, every Yom HaAtzmaut morning, he would wake up at 3:00am, and before people were on the street, he would take a large broom and sweep the street in front of his home. Next, he would take an Israeli flag and put it on the roof of his building. Only then would he go to the Great Synagogue to pray and dance in thanks to G-d for accepting his prayers.

The past year-and-a-half has been the most difficult period since the days of the Sadigura Rebbe in Europe. Yet, it has also been a time of unshaken faith and relentless prayer. Just as the Rebbe once poured his heart into prayer and quiet acts of devotion, so too has our nation stood firm – resilient and determined, faithful and unwavering, bold and enduring. In the face of hardship, we have not faltered; we have only deepened our resolve.

Just as then, we have been inspired by the stories of faith from those who were held captive, the acts of bravery from those who defended our land, and the *chesed* from so many who supported those in need, those in pain, and those who mourned.

On Yom HaAtzmaut, we sing *David HaMelech*'s words and proclaim that "this is the day that G-d has made; we will rejoice (*nagila*) and delight (*v'nismecha*) in Him." According to the Malbim, there is a difference between these two expressions of joy. *Nagila* refers to the initial burst of joy, while *simcha* is the joy that continues to exist every day afterward.

Seventy-seven years ago, our people were blessed with a miracle – the founding of the State of Israel. It was a day we had hoped for and dreamed of for two thousand years – the *nagila* of Jewish history. And for every year since, we have danced and rejoiced – and that *simcha* will continue forever because we are a nation that has always seen goodness despite the darkness, hope despite despair, and strength despite the struggle.

Many years ago, the Sadigura Rebbe danced and cleaned the streets of our sacred land, and for many years to come, we will continue to dance and build the streets, the land, and the nation of Israel – "עד ביאת גואל צדק, until the righteous redeemer arrives."

Rabbi Leonard Matanky
is a member of the board of trustees and a past co-president of the Religious Zionists of America, Rabbi of Congregation K.I.N.S. of West Rogers Park and Dean of Ida Crown Jewish Academy.

MIZRACHI

HaMizrachi

הַמִּזְרָחִי

PARSHA WEEKLY

Your weekly dose of

- PARASHA
- HAFTARAH
- INSPIRATION
- HALACHIC Q&A
- PIRKEI AVOT
- STORIES
- RIDDLES
- ISRAEL CONTENT

Rabbi Hershel **Schachter** | Rabbi Yisroel **Reisman** | Rabbi Jonathan **Sacks** zt"l | Rabbi Yosef Zvi **Rimon** | Rabbi Doron **Perez**

Rabbanit Shani **Taragin** | Sivan **Rahav Meir** | Michal **Horowitz** | Rabbanit Yemima **Mizrachi** | Rabbanit Sharon **Rimon**

Rabbi YY **Jacobson** | Rabbi Eli **Mansour** | Rabbi Moshe **Weinberger** | Rabbi Menachem **Leibtag**

Rabbi Reuven **Taragin** | Rabbi Danny **Mirvis** | Rabbi Shalom **Rosner** | Rabbi Judah **Mischel** | David **Curwin**

EASILY PRINTABLE FOR YOU TO ENJOY AND SHARE WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Sign up to receive HaMizrachi Parasha Weekly direct to your inbox, or register your shul, school or organization as partners in this exciting project, at **mizrachi.org/hamizrachiweekly**

For advertising or dedication opportunities, please email hamizrachiweekly@mizrachi.org

ALSO AVAILABLE IN SPANISH!

¡TAMBIÉN DISPONIBLE EN ESPAÑOL!

FIND IT ONLINE: MIZRACHI.ORG/HAMIZRACHIWEEKLY/ES

Rebuilding Am Yisrael: Love, Loss, and Our Future

Aleeza Ben Shalom

Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut stand side by side, a stark reminder of the delicate balance between sorrow and hope, between loss and rebuilding. One day, we bow our heads, remembering the soldiers and civilians who gave everything for *Am Yisrael*. The next, we lift our heads in gratitude, celebrating the miracle of our homeland.

This year, the pain is fresh. Families are reeling. Children are asking when their fathers are coming home. Homes that once held laughter now carry a silence that weighs heavy. The loss is ongoing, and there are no quick fixes. We are in the middle of it, holding grief in one hand and the responsibility to move forward in the other.

A future built on connection

In times like these, it would be easy to focus only on what we have lost. But *Am Yisrael* has never been a people who stop at loss. We mourn, we cry, we remember – but we also build. And one of the greatest ways we build is through connection. Through supporting each other. Through helping the lonely find companionship, through strengthening homes, and through encouraging those who have lost so much to keep their hearts open to the possibility of joy.

Right now, for many, it is too soon. We don't rush grief, and we don't push people forward before they are ready. But we also know that this is our path forward. The rebuilding of *Am Yisrael* starts in the home – with strong marriages, with children growing up surrounded by love, with families that carry on the legacy of those we have lost.

This is not just an abstract idea. Think of the generations before us who rebuilt after tragedy. After the Shoah, survivors who had lost everything found the strength to marry and raise families. They didn't forget, and they didn't move on – they carried their losses with them while choosing to create something new. That is the strength of *Am Yisrael*. We hold onto the past, but we don't let it stop us from moving toward the future.

Our role in the process

So what can we do now? How do we take this deep, raw pain and channel it into something meaningful?

1. **For all of us – be there for those who are grieving**. This is not the time to push, to encourage, or to tell someone that "life goes on." Right now, they need space to mourn. But they also need people around them who won't let them fall into despair. A warm meal, a listening ear, a hand to hold – these small things matter more than we can imagine.
2. **For those who are single – know that your journey to finding your person isn't just personal – it's part of something bigger**. Building a Jewish home is not just about two people falling in love. It's about creating the future of *Am Yisrael*. Now more than ever, we need strong marriages. We need families filled with love, joy, and connection. Every new home strengthens us as a nation.
3. **For those who are married – help others**. Suggest a match, be a source of encouragement, open your home to those who need warmth. If you see someone struggling, remind them they are not alone. Make introductions. Offer to mentor someone who is navigating dating. Be the person who supports others in their journey toward finding love.
4. **For all of us – hold onto hope**. The grief is overwhelming, but we don't stay in the darkness. We look for the light. We look for the moments of connection, the stories of resilience, the people who are choosing to rebuild.

The path forward

We don't have all the answers. We don't know when the pain will ease or when rebuilding will feel possible. But what we do know is this: We are *Am Yisrael*. We have always found a way forward. And when the time is right, we will continue to build homes, families, and a future filled with love.

We owe it to those we lost. We owe it to the children who are growing up without parents. We owe it to ourselves.

This Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut, we stand in the space between heartbreak and hope. And from that space, we commit to the future. To life. To love. To rebuilding, one match at a time.

● *Originally published on Aish.com*

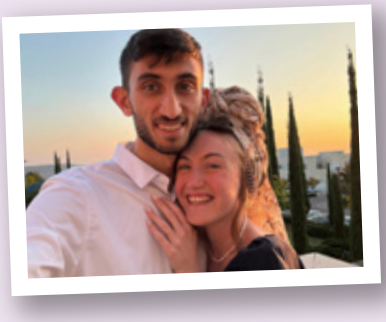
Aleeza Ben Shalom
is a soulmate clarity coach, she was on Netflix's "Jewish Matchmaking" and is an in-demand speaker, expert, and author of numerous books. She leads the Jewish Matchmaking Movement, in partnership with World Mizrachi.

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

MIZRACHI

SHAGRIRIM BALEV

Friends Setting Up Friends



Our Couples: Introducing Hadas & Yisrael Salman

Where was your first date?
At Givat Hatitora in Modi'in, with an outdoor coffee setup and a guitar.

Dating tip:
First of all, be yourselves! Also, don't go bowling or to a restaurant for a first date. Instead, choose a beautiful, peaceful place where you can talk and get to know each other naturally. Another important tip – don't leave the other person waiting for a response after the date. If you had a great time, say so right away! Be direct: "That was really fun, and I'd love to go out again" (assuming you do!). And most importantly – try to enjoy the process

Why is it worth joining the Shagririm Balev database?
First, just look at the success stories–Baruch Hashem! Second, you have an **ambassador who knows you personally, looks out for you, and carefully searches for the right match**. This means more relevant suggestions, full discretion (candidates aren't publicly visible to each other), and no overwhelming flood of profiles – your ambassador sends you one carefully chosen candidate at a time.

What did you learn from the search process?
The most important thing is to believe and trust in Hashem. Keep an open mind, and remember that even dates that don't work out bring you closer to the right person. Each experience helps clarify what truly matters to you. The whole journey is one big lesson

A funny story from one of your dates:
On one of our dates, about six months after we met, Yisrael accidentally slammed his car door on himself. I had no idea what to do! Luckily, we were near my grandparents' house, so at midnight, we knocked on my grandmother's door for help. She took care of Yisrael and brought him ice packs. Everyone reassured us it would heal before the wedding – and thankfully, it did!

Who are the ambassadors who set you up?
Efrat Sharabi and Roei Waltz – good friends of ours.

371 total engagements

602 candidates dating now

Want to join? Want to bring it to your community?

Message: +972 58-532-3242
Email: shagririmbalev@gmail.com
Visit: en.shagririm.org.il

הַמִּזְרָחִי HAMIZRACHI

ALSO AVAILABLE ONLINE!

Your favorite articles
are available
to read and share online at
mizrachi.org/hamizrachi

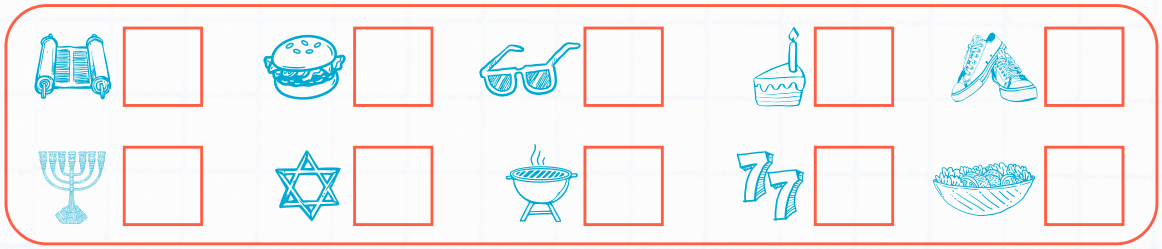
הַמִּזְרָחִי
HAMIZRACHI
KIDS CORNER

COMPILED BY: JACQUI AUSTEN
DESIGNED BY: LEAH RUBIN

I SPY YOM HA'ATZMAUT

How many of each Yom HaAtzmaut object can you find?

If you counted correctly, each row of picures will total 77!



MEET HANNAH G. SOLOMON

January 14, 1858 - December 7, 1942 (28 Tevet 5618 - 28 Kislev 5703)

Founder of the National Council of Jewish Women

Hannah, one of ten children born to Michael and Sarah Greenebaum, grew up in Chicago. From a young age she was politically aware and when she was eighteen, she joined the Chicago Women's Club. After a few years she decided to establish a similar organization but one that would focus on the Jewish community. In 1893 she was chosen to organize a congress of Jewish women for a major event. She handwrote letters to ninety women inviting them to come and eventually establish the National Council of Jewish Women, the first organization of Jewish women in the US. The organization promoted gender equality, education for children, and aid for the vulnerable and poor. Among the many incredible efforts that this organization promoted was the council's absorption of thousands of Jewish refugees who arrived due to the pogroms in Russia. They created workshops for women to learn to work and make money to help support their families. At a time when women did not have the right to vote, women's organizations like them were the first to promote laws that prevented discrimination against women and children. Her organization made major impacts on the world and is still active today.

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

DID YOU KNOW?

- Israel has the most museums per capita in the world!
- Hebrew is the ONLY language that has been brought back after it went extinct!
- Rummikub was invented in Israel by Ephraim Hertzano.

Test Your Knowledge

What year was the Balfour Declaration?

What was "Operation Magic Carpet"?

How many beaches does Israel have?

Look for the answers in the Parshat Tazria-Metzora Youth Edition – see below for more details!

WEEKLY PARSHA FOR YOUTH!

HaMizrachi Weekly Youth Edition & Chavruta

Featuring Thought-Provoking Questions, Fun Activities, and Fascinating Insights!

Scan the QR code or visit mizrachi.org/youth to learn more.

ISRAEL SCATTERGORIES

Can you think of corresponding words for each letter?

I	S	R	A	E	L
1. A bird						
2. A plant						
3. A color						
4. A song						

בס"ד

JERUSALEM COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY

יום העצמאות שמח!

DREAMING OF AN ACADEMIC
DEGREE IN ENGLISH IN ISRAEL?

DISCOVER JERUSALEM COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY TODAY!

HERE ARE THE TOP 5 REASONS WHY!

01

Vibrant Men's And Women's Campuses

offer a unique combination of superior academic degree programs alongside enriching Torah study.

Rabbi Shalom Rosner
Rosh Beit Midrash
International Program

Religious Environment

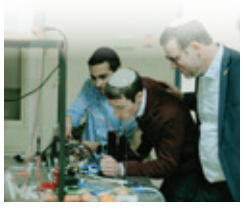
Enjoy a prestigious degree, alongside frum students from around the globe **at an affordable price!**

02

03

Top 3

JCT is renowned for being one of the top 3 engineering schools in the country.



100+ Start-Ups

have been created by JCT alumni and faculty members.

Leaders in workplace integration

04

05

#1 Nursing School

JCT's Selma Jelinek School of Nursing is rated #1 in Israel.

Want to learn more?

Contact us at esp@jct.ac.il