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who was fully devoted to Eretz Yisrael, Am Yisrael and Torat Yisrael



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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.

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Zionism 2.0:

From Security-Based Zionism to Spiritual Zionism

Rabbi Doron Perez

The rebirth of Jewish statehood through political Zionism stands as one of the most remarkable historic achievements of the modern era.

Despite this remarkable achievement, only one country – Israel, of all 200 or so countries in the world today – still has to fight continuously for its very legitimacy. Only the one Jewish state and Jewish communities around the globe face systemic demonization campaigns that have become daily security threats.

Why? Why is there no global delegitimization campaign against either India or Pakistan, despite the large disputed area of Kashmir, where more people have been killed than in the entire Arab-Israeli conflict – and despite the fact that both were founded at the same time as Israel, with much bloodshed and population transfers? Not to mention Western Sahara's disputed territory with Morocco or Northern Cyprus' occupation by Turkey, to name a few.

Why, in a world of 50 Islamic-majority states and almost 100 Christian ones, is the desire of the Jewish people to have just one state of its own in its ancestral homeland seen as racist or exclusionary – worthy of degradation and demonization?

Perhaps the challenge of irrational antisemitism in its current iteration of anti-Zionism contains the key to a great opportunity for the future of Israel. Perhaps today's turmoil can birth a new era of Zionism – a shift from security-based secular Zionism to a spiritually based,

mission-driven one. Evolving from a desire for “normalization” to embracing the distinctiveness and spiritual nature of Jewish life and statehood.

Zionism 1.0 – Herzl's state of refuge

Herzl prophetically predicted in his diary entry at the inaugural World Zionist Congress in 1897 that a Jewish state would be founded within 50 years. Remarkably, almost exactly half a century later in 1948, a sovereign Jewish state was established, and has been going strong for almost 80 years, with half the world's Jews living there and functioning as an impressive first-world country and regional superpower.

As accurate as Herzl's prediction about the timing of Jewish statehood was, he was equally wrong about another. Herzl articulates clearly in his influential 1896 publication *Der Judenstaat* – The Jewish State – that Zionism would be a winning solution to the virulent antisemitism of his time, the “Jewish question” of prejudice and persecution, as it was termed in the 19th century. His solution was straightforward: establish a Jewish state that would serve as a safe refuge for the Jewish collective, a place where Jews could finally live among their own, be accepted as equals, and achieve “normalization,” safety, and security like all other nations.

Totally logical and rational. Totally wrong.

Israel has barely had a single safe and normal day in its 78 years of existence. The day after it was founded, the one-day-old state was attacked by seven neighboring

armies. Over the following 25 years, it fought three regional wars against neighbors determined to destroy it. In 1979, Israel finally achieved peace with Egypt – its largest and most dangerous neighbor – only for that same year to bring the Islamic revolution in Iran, whose regime has been plotting Israel's destruction ever since, despite having no territorial disputes with Israel and no geopolitical grievances against it.

Despite multiple attempts at peaceful coexistence with the Palestinians – the Oslo Accords and the Gaza Disengagement – Israel continued to face deadly terror attacks on a daily basis, intifadas, and missile barrages from Gaza, along with flat-out Palestinian and radical Islamic rejectionism of any Jewish state anywhere between the river and the sea.

No matter what Israel has done, “normalization” – feeling safe and secure within our borders in Israel and within Jewish communities around the globe – remains mysteriously elusive. Almost without fail, every Jewish community institution around the globe faces ongoing threats.

If there was any doubt about this before October 7th, there is none today. As the war against Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Ayatollah's Iranian regime continues now for two-and-a-half years, the virus of antisemitism in its modern incarnation of anti-Zionism has broken out around the world like a contagion – no longer hatred of Judaism or the Jewish people, but now of Israel and Jewish statehood, plain and simple. As Israel battles to secure itself against the annihilationist threats of a

potentially nuclear Iran, voices from the liberal left and now the MAGA right are joining in the delegitimization of Israel's very right to exist and defend itself.

If in the 1930s, at a time of Jewish statelessness, antisemites shouted "Jews, get out of Germany and go to Palestine where you came from," astoundingly, today's antisemites shout "Jews, get out of Palestine and go back to where you came from."

Despite being a regional superpower, the safety and security of Israel and Jewish communities around the world remain threatened. It is difficult to escape a sense of uncertainty and vulnerability about the Jewish condition.

Crises, though, always beget an opportunity for reevaluation and renewal.

From political opposition to spiritual opportunity

I believe that the great challenge of vitriolic opposition to Jewish statehood in Israel presents a remarkable opportunity – to dig deeper into the historic mission of Jewish statehood. The answer to this conundrum does not lie in the area of geopolitics alone, but is rooted in the realm of metaphysics, in the very uniqueness of Jewish destiny.

There is nothing normal about Jewish existence, and there never has been. No other people has survived the collapse of every empire that exiled them, or thrived under conditions that would have erased any other nation. The standard categories simply don't fit: Jews are not merely a religion, nor merely an ethnicity, nor merely a nation, but a singular combination of all of these, bound to a specific land and charged with a universal mission. Any attempt to reduce Jewish or Zionist identity to just one of these elements – stripping away the spiritual core – misses the very essence of what the Jewish people are and what they are here to do.

Through the prism of spiritual Zionism, it is critical to acknowledge that Zionism did not begin with Herzl, or even with bygone eras of Jewish history. Rather, it began with the very first Jew, Avraham – with G-d's very first interaction with him. The verses describing this encounter capture the very essence and beauty of this unique and complex spiritual mission, and the centrality of Israel to its success: "Hashem said to Avram, 'Go forth from your country, your birthplace and your father's household to the Land that I will show you. I will

make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you'" (*Bereishit* 12:1-3).

It is telling that in G-d's first conversation with the very first Jew, he is commanded to journey to a land – and there to become a great nation whose purpose extends beyond itself, to be a source of blessing to all humanity. That is the source of both Judaism and Zionism. That is the mission. That is spiritual Zionism.

Perhaps it is time now for Zionism to evolve from a primarily secular, security-based political framework toward a spiritually rooted Jewish society – one that reflects the deeper purpose of this Jewish mission. Not, Heaven forbid, through any religious coercion, but through spiritual inclusiveness in the true sense of the pleasant and sweet paths of the Torah (*Mishlei* 17:3).

A spiritually-based Zionism does not reject the remarkable achievements of secular Zionism; rather, it embraces them as part of a process of spiritual renewal – first a physical redemption, followed by a spiritual one, a complementary integrated whole. Yechezkel clearly articulates this dual process: "For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you" (*Yechezkel* 36:24-26).

The physical return and rebuilding of the Land is part of a larger spiritual revival. Once the foundations of statehood are secured, the deeper spiritual soul of the nation will gradually reawaken.

The War of Rebirth

Perhaps this is the greatest opportunity of this war since October 7th, aptly named by the government *Milchemet HaTekuma*, the War of Rebirth, or Renewal.

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook emphasized in 1920 how the Zionist endeavor must become not merely a refuge or a political structure but a vessel for the unfolding of Jewish spiritual destiny: "The renewal of our people must be a complete renewal – of the body and the soul, of the secular and the sacred. Furthermore, the

purpose of secular national renewal is only to bring us the renewal of the soul, the renewal of the sacred."¹

This edition of *HaMizrachi* is dedicated to exploring the spiritual roots and vision of Zionism.

The founders of political Zionism accomplished the extraordinary task of restoring Jewish sovereignty. The challenge of the present generation is different. It is to infuse that sovereignty with the spiritual depth, ethical vision, and covenantal consciousness that have always defined the Jewish people. In doing so, Zionism will evolve from a movement of national survival into a project of spiritual renewal.

Fascinatingly, Herzl himself intuited that political Zionism is inherently linked to a spiritual destiny. It is exactly on this note that he concludes his 1902 utopian novel *Altneuland*. The different characters in Herzl's imagined future state each express what they feel is the driving force of the new sovereign entity – be it suffering, technology, knowledge, or willpower, among other suggestions. After each has given their view, the book ends with the words of the final protagonist, Rabbi Shmuel: "But the venerable Rabbi Shmuel arose and proclaimed: G-d."²

1. Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook, *Ma'amrei Hare'aya* 336, "Renewal of the Sacred – a Complete Renewal".
2. Herzl is referring here to one of two Rabbi Shmuels whom he knew well and worked closely with: Rabbi Shmuel Mohliver, founder of the Mizrachi branch of Chibbat Tzion, or Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz, one of the founders and leaders of the Mizrachi of Rabbi Reines.



Rabbi Doron Perez
is the Executive Chairman
of World Mizrachi.

Mizrachi Secures Millions in Emergency Wartime Funding



Photo: Yeshivat Lev HaTorah

As the war continues to impact travel out of Israel, World Mizrachi has helped secure 5 million shekels to assist hundreds of *yeshiva* and seminary students participating in MASA programs who were planning to fly home for the Pesach holiday. Half the grant will be provided by Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael (KKL) together with the Jewish Agency, with a matching amount from the Israeli government.

The funding was secured through the initiative of Roi Abecassis, Deputy Chair of KKL and World Mizrachi representative to the National Institutions, in response to many requests from program administrators and students. In typical years, large numbers of students leave Israel for the Pesach holiday when their programs close or dorm facilities are unavailable for student use. The funding will be specifically allocated to ensure the programs and dorms remain open in dozens of different *yeshivot* and seminaries alongside ongoing academic and social programming.

Mr. Abecassis explained, "As soon as we appreciated the extent of the crisis where hundreds of students will remain in Israel during a time when they would typically be on vacation and not in a supervised structure, we knew we needed to find a solution. We are deeply grateful that KKL, together with our partners, recognized the nature of the challenge and are providing

this critical funding to continue to operate during these difficult times."

World Mizrachi CEO Rabbi Danny Mirvis added, "Thanks to the close and quick coordination of our partners in the National Institutions, we were able to successfully turn the fact that hundreds of foreign students are unable to travel out of Israel due to the war into an opportunity to provide them with practical support alongside additional educational programming that we know can make this period even more meaningful and productive."

In a statement, the organization expressed their gratitude to KKL, chaired by Eyal Ostrinsky, as well as MASA, the Jewish Agency and the Government of Israel for their partnership to ensure a coordinated response for the student community.

World Mizrachi also announced they will be providing over 800,000 NIS in grants to 400 married students currently enrolled in dozens of Hesder *yeshivot* across Israel. The Hesder program is a specialized track in which Israeli men integrate high-level Torah study with active-duty military service.

The grants were made possible through the generosity of the Lamm family of Melbourne, Australia, and a dedicated circle of friends. The initiative was established to express profound



Roi Abecassis, Deputy Chair of KKL and World Mizrachi representative to the National Institutions

gratitude to the community of scholars who balance intensive high-level Torah study with the rigors of military service.

Rabbi Mirvis commented: "Particularly during this time of profound security challenges, as our people fight to defend our nation, World Mizrachi is deeply proud to stand with the Hesder Yeshiva community. Through the remarkable kindness and vision of the Lamm family and their partners, we are privileged to support these individuals who prove, through their daily lives, that deep spiritual devotion and the physical defense of our Land go hand in hand."

He added, "We hope these funds provide these heroes and their families with a sense of relief and joy this Pesach, honoring the personal sacrifices they continue to make in service of the country."



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Is it Permitted to Stand for the Siren on Yom HaZikaron?

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

On Yom HaShoah and Yom HaZikaron, we observe various mourning practices – lighting a *ner neshama*, reciting *Yizkor*, and others. One of the most prominent customs, uniting vast portions of the Jewish people, is standing for the siren.

But is it actually permitted?

In various countries – England and the Netherlands among them – it was once common to sound a siren or ring bells on memorial days, though this practice has largely fallen out of use. In the early years of the State of Israel, this custom was adopted and incorporated into Yom HaZikaron observance.

The Torah, however, forbids following the practices of non-Jews and imitating their ways: “You shall not follow the practices of the land of Egypt where you lived, nor the practices of the land of Canaan to which I am bringing you; you shall not follow their laws (*chukim*)” (*Vayikra* 18:3). The question must therefore be asked: does adopting the practice of standing for the siren from non-Jews constitute a violation of *chukot hagoyim*, the Torah prohibition against imitating non-Jewish practices?

Several *sugyot* indicate that when one follows a non-Jewish practice not out of a desire to imitate them, but for other reasons, it is permitted. The *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 52b), for instance, permits burning the bed and personal effects of a deceased king. Even though non-Jews do the same, there is no issue of *chukot hagoyim*, since we do it to give honor, not out of a desire to imitate their custom. From this, the Ran (*Sanhedrin* ad loc.; *Avodah Zarah* 2b) derives that the prohibition of *chukot hagoyim* applies only to things of *hevel u-vatalah*, “meaningless vanity,” but things that have a rational purpose are not prohibited. So rules the Rema (*YD* 178:1).

A further example: the *Gemara* (*Sotah* 49b) prohibits cutting one’s hair in the *komi* style – shaving the front of the head while growing a long lock in the back – yet permits someone close to the royal court to do so if necessary. If this is a Torah prohibition, how could the rabbis permit it? The Bach (*YD* 178:7) explains that *chukot hagoyim* is only violated when one intends to imitate non-Jews. Someone who does so to avoid disgrace or for a communal need – such as maintaining access to the royal court – is permitted to act accordingly.

Based on these *sugyot*, the Maharik (*She’elot u-Teshuvot Maharik, siman* 88) rules that *chukot hagoyim* is only violated in one of two ways: (a) an act performed with no logic or explanation, such that one can reasonably assume it originates in *avodah zarah*; or (b) an act that involves *peritzut* (licentiousness).

The Rema rules accordingly (*ibid.*): “All of this is only prohibited in something that non-Jews practice out of *peritzut* – such as wearing red garments – or in something practiced as a custom or decree with no rational basis, where there is concern of *darchei ha-Emori* and a trace of *avodah zarah* inherited from their ancestors. But something practiced for a useful purpose – such as a distinctive garment identifying an expert physician – is permitted to wear. Similarly, something done out of honor or another legitimate reason is permitted.”

It is therefore clearly permitted to stand for the siren. Standing for the siren was not instituted out of *peritzut*, nor as part of *avodah zarah*, and it is not done in order to imitate non-Jews. On the contrary – it is a beautiful practice that unites the Jewish people around those who gave their lives *al kiddush Hashem*, and honors the memory of the murdered and the fallen.

Rav Zvi Yehuda Kook writes regarding standing for the siren on Yom HaZikaron:

“Standing during the siren for the fallen of *Tzahal* is a holy *mitzvah* of honoring the memory of the *kedoshim*” (*Techumin* 3:388).

There may even be a hint in the Torah to this shared silent standing. When Aharon’s sons died, Aharon responded with silence: “*Vayidom Aharon* – and Aharon was silent” (*Vayikra* 10:3). Sometimes the appropriate response to mourning and grief over death is precisely silence and *kabbalat ha-din* – acceptance of Divine judgment. “And a still, small voice shall be heard” (*Mussaf for Yamim Nora’im*).

We do not understand the judgments of the Almighty. We cannot comprehend why the finest young men were killed in battle, and certainly not why millions of our people were murdered in the *Shoah*. Standing in silence in their honor is not an absence of speech – it is a silence that expresses *kabbalat ha-din*, connection to all the murdered and fallen, the shared bond of *Knesset Yisrael* as a whole, and *emunah* in the Almighty, Who is the source of our strength even in hours of bereavement and crisis.



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

is the Nasi of World Mizrahi.

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

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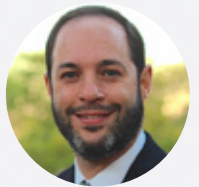
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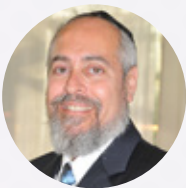
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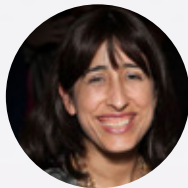
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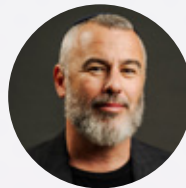
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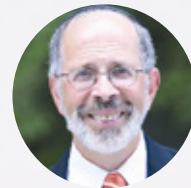
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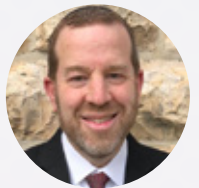
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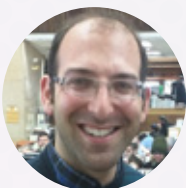
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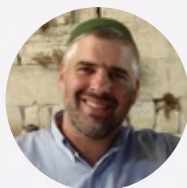
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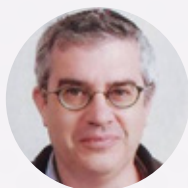
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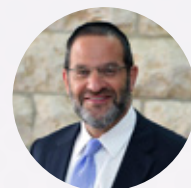
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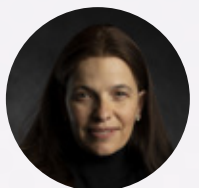
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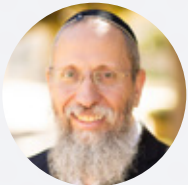
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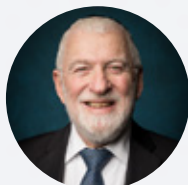
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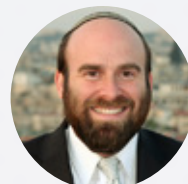
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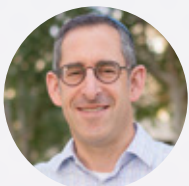
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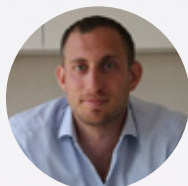
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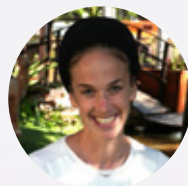
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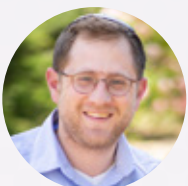
Rabbanit Shira Melamed
UK



Rabbi Danny Mirvis
UK



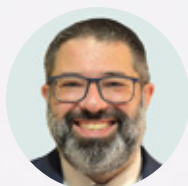
Rabbi Aviad Tabory
Kemp Mill Synagogue, MD



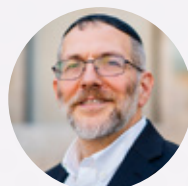
Rabbi Bentzi Mann
UK



Rabbi Eli Reich
East Denver Orthodox Synagogue, CO



Rabbi Johnny Solomon
Kingsway Jewish Center, NY



Rabbi Binyamin Zimmerman
UK



המרכז
לשליחות
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לתפוצות



קרן קימת לישראל
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מכון תורני לנשים על שם שרה בת יצחק יעקב רעננערט
The Sadie Rennert Women's Institute for Torah Studies

The Power of Commitment: Learning Torah in Jerusalem This Summer

For decades, **Matan: The Sadie Rennert Women's Institute for Torah Studies**, has been at the forefront of advancing women's Torah learning and leadership. Thirty years ago, it launched one of its most popular community learning initiatives – the annual **Matan Summer Learn & Tour Program**, which draws participants, both men and women, from Israel, the US and beyond, for an intensive three weeks of study in Jerusalem combined with touring the country.

The program brings together high-level Tanakh study, dynamic lectures and fascinating weekly tours. Participants discover how the biblical texts illuminate the questions and realities of contemporary Jewish life. It offers a unique opportunity to engage deeply with **Torat Eretz Yisrael in Medinat Yisrael**, studying and experiencing Tanakh in the very landscape in which its stories unfolded.

For many participants, the program is an opportunity to step away from the pace of daily life and enter a vibrant and inspiring world of Torah learning, thoughtful discussion, and spiritual exploration, guided by some of Israel's leading Torah scholars.

The summer program will run from **Sunday, June 28 – Thursday, July 16**. Participants are invited to join for the full three weeks, a single week, a day or even an individual shiur. (The schedule will be adapted as needed, in accordance with all safety guidelines.) This year's theme, ***The Power of Commitment: Covenant, Obligation and Choice in Jewish Thought and Text*** will explore questions that feel especially urgent today. What is a brit? What do we owe each other as individuals and as a people? How does halakha approach the promises that we make? These are not abstract questions; they are at the heart of Jewish identity and responsibility.

There will be an extraordinary line-up of scholars taking part, including Rabbanit Malke Bina, Dr. Elana Stein Hain, Rabbanit Nechama Goldman Barash, Dr. Yael Ziegler, Rav Johnny Solomon, Rabbanit Dr. Adina Sternberg, Dr. Sharon Galper Grossman, Rabbanit Karen Miller Jackson, Yael Leibowitz, Tamar Weissman, Rabbanit Tamara Spitz, Gila Fine, Malka Hubscher and more. Weekly tours are a

highlight, woven into the fabric of the program and grounding the learning in the land of the Jewish covenant and collective memory.

Summer at Matan is just one example of our in-depth and uplifting learning opportunities. **Even in the midst of war, Matan has continued its programming with determination** – inspiring, strengthening and uniting Am Yisrael through Torah. Alongside our advanced Beit Midrash programs in Talmud, Halakha, Tanakh, Chassidut and Jewish Thought, we have created an afternoon program for professional women; a mother-baby program that combines Torah study with parenting sessions led by a psychologist; Y'mei Iyun and special events; the international mother-daughter Bat Mitzvah program; and Kitvuni, an initiative which gives women scholars the opportunity and framework to write Torah books that are beginning to fill the Jewish bookshelf and amplify women's voices in the Jewish world.

We also continue to be excited about our weekly parsha and haftorah podcasts, in English and Hebrew, which reach tens of thousands of listeners around the world and bring Torah insights to a global audience.

As the Jewish people grapple with profound challenges, in-depth study of our foundational texts feels even more significant, serving as a source of strength, clarity and connection.

Learning Tanakh in Jerusalem and traveling through the landscapes in which its stories happened, creates a powerful encounter between text, land, and people. **The Matan Summer Learn & Tour Program embodies this vision of Torat Eretz Yisrael – Torah deeply rooted in the land – and speaks to the realities of Jewish life today.** Participants leave not only with new knowledge, but with renewed inspiration, friendships, and a deeper connection to Torah and to Medinat Yisrael.

As it has for three decades, the summer program is creating a community of people who share in a unique, memorable and deeply meaningful experience – learning together and strengthening Am Yisrael.



A Religious Inflection

“We therefore declare the establishment of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel – it is the State of Israel!” — Israel’s Declaration of Independence.

What happened on May 14th, 1948? On one level, nothing remarkable. In the first half of the 20th century, over a dozen countries formerly of the Ottoman Empire became independent states; the sprawling empire was parceled into Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt and more. The declaration of the new State of Israel – after some thirty years of British stewardship – was part of this wider phenomenon.

On another level, something utterly remarkable. Self-consciously, this state declared itself the continuation of a political story that had been on a two-thousand-year hiatus. Israel’s Declaration of Independence describes how the Jewish people lived in the Land of Israel as a sovereign nation, were exiled, and never stopped dreaming of return. The nation that had fought the Canaanites, Alexander the Great, and the Roman Empire was now resuming its story in the age of the United Nations.

But there is a third level – one of particular interest to religious Jews. The reborn nation-state of the Jewish people carries religious significance and religious consequences.

To a point, this needs no argument. Few motifs recur more in the Torah than the Land of Israel, and entire sections of *halacha* are simply inapplicable outside its holy soil. Yet the religious significance of Jewish sovereignty is also a source of debate and controversy. Most of Jewish history has unfolded in exile, and Jewish law was meticulously observed throughout. When *Shabbat Parashat Emor* began on the evening of May 14th, was it

not observed in New York and London exactly as the Shabbat before? What difference did political independence – for roughly 5% of world Jewry, at that point – make to a religion that had thrived across every continent? And could a declaration signed by 37 Jewish leaders, most of them non-religious, truly carry religious weight?

Religious Zionism has always answered: yes. It is to that answer that this edition of *HaMizrachi* is dedicated. Immediately after Ben-Gurion finished reading the declaration, Rabbi Yehuda Leib Maimon, one of the leaders of Mizrachi, rose to the podium and recited the *Shehecheyanu*: “Blessed are You, Hashem... Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this day.” Seventy-eight years later, we remain the beneficiaries of that blessing. Whether one lives in Israel or not, for a religious Jew, the Jewish state is inseparable from what it means to live a Jewish life today.



Rabbi Aron White


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



Jewish Sovereignty and the Redemption of the Shechina

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik was one of the towering Jewish religious leaders of the 20th century. As well as his role as a rabbi in Brookline, Massachusetts, and as a Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva University, he was the head of the Mizrachi movement in the United States. Below, we publish an excerpt from a speech he made to a Mizrachi Convention in New York on June 22nd 1948, merely weeks after Israel's Declaration of Independence. As the War of Independence raged, this speech set out the religious nature of the new state, and the role of the Mizrachi movement in this nascent project.



At this juncture, we come to the task of the Mizrahi movement in this *harat olam* period in Jewish history, when the wheel of time, historic events, move at such a rapid, head-spinning pace. Let us consider this calmly and gently, without following the path of mass psychosis and mass hysteria.

There will, G-d willing, be a State of Israel. I have no doubt about that. Despite all the difficulties and struggles which we still have to endure, we will, with G-d's help, be victorious. The old comment of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch must be loudly proclaimed tonight: "Tomorrow shall be a festival of the L-rd!" (*Shemot* 32:5). As cynical, false, and defiled as today might be, tomorrow is ours; it belongs to G-d.

I am not a statesman and I am barely in contact with either gentile or Jewish diplomats or politicians. I am a simple teacher and preacher, and what I say is not based on information gleaned from high society, but simply on an intuitive feeling.

I cannot explain it myself, but it is intuitively clear to me that the historical phase that has lasted these past eight or nine years – you can call this the phase of *hester panim*, in which G-d's presence is hidden from our sight – has passed. Maimonides understands *hester panim* as a period when historical events become chaotic, wild, absurd, arbitrary, and cruel; when all rationality and comprehensibility are shed (*Moreh Nevuchim* III:51). When I remember the entire Nazi era with its animal-like insanity and the casual indifference of the Christian world, I can only describe it using the words of the verses in *Parashat Vayeilech* that Maimonides cited: "Then My anger will flare up against them, and I will abandon them and hide My countenance from them. They shall be ready prey; and many evils and troubles shall befall them. And they shall say on that day, 'Surely it is because our G-d is not in our midst that these evils have befallen us.' Yet I will keep My countenance hidden on that day" (*Devarim* 31:17–18). "That day," the dreadful day of *hester panim*, lawlessness, and all-consuming anarchy, has passed. Never again will this happen in Jewish history, despite all the efforts of a[n Ernest] Bevin or a Loy Henderson.

True, today we are bleeding profusely in the Land of Israel, the precious blood of "the dear children of Zion" (*Eicha* 4:2). But these sacrifices are not sacrifices of *hester panim*, which are not accepted, toward which G-d does not turn – "but to Cain and his offering He paid no heed" (*Bereishit* 4:5). Rather, they are fragrant offerings, through which we build a glorious future and which bring to the Jewish name honor and praise.

Perhaps even today the *middat ha-din*, the attribute of judgment, still prevails, and the *Knesset Yisrael* suffers and bleeds. But one cannot consider this the *hester panim* of Treblinka and Dachau. One must always distinguish between *hester panim* and *middat ha-din*. *Hester panim* means aimless, crazy sacrifice; *middat ha-din* means purposeful sacrifice. The progression of Jewish history has ceased to be chaotic, insane, and absurd. It now has a sense of purpose and significance. It has a direction and an objective.

We need to stop and examine this assertion of purpose, of direction, of an ideal. What are they? The answer is simple. The State of Israel will liberate a segment of the Jewish people from exile in the political-social sense. Naturally, not everyone will be redeemed by it. Even the Exodus from Egypt itself did not free all the Jews from Egypt; according to *Chazal*: "Now the Israelites went up *chamushim*, armed' (*Shemot* 13:18); [understand it as] one in *chamishim*, fifty" (*Mechilta d'Rabbi Yishmael* 13:18). Exile is a subjective concept. Through the Jewish state, we Jews have at least been given the opportunity to liberate ourselves from exile. But will the Master of the Universe Himself also be freed from exile by the State of Israel, or will He remain in captivity in a Jewish state? This is the main question we religious Jews have been asking ourselves for the past several months.

A strange question: will the leaders of the State of Israel make the same error as the leaders of the emancipation movement, only bringing the Jews to the Land of Israel, leaving the Master of the Universe in exile? We have a right to ask this question. We must not, with eyes shut, wander aimlessly on the road of Jewish history. Obviously, the exile of the Master of the Universe in the Land of Israel would be a hundred times worse and more dreadful than His exile abroad. First, we would not have any mitigating excuses. We would not be able to argue: "Did they not worship false gods solely on account of slavery and the resulting madness?" (as the Master of the Universe Himself once said in defense of the Jews) (*Yalkut Shimoni, Parashat Beshalach*, sec. 234).



And second, the Land of Israel itself does not tolerate transgressors. Nachmanides and the Kuzari along with Ibn Ezra formulated an entire philosophical theory regarding this concept.

With regard to this latter point, the importance and responsibility of the Mizrachi grows. It was foolish to talk about dissolving the Mizrachi now. On the contrary, it must be reborn and rise to awesome historical heights...

The redemption of the *shechina* from Her defilement is the most popular slogan among our Orthodox Jews, and the average Mizrachi member understands it very well. Of course, this task is a very important one. It is impossible to imagine the Land of Israel deprived of all the fundamentals of the religion. But I want to be honest here. I am by nature an outspoken individualist and cannot be influenced by mass hysteria, even when the hysterical outcry comes from pious Jews.


With regard to redemption of the *shechina* from defilement in the Land of Israel, I am very optimistic. Whoever ultimately stands at the helm, life in Israel will to a certain extent be entirely Jewish. I read in the press that the kitchens of the Haganah are strictly kosher. When the establishment of the State of Israel was proclaimed, the ceremony was held earlier on Friday afternoon so as not to desecrate Shabbat, despite various logistical

difficulties associated with doing this. That act alone sanctified Shabbat much more than fifty congresses dedicated to Shabbat observance. Naturally, religious Jewry must stand watch and fight for it, but I can assure everyone that Shabbat in the Land of Israel will be holier than it was on Artilleriestraße in Berlin, in the Frankfurt Ghetto, or even on Bedford Avenue in Brooklyn.

I also believe that in the Land of Israel, Santa Claus will not have as white a beard, and the radio will not play "Silent Night, Holy Night." Of this I, a Jew who lives in the Diaspora, can assure all of our zealots in the exile.

However, the redemption of the *shechina* from *tzimtzum* is a much more complicated and important task, and a great deal of time, intellectual power, energy, and work must be devoted to the realization of this hope. The Mizrachi and Hapoel Hamizrachi must contribute substantially to the implementation of this vision.

With regard to the redemption of the *shechina* from *tzimtzum*, I understand this idea simply to mean the revival of large parts of the Torah, the re-inscription of abstract letters upon the concrete parchment of historical reality. I specifically mean the Torah laws relating to the community. At the end of the day, Shabbat and the laws of forbidden foods are *mitzvot* that apply to individuals. Even public Shabbat observance has nothing to do with the community from a *halachic*



perspective. When an individual is multiplied by hundreds of thousands, their acts are not public per se. Their individual character remains. However, the seal of Judaism, of Jewish law and morality, must be expressed in the sociopolitical, economic life of the Land of Israel. The various phases of state life must be permeated with the Jewish spirit, understood and interpreted by Torah and spiritual giants, visionaries and people with a knowledge of Torah. I exclude two groups here: ignoramuses with the gift of gab and idlers. Our treasure of *halacha* regarding laws between man and his fellow man, from the laws of damages to the laws of kings, must be built and transformed into action and facts. True, I have not put much thought into it, but I am convinced that when the Jewish sociopolitical institutions embody the Torah's ancient ideal civil code, we will be the most advanced state in regard to social justice and truth. To summarize, the expansion of the *shechina* means the realization of a total Torah worldview with regard to communal social justice and universality.

By reviving the flying letters, we will produce state-parchment that will be glorious and praiseworthy. True, we are still far from a complete redemption, but we do stand at the threshold of redemption.

And I would very much not want Jews to have mere sovereignty alone. We have waited, dreamed, yearned, and prayed so long. And at the end, will the *atchalta di-geulah*, the beginning of the redemption, be so mundane, so gray and ordinary; will Israel be another tiny state like Costa Rica or Haiti?

Our dream was very much practically linked to its realization. It cannot be like the old sociological axiom regarding the discrepancy between the ideal and its realization: the more a dream is realized, the greater the distance between reality and the original vision. We do not believe in this rule. "A song of ascents. When the L-rd restores the fortunes of Zion - we see it as in a dream" (*Tehillim* 126:1). When the dream of the return to Zion will be fulfilled, we will continue dreaming, because there must not be any contradiction between the dream and its realization.

Even when G-d will bring back the Jewish exiles, we will still be dreamers-visionaries. Reality itself will be shrouded in a golden fantasy. And when I say "as in a dream," I do not mean a dream about wealth and military power, luxury and gold. The Land of Israel will be poor and small for years. We must not become snobbish. I mean a dream about a Torah life, about

a "great nation [that] has laws and rules as perfect as all this Teaching that I set before you this day" (*Devarim* 4:8)!

The task is a huge one. It is huge because it will not go as quickly or as easily as I speak. First, a great deal of research is needed to consider modern problems in light of Torah Judaism. For example, take such an area as labor rights. We have the material, but it needs to be processed and woven into practical life, in the relationship between employer and employee. Modern institutions such as strikes, unionism, closed shops, social security, and so on must take on a Jewish complexion.

But the Torah will not find its actualization in the Land of Israel through rabbinical assemblies, nor through advice given by privileged New Yorkers to the fighters on the barricades in Jerusalem, nor by writing flowery articles. Rather, it will be achieved only through participating in the building of the land, by hewing stones and draining swamps, defending cities and colonies, through work and self-sacrifice. Neither Zionist political leaders nor plain intellectuals will impart their seal upon the Land of Israel.

"The L-rd said to Moses: 'Carve two tablets of stone like the first, and I will inscribe upon the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you shattered'" (*Shemot* 34:1). Moses, do you want eternal tablets, tablets that will last through history? Do not bring them down from heaven! If they come from there, they will not last. Hew the stone tablets yourself, and on the stones which you will carve with effort and sweat and sacrifice I will write the *Aseret ha-Dibberot*. Otherwise, you will not receive a second set of tablets. *Morai ve-rabbotai!* If Orthodoxy wants a Jewish Land of Israel, it must fulfill the commandment of carving the tablets with our own hands.

Out of this, a new political philosophy, a new worldview, can emerge.

● *Republished with permission from "The Return to Zion", published by OU Press, 2023.*

Prophecies in our Time, For our Time

Rabbanit Shani Taragin

Chazal teach in *Megillah* 14a: “A prophecy that was needed for the generations was written.”

Although there were multitudes of prophets and prophecies over the course of eight hundred years of prophetic leadership, only prophecies needed for all generations were recorded and canonized, to teach us not merely as predictions of what would be, but as invitations to what can be. They chart a divine trajectory that depends on human partnership.

Every generation must rediscover the relevance of the prophecies, which serve both as a record of G-d’s promises and as a roadmap for the moral, spiritual, and national possibilities we are called to fulfill. On Yom HaAtzmaut, we see clearly how many of these words, written thousands of years ago, have been translated into political reality, national rebirth, and miraculous survival. The history of the Jewish people is unique in the annals of humanity: no nation has endured exile for nearly two thousand years and then returned to its homeland. No people have been so dispersed, so persecuted, so small in numbers, and yet come roaring back to life. The *nevi'im* foresaw all of this – not as a vague hope but as a precise covenant, an enduring promise that the Land of Israel, the People of Israel, and the Torah of Israel would outlive empires and ideologies.

The fact that these prophecies have been fulfilled in our own time is evidence not only of the truth of the Torah, but of the guiding hand of G-d in history.

The blossoming of the land: Yehoshua and Yishayahu – from wilderness to agricultural miracle

The prophetic dream begins already in *Sefer Yehoshua*, where the promise is given: “Every place your foot shall tread I have given to you” (*Yehoshua* 1:3). That promise of sovereignty over the Land is the thread that reemerges in modern Jewish history through the restoration of Jewish autonomy in 1948, when the State of Israel was established after nearly two thousand years of exile.

The prophets also envisioned a land that had been destroyed returning to fertility. Yishayahu promised that the wilderness would rejoice and the desert would bloom like a lily: “The wilderness and the parched land shall rejoice, and the desert shall blossom like a lily” (*Yishayahu* 35:1).

The description of the Negev and Arava – once barren, drifting sands now transformed into fields of crops, date palms, and solar farms – is not just a technological miracle; it is the visible fulfillment of that prophetic vision.

Yechezkel echoes this image when he foresees the Land itself awakening: “The land that was desolate will be tilled, in place of how it was laid waste before the eyes of all passersby. And they will say, ‘This land, which was desolate, has become like the Garden of Eden’” (*Yechezkel* 36:34–35).

In Israel today, this is reality: the water-saving technologies, drip irrigation, and desert agriculture pioneered by Israeli farmers are a living *Midrash* on these verses.

Yishayahu also foresaw the light of Israel illuminating the nations: “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and nations shall walk in your light” (*Yishayahu* 60:1–3).

The light of the State of Israel, broadcast through its moral leadership, its medical innovations, and its humanitarian aid around the globe, is the *or Hashem* that Yishayahu envisioned.

The return and the tears of Rachel

The prophecies of Yirmiyahu are particularly poignant in our time. He speaks of Rachel weeping for her children in exile, and yet being promised that they will return to the land: “A voice is heard in Ramah... Rachel weeping for her children... For your labor has its reward, and your children shall return to their borders” (*Yirmiyahu* 31:15–17).

Throughout the past millennia, we have been weeping these tears together; yet the echoes of Rachel’s cries have never resounded more loudly than in recent times, as we prayed for the return of hostages held by our enemies. The longing of a mother for her children, the hope of a nation for its captives, and the certainty that the covenant of return has not been annulled have all been compressed into these *pesukim*.

In another powerful prophecy, Yirmiyahu purchases a field during the siege of Jerusalem as a sign that the people will one day return to the land and resume buying and selling property: “Fields will again be bought in this land” (*Yirmiyahu* 32:15).

The very phrase evokes the modern re-

ality of housing prices, mortgages, and real-estate transactions in Israel – a sign that the People of Israel once again live in their land, not as guests, but as a nation with a property market, economy, and future.

The return of the sanctuaries: from exile to the land

Yechezkel describes the exile as a process in which the Jews, scattered among the nations, will carry their “mini-sanctuaries” with them and eventually bring them back to the Land of Israel: “I will be to them a small sanctuary in the lands where they have gone” (*Yechezkel* 11:16).

Today, this is exactly what we see: immigrants from Morocco, France, Yemen, Russia, America, Argentina, and elsewhere bringing their *shuls*, *yeshivot*, *midrashot*, and Torah traditions to Israel. The synagogues of the Diaspora reopen in the streets of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Be'er Sheva, their melodies and customs blending into a new, unified Jewish life.

Shivat Tzion: prophetic timelines and encouragement

The prophets Chaggai, Zechariah, and Malachi addressed the returnees from Babylonia, a small and disheartened generation struggling to rebuild. Chaggai rebuked the people for focusing on their own homes while the *Beit HaMikdash* remained in ruins: “Is it a time for you to dwell in your paneled houses, while this House is lying in ruins... Give careful thought to your ways” (*Chaggai* 1:4–5).

The message is timeless: redemption requires action, not just waiting.

Zechariah offered hope grounded in precise divine timing. Reinterpreting Yirmiyahu's seventy years of exile (*Yirmiyahu* 25:11–12), he explained that the count began with Babylon's rise (605 BCE) and extended until Cyrus' decree of return (535 BCE). A second seventy-year cycle then followed, culminating with the Temple's rebuilding in Jerusalem (516 BCE). Through this chronology, Zechariah reassured the people that the promise of redemption had not expired (1:12–17).

Remarkably, the pattern repeats in modern times. In 1948, as in 535 BCE, we regained autonomy. Nineteen years later, in 1967, we reclaimed Jerusalem, paralleling the nineteen years between the initial return and the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Even the recent cycle – from 2005, the Gaza disengagement, to 2024–2025's re-

newed struggles and return to the same area – spans nineteen years. The cadence of redemption suggests that the prophecies of Zechariah are not only fulfilled in content but also in their rhythm, which is perhaps why Rabbi Akiva laughed at the sight of jackals on the ruins of the *Mikdash*. He was not mocking the destruction, but marveling at the enduring promise of Zechariah, as he could foresee the return of old men and children to the streets of Jerusalem – realized in 1967: “Old men and women will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem... and the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing” (*Zechariah* 8:4–5).

His faith was chronological as well as theological – redemption unfolds by divine rhythm.

Yet Zechariah reminds us (Chapters 7–9) that redemption requires human ethics and initiative. The fasts of mourning will turn to joy only when Israel becomes a society of *emet* and *shalom* – honesty, compassion, justice.

Dry bones and the call to unity

Few prophecies capture the twentieth century with such clarity as Yechezkel's vision of the dry bones. Standing amid a valley of death, Yechezkel hears G-d ask, “Can these bones live?” (*Yechezkel* 37:3). The bones rise, sinews form, breath returns, a people restored to their Land – a vision eerily prophetic of the Jewish resurrection following the Holocaust. Yet the chapter continues with a call to unity: “Take for yourself one stick... and bring them together into one stick” (*Yechezkel* 37:16–17).

This is the story of our age: a people revived from the ashes, returning to the Land, and struggling to become one people once again – fusing diverse tribes, ideologies, and backgrounds into a single living nation.

Zechariah's final visions: war, plague, and redemption

Zechariah's later chapters speak of a great war centered on Jerusalem, after which the city will be redeemed: “On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives” (*Zechariah* 14:4).

Many see echoes of the Six-Day War here, when the division of the city ended and the Old City was reclaimed. The vision also includes a plague that strikes the nations: “This will be the plague that Hashem will bring upon all the nations”

(*Zechariah* 14:12) – perhaps alluding to the global coronavirus pandemic. The final *pesukim* foretell renewed international pilgrimage to Jerusalem and a war coming from the southwestern Egyptian borders (the Gaza envelope?) that will lead to a universal recognition of G-d.

Our recent history – from the Holocaust through the *Milchemet HaTekumah* of October 7th – resonates with the painful contractions of that same prophecy: suffering, awakening, battle, and renewal. The war from Gaza and the steadfast defense of Israel's borders feels like a continuation of Zechariah's unfolding vision, where tragedy births unity and faith.

From Yehoshua to Nechemiah: building a society of Torah

The prophecies of the past are resounding louder than ever today. Yehoshua teaches how to conquer the land (*Nedarim* 22b) – not only physically but spiritually: through humility, courage, and faith. Yechezkel teaches how to rebuild the *Beit HaMikdash* with precision and holiness (*Yechezkel* 40–48), incorporating lessons from past failures. Shmuel guides the establishment of *Malchut Beit David*, showing that true kingship rests on justice and righteousness (*Shmuel* II 8:15).

The *Ketuvim* – *Ezra*, *Nechemiah*, and *Daniel* – provide practical templates for redemption under international pressures. Ezra and Nechemiah faced assimilation, economic hardship, and bureaucratic obstacles, all while rebuilding a Torah-centered society. In *Nechemiah* 8:8, the Torah had to be read and translated, much as modern Israel has had to revive both Hebrew and Torah awareness among Jews long alienated from their heritage.

Megillat Esther and the blueprint for the end

The *Yerushalmi* (*Megillah* 1:5) records that Rabbi Yochanan said the Prophets and *Ketuvim* will eventually be annulled, but the five books of the Torah will not. Reish Lakish added that *Megillat Esther* and *halachot* will also never be annulled.

Why does Reish Lakish single out *Megillat Esther*? Perhaps he foresaw that even in the final era, Jews would remain spread across “127 provinces” (*Esther* 1:1), vulnerable to new antisemitic “Hamans.” *Megillat Esther* thus becomes a manual for late-redemption history, teaching how *Am Yisrael* survives under threat through hidden miracles, courage, unity, and divine partnership.

The confrontation with modern Persia (Iran), the mobilization of soldiers and civilians alike, and the call of Esther – “*Leich k'nos et kol haYehudim* – Go, gather all the Jews” (*Esther 4:16*) – echoes in our own time as Jews from around the world stand together in solidarity with the People of Israel. From *chesed* networks to WhatsApp chains of *Tehillim*, from Torah study to global solidarity, each act becomes part of the hidden miracle of salvation.

Prophecy as partnership

The recorded prophecies endure not as relics but as assignments. Each fulfilled verse invites us to realize the next. The prophets did not write to satisfy our curiosity about the future. They wrote to call us to action. The Torah promised that the People of Israel would be scattered, persecuted, and small, yet also that they would return to the Land, rebuild it, and become a light unto the nations. Everything we have seen in the last century – from the rise of the State of Israel to the miraculous military victories, the return of the exiles, and the flourishing of the Land – is the fulfillment of those promises.

Yet prophecy is not a movie that plays itself out on its own. The final chapters of the story still depend on us – our courage, our unity, our commitment to Torah and truth. The prophecies of Zechariah, Yechezkel, and the others are not yet fully complete. The *Beit Ha-Mikdash* is not yet rebuilt. The world has not yet fully recognized the G-d of Israel.

But the signs are clear. The Torah foresaw all of this, and the prophets showed us the contours of redemption – not by prediction, but by participation.

Just as the final prophet Malachi taught about the enduring nature of *Torat Moshe* (3:22), and Reish Lakish taught that both *halacha* and *Megillat Esther* will never be annulled, so too our generation's calling continues: to live *halachically* and prophetically, revealing G-d's light through courageous action, unity, and faith, until the words of *Zechariah 14:9* resound – “And G-d shall be King over all the earth.”



Rabbanit Shani Taragin

is Educational Director of Mizrahi, Mizrahi Lapidot and Matan Eshkolot Programs for Educators, and the Rosh Beit Midrash of Mizrahi-Tzemach David Women's Learning Hub, Mizrahi Lapidot, and Yeshiva University in Israel Women's Torah Studies Program.



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SHAGRIRIM BALEV

Friends Setting Up Friends



Our Couples: Introducing Naomi and Shlomi Shinover!

Where was your first date?

I thought I'd been to every date location in Yerushalayim, but Shlomi (who's from Haifa) managed to take me somewhere I'd heard of but never found. The "Pillow Square" at Kikar Safra.

What did you learn from the dating process that you'd like to share?

Wow, so much! It's so important to remember that G-d is the ultimate shadchan so each date is an opportunity to learn something and move one step closer to the right person. It's a journey of clarifying what truly matters to you and the kind of relationship you want to build. There's so much that we can do mentally and practically to grow towards it. That insight inspired me so much that I decided to study dating coaching and BH now am helping guide others through the process.

Why is it worth joining the Shagririm Balev database?

With Shagririm there is personal care of being set up by trusted friends who happily put thought and effort into finding good matches. It gives them access to a wide variety of people.

A funny story from one of your dates:

On our 5th date we planned a nature hike and to make shakshuka. Halfway through the hike my sandal broke, and I also realized I had forgotten the pan. What was supposed to be a romantic date in nature turned into an emergency trip to the mall... Which also led to a spontaneous first time meeting of Naomi's parents who lived nearby. In the end we still made the shakshuka at a lookout near her house (it was delicious), and finished the date with a cake I had brought to celebrate our one-month anniversary. Definitely not the plan, but a memorable date!

Is there anything else you want to share?

Marriage is amazing. Finding and building your home together, experiencing constant growth and joy, giving to each other, and truly wanting to be there for someone else. The journey is absolutely worth it!

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

Dina Cohen, my friend since elementary school - who also got married through Shagririm, and Dor Shabtai, Shlomi's friend from Machon Lev. We'd like to say a tremendous thank you to them for doing such Avodat Kodesh and to Dina's baby for being born a week early so she could make it to our wedding!



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THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL AS A SPIRITUAL REVOLUTION

RABBI ZALMAN MELAMED

Rabbi Zalman Melamed is the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Beit El. His annual Sichot for Yom HaAtzmaut were translated and published with the support of World Mizrahi in 2019. He was one of the leading students of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Merkaz HaRav that had been founded by his father, Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook.

In this excerpt, Rabbi Melamed explains some of the teachings of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook around the significance of the establishment of the Jewish state.

HaRav Zvi Yehuda Kook explains three reasons why we must support the establishment of the State of Israel. He says it is because of three matters of sanctity: the People of Israel, the Torah of Israel, and *Eretz Yisrael*. HaRav Zvi Yehuda explains each of these reasons on two levels: one, a straightforward manner meant for the general public, and the other a more profound explanation meant for Torah scholars.

THE FIRST REASON: THE NATION OF ISRAEL

This reason refers, first and foremost, to the physical safety of Jews. It is a very clear Torah commandment of *pikuach nefesh*, the saving of a life. The State of Israel can absorb all of the refugee Jews and all those in lands where there is danger, and

is the only place that can guarantee that they will be welcomed, absorbed, and saved. HaRav Zvi Yehuda does not only speak of physical danger, however, but also of spiritual danger. Spiritually speaking, the Jewish dispersion and assimilation in the Diaspora are wreaking havoc on the Jews there, but when they come here, assimilation ends.

Ketzaleh once brought a *Chareidi* Jew from England to visit, and I told him, “You should know that the State of Israel saved three million Jews from assimilation, because if they had not been here, many of them would have intermarried.” And he said to me, “But here as well there is assimilation!” So I told him: “Here in *Eretz Yisrael* the assimilation rate is not 70 percent!” – meaning that the State has already made a practical difference in helping to preserve Judaism.

This is on a basic level, but when HaRav Zvi Yehuda said that the State is “for the

People of Israel,” he also meant something much deeper. After all, the essence of Israel is not defined by the saving of individual Jewish lives, but by the very reality of the Nation of Israel, by its existence as a nation. Of course, even if the State of Israel rescued just one Jew, this would be justification enough for its establishment, and, as we know, it did not save one or two Jews, but thousands and tens of thousands, physically and otherwise. However, this is still on an individual level, while in reality there is another level, another way of looking at the all-encompassing reality of the Israelite nation as a *klal*: G-d has promised that this entity will continue to exist, and even though this is guaranteed by Him, we need to participate with G-d and work with Him and His promise to establish and uplift the nation in its totality. And that is what HaRav Zvi Yehuda meant in saying that we must support the State for the reason that has to do with the Nation of Israel.

THE SECOND REASON: TORAH

Without a doubt, *Eretz Yisrael* helps increase Torah study. Our Sages taught: “You have no greater nullification of Torah than when the people of Israel were exiled” (*Chagigah* 5b). It follows, then, that there is no greater fulfillment of Torah than Israel’s return to its land. This is true even in terms of the country’s public policy, which enables the fulfillment of Torah and its commandments better than in any place on the globe. As such, simply in terms of the observance of individual Torah *mitzvot*, the simple fact that more Torah is studied and more *mitzvot* are fulfilled here makes it patently clear that we must support the establishment of the State. We must ensure our national presence in the Land so that every part of the Torah is fulfilled, and especially the *mitzvot* that can be fulfilled only here and nowhere else.

However, the measurable, quantitative aspects of Torah observance did not suffice for HaRav Zvi Yehuda. He spoke of Torah in its all-encompassing meaning, in its inclusive essence – namely, that it is the source of all reality. It is the source of the People of Israel; the entire world is able to exist only via the fulfillment of Torah in its universality, something that can occur only in *Eretz Yisrael*. And now that things are advancing, it means that now is the time to act for the establishment and perpetuation of the State.

These concepts are very clear to us, but I am repeating them because two days ago, some students turned to me for an explanation of the essence of this day of Yom HaAtzmaut; they had heard that there are those who cast doubts upon these ideas and are not sure that the explanation given by HaRav Zvi Yehuda is relevant nowadays, given our current spiritual state. I would like to therefore relate that when we decided to come to Bet El, our neighbors in Yerushalayim were quite skeptical: “What are you going out there for? It will never work, it’s a waste of effort and resources. You put up those caravans – they’re there

today but tomorrow they’ll be somewhere else.” People aren’t saying that anymore; *Eretz Yisrael* is thriving and being built up, it is enduring and permanent, and it is growing. The most eternal thing is the advancement of the *geulah*; nothing is more permanent than that.

When the State was first established, there were those who said that it could never endure. Of course, without Torah it cannot continue to exist, but with Torah, the State can well exist, and in fact Torah is becoming more of an integral part of the State of Israel; its essence is rooted in Torah. True, we don’t see this openly, but the nation’s entire aspiration for *Eretz Yisrael* and for national revival – all of that is Torah; it can have no significance otherwise. The world cannot exist without Torah, and certainly the Nation of Israel cannot exist without Torah, and the State of Israel, too, cannot exist without Torah. The State of Israel is forged from within the Torah, and its very existence proves its deep connection to the Torah; since we see that the Torah is becoming stronger here, this means that it is precisely the power of Torah that leads the way, strengthening and building the country, with the State growing and becoming more established. And this is, in fact, the case.

THE THIRD REASON: ERETZ YISRAEL

This reason, too, can first be explained on a simple level: There is a Torah commandment to settle *Eretz Yisrael*, as written by the Rambam¹ and the Ramban.² True, there are those who note the opposing opinion of the *Megillat Esther*, but since when does the entire public seek out leniencies on matters in dispute? In any event, even if there are those³ who do not count “living in the Land” as a Biblical commandment, all agree that it is a Rabbinic commandment. There are also those who say that there is no *mitzvah* to move to the Land, although someone who lives here fulfills a *mitzvah* – like that of *tzitzit*, which the Torah commands us to wear

only in the event that we are wearing a four-cornered garment. Not everyone agrees with this comparison, but even if we believe it is correct – does this imply that we should not make an effort to wear *tzitzit* simply because we are not absolutely obligated to? Why should we have to fashion an artificial garment of four corners? Let’s just wear ordinary clothes! But the fact is that we do make the effort, everyone knows that we do not walk around without a four-cornered garment with fringes on it – and we should similarly not live outside the Land.

In actuality, the story is much deeper than that. It is not only in order to fulfill the *mitzvah* of settling the Land, or the commandments that are land-dependent, that we have a State. The profound essence of *Eretz Yisrael* is that the true destiny and mission of the Jewish people and the Torah are only to be found here, and that the entire world is influenced from here. The world was founded upon the Foundation Stone on the Temple Mount in *Eretz Yisrael* (*Yoma* 54b), and it is the basis of all existence. It is in *Eretz Yisrael* that the Nation of Israel dwells, engages in Torah, and lives the way it should. And it is upon this that the entire existence of the world is based, is uplifted, and moves forward. When we speak in this way, employing concepts of *Klal Yisrael*’s function in *Eretz Yisrael* on behalf of the entire world, we are not always understood – but we have no choice. The time for the revival has come, and we must rise and look at reality from this all-encompassing perspective.

● *Republished with permission from “This is the Day: Lazman Haze”.*

1. *Laws of Kings* 5:6–12, and more.

2. *Additions to the Sefer of Mitzvot*, Positive Commandment 4.

3. See Rav Moshe Feinstein, *Igrot Moshe, Even HaEzer* I, 102.

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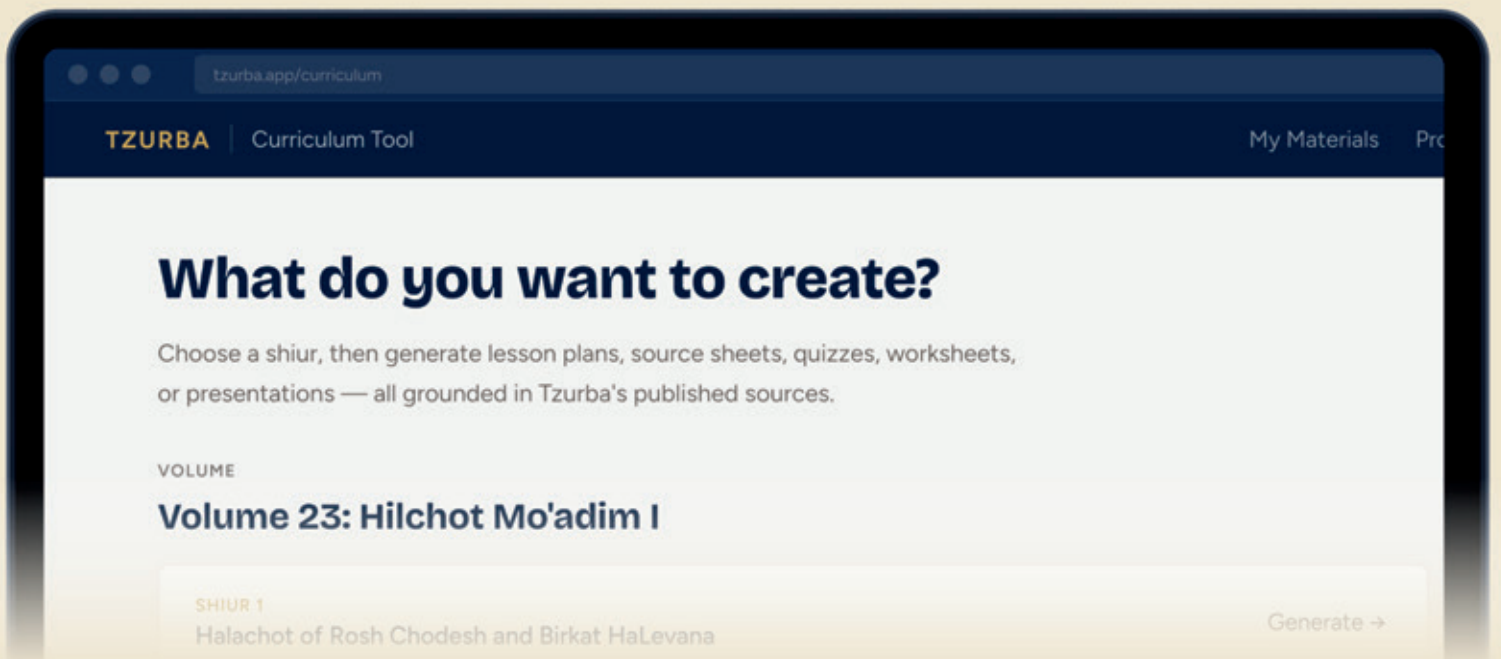
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WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO BUILD A STRONGER ISRAEL THROUGH ALIYAH



Chief Rabbi Herzog and Halacha in the State of Israel

Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Brody

In the early years of the State of Israel, Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi Yitzchak Herzog advanced a bold proposal. He sought to enact a *takanah* that would, in practice, allow daughters to inherit alongside sons under Israeli law. The pressure to address the issue was significant. In Western countries such as France, the United States, and Britain – whose Mandate system had shaped legal frameworks still in place – inheritance laws already divided estates equally between sons and daughters. The young Knesset favored adopting a similar rule, even if it meant setting Jewish law aside entirely. Rabbi Herzog was determined to prevent that outcome. He insisted that the laws of the Jewish state must be grounded in *halacha*, while also striving to find a *halachic* path that would allow daughters to share in their parents' inheritance.

After someone passes away, formal Torah law includes a clear order of heirs who receive default inheritance rights – including a double portion for a firstborn son – immediately upon death (known as “Torah heirs”). At the moment of death, the estate passes automatically to these heirs, who are typically male descendants or relatives. Yet the long-standing practice across many centuries of Jewish communal life has been to use established Jewish legal mechanisms to distribute assets upon death to other beneficiaries: a spouse, all children (including daughters, adopted or stepchildren), other relatives, and charities. Jerusalem's Rabbi Yechiel Michel Tykocinski, whose classic book on mourning appeared in 1947, urged parents to create *halachically* sound bequests to all children to avoid family disputes (*Gesher Ha-Chayim*, p. 41–42).

As Rabbi Herzog documented, Jewish law developed a variety of mechanisms to soften the practical consequences of the Torah's inheritance rules without formally changing them. Some of these tools already appear in the *Gemara*. The concept of *binin dichrin*, for example, ensured that a woman's dowry would ultimately benefit her own sons, creating a structured financial claim that affected how property was distributed after death. Other devices, such as obligations placed on property (*issur nechasin*), allowed assets to be encumbered with financial commitments that had to be satisfied before heirs could receive their shares.

In this way, the formal order of inheritance could remain intact even as contractual obligations shaped the practical outcome.

In later centuries, Jewish communities expanded these approaches through communal enactments and legal instruments. Medieval Ashkenazic communities – including the cities of Speyer, Worms, and Mainz, known as the *ShUM* communities – issued ordinances that limited a husband's automatic inheritance of his wife, measures that later influenced practice in Poland and Eastern Europe. Spanish communities adopted their own regulations that reshaped the financial relationship between spouses and affected how estates were distributed.

Other regions developed distinctive customs and legal tools designed to ensure that daughters received a portion of family wealth. The best-known Ashkenazic example is the *shtar chatzi zachar*, a document granting daughters a financial claim equivalent to half the share of a son while formally preserving the biblical inheritance structure. A later version, the *shtar zachar shalem*, granted daughters equal inheritance rights. Other solutions emerged in North Africa and among the Spanish-Portuguese exiles, including enactments that expanded women's inheritance rights. At times these mechanisms met with resistance, whether from ideological opposition to circumventing Torah law or from *halachic* concerns about the methods employed. Nonetheless, Rabbi Herzog saw in these developments a consistent pattern across the Jewish world: without abolishing the Torah's inheritance laws, rabbinic authorities repeatedly relied on contracts, communal ordinances, and financial obligations to achieve more balanced outcomes.

Alongside these developments, rabbis also grappled with whether civil wills written under local law could be recognized under *halacha*, at least after the fact (*bedi'eved*). Such wills raise difficulties because they attempt to distribute property after death, while under *halacha* the estate passes immediately at the moment of death to the Torah-designated heirs. If those heirs do not waive their rights, beneficiaries of the civil will could be taking property that *halachically* belongs to others – raising concerns of theft. The testator himself may violate the prohibition of illicit estate transfers known as *ha'avarat nachalah* (*Choshen Mishpat* 281:4).

Yet Jewish law places great weight on fulfilling the wishes of the deceased – *mitzvah lekayem divrei ha-met* – especially when the instructions come from one's parents, touching on the *mitzvah* of *kibud av va-em*. For this reason, some authorities argued that civil wills might still be honored where valid *halachic* mechanisms (*kinyanim*) could be presumed, or where arrangements were reinforced by local law under the principle of *dina de-malchuta*. The question of civil wills thus became the subject of extensive *halachic* debate.

Rabbi Herzog was adamant that the new Jewish state should not rely on legislation that set aside *halacha* in order to achieve equal inheritance. If such an arrangement reflected the needs of the time, he argued, then *halacha* itself must provide the tools to achieve it. He therefore proposed a *takanah* requiring a new clause in the *ketubah*, modeled on the husband's existing financial obligations. At the time of marriage, the groom would undertake that if he died leaving both sons and daughters, the daughters would receive an equal portion from the estate. Because this commitment would be made during his lifetime and recorded in a binding document, it would create an enforceable financial claim against the estate.

The authority for such a measure rested on the principle of *hefker beit din hefker* – the Talmudic power of rabbinic courts to restructure financial rights through communal enactments. Since *ketubah* obligations are already collected from the estate before inheritance is distributed, Rabbi Herzog believed this mechanism could achieve a more equal outcome while remaining firmly within the *halachic* framework. He also saw it as a natural continuation of earlier enactments from 5704 that standardized the value of the *ketubah* and required fathers to support their children until age sixteen.

Much to Rabbi Herzog's dismay, his detailed proposal was largely rejected or ignored. As Justice Chaim Cohen observed, many secular state leaders had little interest in *halachic* workarounds when crafting modern legislation. Some rabbinic authorities also hesitated, questioning certain legal aspects of the proposal

and worrying that such a sweeping measure could give the impression that biblical law might easily be set aside by *Rabbanut* decrees. Sephardic Chief Rabbi Ben-Zion Uziel favored a narrower path: standardizing private legal instruments, such as financial obligations established during a parent's lifetime, to provide daughters with a share of the estate. Rabbi Uziel sought a similar practical result, but through voluntary *halachic* arrangements rather than a binding communal enactment.

The difficulty with this approach is that it depends on individuals arranging their estates with proper *halachic* guidance – something that often does not occur. Even today, most people are unaware of the need to structure their estate according to *halacha*. In this respect, Rabbi Herzog had a point: if a society hopes for widespread behavior to follow *halachic* standards, broader legal structures are often necessary. In their absence, individuals are well advised to consult their rabbi about preparing a *halachic* estate will. For a user-friendly example, see Ematai's *halachic* estate *shtar* at ematai.org/shtar.



Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Brody

is the executive director of Ematai, which helps Jews navigate dilemmas of aging and end-of-life care.



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A Letter from a Defender of the Old City

The War of Independence lasted eighteen months, during which more than 5,600 Israelis were killed. One of them was a young woman named Esther Cailingold, who died defending the Old City of Yerushalayim.

Esther was born in London, shaped by a Religious Zionist home and her years in Bnei Akiva. In 1946, she made Aliyah and became an English teacher in Yerushalayim. When war broke out, she was one of the 150 defenders of the Old City, fighting to hold back the Arab advance. On May 26th, an explosion left her with severe spinal injuries. Despite her wounds, she left her hospital bed to rejoin the fight – and was then struck by a bullet.

She lay dying without morphine; there were no supplies left. Someone offered her a cigarette. She refused – it was Shabbat. She asked for a siddur, davened Kabbalat Shabbat, and passed away during Shabbat Bechukotai, May 29th, 1948.

After her death, a letter was found addressed to her parents, urging them not to grieve but to be proud. In recent years, letters and ethical wills of fallen Israeli soldiers have surfaced across the country, each one a window into the souls of those who built this state. Here is one of the earliest: the letter of a fighter of Yerushalayim, from Israel's first war.

Dear Mummy and Daddy, and everyone –

If this reaches you at all, it will be, I suppose, typical of all my rushed, messy letters. I am writing to beg you: find it in yourselves to accept what has happened to me, to accept it in the spirit I intended – and know that I have no regrets. We have fought a bitter fight and we have been through *gehenom* – but it has been worth it, because I am completely convinced that in the end we will see a Jewish state and the realization of everything we dreamed of.

I will be only one of many who fell. I felt compelled to write this because someone very close to me was killed today, and the grief I felt made me want you to receive any such news differently – to remember that we were soldiers with the greatest and most noble cause anyone could fight for. G-d is with us, I know, in His Holy City. I am proud, and I am ready to pay whatever price is asked of me.

Don't think I took unnecessary risks. When human resources are few, there is no other choice. I hope you will have the chance to meet some of my fellow fighters who survive, if I do not – and that you will feel proud, not sad, when you hear how they speak of me. Please, please, don't be sadder than you can bear. I have lived my life fully, if briefly, and I believe this is the best way – “short and sweet.” Very sweet it has been, here in our own land. I hope you will find in Mimi and Asher the *nachas* you didn't get from me. Let it be without regrets – and then I, too, will be happy. I am thinking of every one of you, every single member of this family, and I feel a deep joy knowing that one day – very soon, I hope – you will come and enjoy the fruits of what we are fighting for.

Much, much love. Be happy, and remember me in happiness.

Shalom and lehitraot,

Your loving Esther

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ISRAEL CANADA



When Memory Becomes Torah: The Story of Chumash HaGiborim

On October 7th, Yehuda Lanzkron watched the news like everyone else – but for him, the grief was layered. He had walked this road before. Twenty-five years of helping bereaved families memorialize their loved ones prepared him for a mission he never wanted but was undeniably called to. Rabbi Aron White spoke with Yehuda to hear the story behind Chumash HaGiborim and the organization bringing it to life.

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us. An upcoming edition of HaMizrachi will feature Chumash HaGiborim, and we're honored to share it with our readers. Before we discuss the project itself, tell us a little about your background.

I was born 57 years ago in London. When I was eighteen months old, my parents made *Aliyah* with two children – myself and my older sister – and we settled in Petach Tikva. In Israel they had eight more children, so altogether we were ten siblings.

Twenty-five years ago our family experienced a tragedy. My youngest brother was killed in a terrorist bombing during the Second Intifada. He was learning in a *yeshiva* in Kedumim and

was on his way there when the attack happened. He was only thirteen years old, just three months after his *bar mitzvah*.

For me, the way to cope with that loss was through memorial projects. I'm someone who needs to act, to do something. Over the years I organized a number of initiatives in his memory: writing three *sifrei Torah*, helping establish two synagogues, a *beit midrash*, and other projects.

About two years after he was killed, I had a dream in which my brother came to me and said: "Yehuda, stop. You've done enough for me. Now go and help other bereaved families." I took that dream very seriously – almost as a mission.

From that point on I began helping other families commemorate their loved ones. Over the last twenty years I've worked with close to a hundred bereaved families. Each family wants something different: a *sefer Torah*, an *aron kodesh*, a *parochet*, sometimes a book or a film. To make these projects possible I had to raise funds, and over time I became deeply involved in fundraising for a range of causes – *yeshivot*, municipalities, and other communal initiatives.

How did that work evolve into the organization you lead today?

Everything changed after October 7th. In the first weeks after the attack I was in a very difficult emotional state – it brought back the trauma of losing my brother. A doctor told me I was experiencing post-trauma.

But after about two months, as I began to process what had happened across the country, I realized that what I had been doing as a volunteer needed to become my full-time work. The scale of loss was enormous, and families needed support.

So I established an organization called *Mantzichim* – Israel Memorial Project. The word *mantzichim* comes from the Hebrew root for remembrance. Our goal is to help families commemorate their loved ones in meaningful ways.

Our flagship project is called *Etz Chaim* – the Tree of Life. As someone who has dedicated *sifrei Torah* in memory of loved ones, I know firsthand how meaningful a *sefer Torah* can be for a grieving family. But a new scroll today costs around 200,000 shekels – an enormous sum, especially when there are hundreds of bereaved families.

So we developed a different approach. Around the world there are many *sifrei Torah* that are no longer usable – old or damaged scrolls. We collect them from Israel and from the United States. About 30 to 40 percent can actually be repaired. We restore those scrolls and dedicate them in memory of fallen soldiers. Each restoration costs approximately \$20,000. We run joint fundraising campaigns with the families, often with matching



Yehuda Lanzkron (right), Founder and CEO of the Mantzichim Association, with Chaim Meitlis, Chairman of the Association.

donations from supporters in the United States. The soldier's name appears on the front of the mantle; donors can dedicate the Torah in memory of someone meaningful to them on the back.

Baruch Hashem, the project is growing. In roughly two years we've collected 186 damaged Torah scrolls and restored 65 of them.

You also partnered with Mizrachi on a Simchat Torah memorial initiative. Tell us about that.

I had originally planned a project to create special Torah mantles commemorating those killed on October 7th. When I approached Rabbi Danny Mirvis at World Mizrachi, he told me that Rabbi Andrew Shaw in London had already begun something almost identical. We connected immediately, and when we compared



Yehuda Lanzkron with the Mantels of the Mantzichim's Project in partnership with Mizrachi's Simchat Torah Project.

our plans the overlap was remarkable. So we joined forces – their team handled the international marketing and distribution, and I designed and manufactured the mantles in Israel.

Together we produced around 700 mantles that were distributed to synagogues around the world for the first Simchat Torah after October 7th.

How did the idea for Chumash HaGiborim come about?

Like many Israelis, I feel a deep personal connection to the soldiers who defend this country. I served in the army myself, and my son served in the armored corps during this war. He was injured, but *baruch Hashem* he recovered.

I wanted every soldier who fell to be connected in some way to a Torah project – but I knew that not every family would choose to dedicate a *sefer Torah*. So together with my son we conceived the idea of *Chumash HaGiborim*. Each fallen soldier receives a dedicated page within the volume, including a short biography, words of remembrance from the family, and a Torah insight written in that soldier's honor.

When we began, there were approximately 960 fallen soldiers and members of Israel's security forces. We contacted every family personally to ask permission to include their loved one – a process that alone took months. In the end, 818 families agreed. Some declined for personal reasons, and we respected that completely.

The project took a full year of work from roughly forty people and required an investment of close to half a million dollars. Each soldier's page includes a QR code linking to a website with additional information – their story, photographs, and further tributes.

We also asked families whether there was a rabbi or teacher they wanted to write the Torah insight dedicated to their loved one. In many cases a rabbi from the soldier's *yeshiva* or community contributed the piece. When families had no specific request, our team of scholars wrote the essays.

What has the response been since publication?

Extraordinary. People are deeply moved when they see it – because nothing like this has ever been done before. Integrating the memory of fallen soldiers directly within a *Chumash* is entirely new.

We've heard powerful stories from many families. One moment that stayed with me involved Rabbi Tokayer from the Rabbinical Council of America, who visited Israel after his community helped fund a *sefer Torah* in memory of a soldier. When we visited the soldier's mother in Jerusalem, she brought out *Chumash HaGiborim* and showed us her son's page. She told Rabbi Tokayer that because of the Torah insight written in his memory, she had begun attending synagogue regularly – and had even decided to dedicate a *sefer Torah* in his honor.

For many families, this book has become the most meaningful memorial of all. Their son is now part of the Torah itself.

What message do you hope this project carries to Jewish communities abroad – especially to young people?

In Israel, everyone feels this war personally. Almost every family knows someone who was killed or injured. In communities abroad the connection is naturally more distant – but it's important to build bridges.



Yehuda Lanzkron presenting the Chumash HaGiborim to President Isaac Herzog.



Yehuda Lanzkron at the Siyum of writing letters in a *Sefer Torah* that he wrote in memory of his brother Naftali HY"D.

Through this project, schools and communities can learn about these soldiers – their lives, their dreams, their stories. Students can participate in writing letters in a *sefer Torah*, raise funds for memorial projects, and meet the families of those who fell.

When a young person learns about a real individual – when they see a face, understand a life, and grasp a sacrifice – it creates something that no headline can. A genuine connection to Israel and to the Jewish people.

These soldiers are part of the story of *Am Yisrael*. Their lives and their sacrifice are woven into the Torah and into the history of our people. This *Chumash* is not only a memorial. It is a bridge – between Torah and life, between Israel and Jews around the world, between the past and the future of our nation. ■

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Israel – Our Hope and Pride

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ל"צ

This address was delivered in 2005 in Finchley Synagogue, as part of Bnei Akiva's annual service for Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut.

“**A**nd he said: ‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have struggled with G-d and with men, and you have prevailed’” (*Bereishit* 32:29).

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

For more than 2,000 years, the Jewish calendar went without significant addition, whether of new holy days or new fast days, whether of remembrances, of grief or of joy.

Four new days have been added, all in the period of Sefirat HaOmer, between Pesach and Shavuot, between the Exodus and revelation – two days of grief, two days of joy; Yom HaShoah and Yom HaZikaron on the one hand, Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim on the other.

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

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

Yet out of the very depths of those very tragedies came two of the greatest moments in 2,000 years of history: Yom HaAtzmaut, the restoration of Jewish sovereignty after 1,900 years, and Yom Yerushalayim, the return to the ancient and holy city, Jerusalem, home of the Jewish

heart, focus of all our prayers, embodiment of all our hopes.

Yet Israel is again under attack, after four years of a savage, ceaseless, brutal terror.

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

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

Why? Why, after 57 years and more of seeking peace, is Israel still seen as the aggressor? Why, after ten years of negotiation, in which the Palestinians were offered their own state in all of Gaza, 97% of Judea and Samaria, with a capital in East Jerusalem, is Israel still seen as the sole obstacle to peace? Why, in a world in which there are 57 Islamic states and something like 100 Christian ones, is the desire of the Jewish people to have just one state of its own seen as – G-d forbid – racist or exclusionary?

Why, when Israel occupies a quarter of one percent of the land mass of the Arab world, is it deemed to be Goliath against David? Why, alone among the almost 200 nations that comprise the United Nations, is Israel the only one whose very right to be is still called into question?

Why is the Israel-Palestinian conflict seen by one European public after another as the greatest threat to world peace, when anyone with the most rudimentary understanding of the contemporary world knows full well that were – G-d forbid a million times – Israel to cease to be, not one of those problems of the world would be changed by a millimetre?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. **The Environment:** Israel was the first country in the modern world to plant trees, not cut them down, to reforest, not deforest. Long before ecology had entered the moral imagination, the Jewish people were turning a land that for centuries lay desolate into a fertile landscape of farms and forests and fields.
2. **Asylum Seekers:** Israel is the only country other than the United States built out of asylum seekers. They came from 103 different countries, speaking 82 different languages, and out of that global mixture of refugees a great nation was born.
3. **Terror:** Israel's security fence, so often described as a wall, is the only effective non-violent protection against terror yet devised in this age of global terror.
4. **Economic Divisions:** According to Harvard University's Professor of Economic History, David Landes, only one country in the world has moved in 50 years from being a third world economy to a first world economy: and that is Israel.

5. **Democratic Freedom:** Not only is Israel the only genuine democracy in the Middle East, but it has sustained its democratic freedoms under strains and stresses that would have broken the back of weaker cultures.

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

“For you have struggled with G-d and with men, and you have prevailed.” The struggle continues and is part of what it means to be a Jew.

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

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

“*Ve'erastich li be'emunah*” (*Hoshea* 2:22). We are betrothed to Israel in unbreakable, unshakable loyalty. Nothing will stand between Israel and our love.

Not for nothing were our people and land called Israel. Throughout more than a hundred generations of our history, we have known that to be a Jew involves struggle – sometimes with our fellow human beings, sometimes with G-d, sometimes with both. Yet in that very name, the name the State has borne for 57 years, a momentous hope, a promise, was born – that though the people of Israel must struggle, *va-tuchal*, it will always prevail. That, for the State of Israel is our faith and our prayer. Israel is our hope, our people's freedom, and our pride.

And so it will be forever. Amen.



The Rabbi Sacks Legacy

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

The Essence of Atzmaut

Rabbi Reuven Taragin

Independence

Most of us know the word *atzmaut* from Yom HaAtzmaut, which we translate as Independence Day. The word itself is a modern Hebrew coinage, but it is rooted in *atzmi* – “myself.” Since independence means the right to self-determination, the ability to stand on one’s own, the name fits naturally.

But the root *etzem* (*ayin, tzadi, mem*) carries additional meanings – and each one deepens what we mean when we celebrate this day.

Strength

Sefer Devarim uses this root to describe strength, warning against those who attribute their success to “*kochi v’otzem yadi*” (8:17) – the power of their own hand. This meaning is no accident. Independence both signals and enables strength. It allows individuals and nations to develop their full potential. Israel’s independence has done exactly that, driving our physical and spiritual growth as a people in ways that would have been unimaginable in exile.

Bones

Etzem also means bones, the strongest part of the human body. This is perhaps the most striking connection of all, because our independence has been part of a national revitalization that Yechezkel saw in prophecy. He described the Jewish people as dry bones (*Yechezkel 37*), shriveled in exile, and then watched as G-d rejuvenated those bones, added flesh and blood, and returned them to life in Israel. When we use the word *atzmaut*, we are, whether we realize it or not, invoking that vision. The State of Israel is its fulfillment.

Essence

Etzem is also used in the abstract sense of essence – *b’etzem*, the core of a thing. Here too, the connection runs deep. Scattered across the world, our ancestors were forced to conform to others’ expectations and absorb foreign cultural norms. Independence gives us the opportunity to be ourselves again, to live out our unique Jewish identity in our natural surroundings, our ancestral homeland.

Growth

Some linguists connect *etzem* to the root *etz* (*ayin, tzadi*) – tree. This calls to mind Yishayahu’s comparison of the Jewish people’s redemption to the life of a tree (65:22): capable of reawakening after a dormant winter, of regenerating even after branches – or part of the trunk itself – have been cut away. After millennia of exile, we have come back. That resilience, too, is part of what we call *atzmaut*.

Our celebration

Each of these meanings belongs in our celebration of Yom HaAtzmaut – as a cause for joy and as a call to responsibility. We celebrate the revival and strength that independence has made possible. And we ask ourselves what the ultimate purpose of that independence must be: the realization of our true identity and G-d’s mission for us and for the world.

This Yom HaAtzmaut, as we continue our struggle against those who fight to undermine everything we have built, let us thank Hashem for what our independence has already achieved – and rededicate ourselves to what we are still meant to accomplish.

May our appreciation for Hashem’s gift of *atzmaut*, and our commitment to realizing its ultimate purpose, merit us His continued berachot and help in completing the work of our true and complete redemption.

I thank David Curwin for helping me understand the relationship between the various usages of the root.



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



Rabbi Reuven Taragin

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



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Hallel on Yom HaAtzmaut

Rabbi Aron White

The book of Psalms contains prayers that run the gamut of emotions – joy, fear, gratitude, loss, penance, celebration. Portions of the *Tehillim* have become the bedrock of Jewish prayer services, such as the *Peskuei DeZimra*, based largely on the final six chapters of *Tehillim* that express the wonder of the rhythm of natural life.

Another group of *Tehillim*, from Chapters 113–118 are known by the Sages as *Hallel*. These chapters are said on most of the *chagim*, and there is a *minhag* to also say a portion of them on Rosh Chodesh. The Talmud however also gives a broader description of when *Hallel* should be said: “The prophets of Israel instituted that they should say it after each event and each tragedy; when they are redeemed from it they should say *Hallel* over their redemption.”

Following the Declaration of Independence, there was discussion among the *poskim* about the recitation of *Hallel* on Yom HaAtzmaut. The Chief Rabbinate of Israel said that *Hallel* should be recited on Yom HaAtzmaut; their initial decision was to recite it without a *beracha*, but in the 1970s updated their decision to say *Hallel* should be recited with a *beracha*.

The words of *Hallel* shimmer with modern meaning when recited over the miracle of Jewish independence. “From the straits I called out to You, and You answered me expansively.” “Your kindness Hashem is overwhelming.” The following pages will delve into the *Hallel* Psalms, to deepen our understanding, and our expression of gratitude to Hashem.

From Praise to Trembling: Two Faces of Redemption in Hallel

Tehillim 113 and 114

Rivka Mazal Tauber

There is something curious about the way *Hallel* unfolds in its first two chapters of *Tehillim*.

Hallel, we expect, should be a song of roaring national victory, of Hashem's greatness declared in sweeping terms: "Sing praise, servants of Hashem," "Who is like the L-rd our G-d?"

But then it continues – not with thunder, but with intimacy. With the lifting of a poor man from his despair, the raising of the needy, and the transformation of a barren woman. Is this the praise we expected?

One might have assumed *Hallel* would open with *Tehillim* 114: with leaving Egypt, with the sea, with the great rupture in history that turned slaves into a people. Why this order? Why place, before the memory of national redemption, a chapter about daily praise, human fragility, and quiet reversals of fortune?

A teaching of the Lubavitcher Rebbe offers a way in.

On the verse from *Micha* (7:15) – "As in the days of your going out from the land of Egypt, I will show you My wonders" – the Rebbe notes the strange phrasing: "*Kimei*, the days" of your going out, in the plural. Yet the Exodus, of course, took place on a single day.

Chassidic thinkers explain that redemption from Egypt was not only an event; it was the opening of a passageway. From the first redemption until the final one, all our days are, in some sense, "the *days* of your going out from Egypt." Human history, Jewish history, even the inner life of each person, becomes one long exodus – from narrowness toward expansiveness, from

concealment toward recognition, from bondage toward G-d.

Egypt, in this reading, is not only a place once left behind. It is the recurring experience of constriction itself.

That insight explains the movement from *Tehillim* 113 to 114. These are not simply two adjacent chapters of *Tehillim*. They are two languages of redemption.

Tehillim 113 speaks the language of redemption as it appears in the fabric of ordinary life. It teaches us to see the Divine not only in split seas and public miracles, but in the daily, hidden acts of restoration. The poor one lifted from the dust, the needy one drawn from the ash heap, the barren woman transformed into a joyful mother – these are not merely private blessings. This chapter gives us language to perceive how G-d is enthroned above the nations, beyond all comparison, and still sees, hears, and meets us in our humanity. This is what redemption looks like in the everyday: not a sea splitting, but a human being standing upright again.

Before we can hear *Tehillim* 114, we need *Tehillim* 113. Otherwise we would not know what we were witnessing.

"When Israel went out of Egypt." Now redemption is no longer intimate but historical, no longer hidden but overwhelming. The story widens from the life of the individual to the life of a people – and wider still, from human history to creation itself. The sea does not merely witness redemption; it recoils before it. The Jordan River does not merely flow; it turns back. The mountains do not merely stand nearby; they leap. The earth trembles.

Tehillim 114 is not a departure from *Tehillim* 113. It is its expansion.

The One who raises a person from the dust is the same One before Whom the sea flees. The G-d of the vulnerable individual is the G-d of national becoming. The quiet redemptions of ordinary life and the great turning points of Jewish history are not separate stories. The same G-d is behind all of it.

This is what makes *Hallel* so powerful. It refuses to let us imagine redemption in only one register. It insists on both truths at once: redemption is public and intimate, historical and inward, national and personal. It arrives with trembling earth, and it arrives with a human being lifted from the ash heap. The great wonders do not erase the smaller ones. They gather them up.

And perhaps that is the deepest suggestion of these two chapters of *Tehillim*: the road to the final redemption is not elsewhere. It is here, in these very days – in all the ways we are still learning to leave Egypt, and still learning to see that Hashem has been redeeming us all along.



Rivka Mazal Tauber

is a Chassidut and Tanach teacher in Jerusalem. She is currently a participant in the Mizrahi Lapidot program.

From Har Herzl to Hallel: David's Lesson for Israel

Tehillim 116

Chevi Charlap

Tehillim Chapter 116 opens with a striking declaration: "I love Hashem because He hears my voice and my supplications." Rashi explains that David's use of the word "ahavti, I love," conveys the intensity with which David longed for Hashem to hear his prayers in that moment. He is describing a scene of physical danger and deep emotional distress, and yet, precisely through that experience, his love for Hashem only deepened. Then, halfway through the chapter, the tone shifts. David pivots to praise: "How can I repay Hashem for all the bounties given to me?"

Within a single chapter, we find David praising G-d both for his suffering and for his salvation. How can David hold these two seemingly opposite emotional states in the same breath?

The *Gemara* tells a remarkable story. At a great feast in the World to Come, the greatest *tzaddikim* of Jewish history are seated together - Avraham, Yitzchak, Ya'akov, Yehoshua, and *David HaMelech*, among many others. One by one, each figure is invited to lead the table in *zimun*

- the formal call to recite *Birkat HaMazon* - and one by one, each declines, citing some personal failing. When David's turn comes, he does not hesitate. He declares, "I will recite the blessing. It is fitting for me to lead, as it is written: 'I will lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of Hashem'" (*Pesachim 119b*).

The question is obvious. How does *David HaMelech* stand before Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov - towering figures who nonetheless demurred - and confidently declare "It is fitting for me to lead"?

A different teaching in the *Gemara* offers the key: "One is obligated to bless G-d for the bad that befalls him, just as he blesses G-d for the good" (*Berachot 60b*). *David HaMelech* has mastered precisely this. He begins *Tehillim 116* crying out from a place of trouble and sorrow and calls upon the name of Hashem. He ends the same chapter lifting the cup of salvation and calling upon the name of Hashem. The words are identical, even as the emotional reality is the opposite. And that is the point.

What sets David apart from every other *tzaddik* at that table is not superior righteousness - it is that his relationship with Hashem was genuinely bilateral. He praised G-d in the darkness and he praised G-d in the light. Moments of blessing did not make him forget his dependence, and moments of suffering did not obscure G-d's love for him. That is why he could say "it is fitting for me to lead." David earned the cup.

Every year, Jews in Israel live through what can feel like an impossible emotional whiplash: the raw grief of *Yom HaZikaron* giving way, within hours, to the dancing and *Hallel* of *Yom HaAtzmaut*. The transition can feel jarring - even wrong. How do we mourn during the day and celebrate that evening?

David HaMelech's answer is that they are not opposites at all. Walking among the graves on Har Herzl and dancing with a flag in the street are two expressions of the same love - for this Land, for this people, and for the G-d Who is guiding our return to both. Our gratitude cannot be one-sided. It must be expressed in tears and in laughter, in loss and in triumph, because a relationship built only on the good is not yet a full relationship.

That kind of love demands something from us. It asks us to trust G-d not only when things are going well, but precisely when they are not - to hold both the grief and the joy without letting either one cancel out the other. That is what David modeled, and it is what we carry with us, from the cemetery to the celebration and back again.



Chevi Charlap

is originally from Woodmere, New York, and made Aliyah to Jerusalem in August 2023. She is currently studying in the Tanach-Halacha track at the Mizrahi Lapidot program.

From Narrowness to Expansiveness

Tehillim 118

Rabbanit Sharon Rimon

T*ehillim* 118, the culmination of *Hallel*, contains within it a human and existential drama – both personal and national. From the deepest pit to the heights of salvation and joy. On Yom HaAtzmaut, these words cease to be mere verses and become the living story of the Jewish people.

The *Tehillim* is built on reversals and sharp transitions: from narrowness (*meitzar*) to expansiveness (*merchav*); from distress to salvation; from fear to security; from falling to standing tall; from rejection to cornerstone; from humiliation to holding one's head high. It reflects the spiritual state of a people who have learned to hold onto faith and hope in the midst of constriction, and even to sing.

The *Tehillim* opens and closes with gratitude to Hashem for the kindness He bestows upon us: "Give thanks to Hashem, for He is good, for His kindness endures forever." This thanksgiving is shared by every segment of the nation: "Let Israel say: His kindness endures forever. Let the House of Aaron say: His kindness endures forever. Let those who fear Hashem say: His kindness endures forever" (*Tehillim* 118:2-4).

After this festive opening, the *Tehillim* plunges into lived experience: "From the narrow place I called to G-d; He answered me with expansiveness." The gratitude does not arise from a rosy reality. On the contrary; the nation finds itself in the *meitzar* and cries out from within it. It is Hashem's response that carries us out into the *merchav*. The very act of turning to Hashem expands the heart and enables a feeling of security, even when one is still in the narrow place. We all long for genuine physical safety, but the *Tehillim* teaches us that salvation begins as an inner experience.

The *Tehillim* continues: "Hashem is with me; I shall not fear – what can man do to me?" Ibn Ezra explains: "G-d is with me,

so what can any man do to me?" Hashem's protection renders us invulnerable. There is another layer here, which Ibn Ezra cites in the name of Rabbi Moshe HaDarshan. When we cleave to our Creator, external threats cannot shake our fundamental sense of security. Even when the security situation is complex, freedom from fear becomes possible through the knowledge that "Hashem is with me."

This *bitachon* deepens precisely through disappointment: "It is better to take refuge in Hashem than to trust in man... than to trust in princes." Jewish history is a long chronicle of broken promises – from great powers, international guarantees, and generous patrons alike. Our ability to stand firm when "all the nations surround me" rests not on military strength alone, but on the name of Hashem that we carry – "in the name of Hashem I will cut them down."

"You pushed me hard to make me fall, but Hashem helped me." How many times in history have we stood at the edge of the abyss, only to be saved in an instant?

This reversal finds its most powerful expression in the verse that follows: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." A person who was despised and humiliated, who endured crushing hardships, succeeds, with Hashem's help, in rising, rebuilding, and ascending to the highest place. So too the Jewish people. The nation once dismissed and persecuted for centuries became, with the establishment of the State, a cornerstone – a force of innovation, morality, and power.

"This is from Hashem; it is wondrous in our eyes." The return to Zion is so astounding, so incomprehensible, that even we who live it every day sometimes struggle to absorb the magnitude of the miracle.

Yet salvation is never self-evident, and it places upon us a responsibility – to sing and give praise to Hashem; to make clear

salvation comes from Him; to tell the story of our miraculous survival as testimony to His power. "G-d is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation. The sound of joyous song and salvation resounds in the tents of the righteous – the right hand of Hashem performs valiantly, the right hand of Hashem is exalted. I shall not die but live, and recount the deeds of G-d" (*Tehillim* 118:14-17).

At the height of joy, the *Tehillim* brings us back to earth: "Please, Hashem, save us now." Even as free people in our own Land, we remain dependent on Hashem at every moment. Independence is not an achievement to be pocketed – it must be earned continuously, in security and above all in spirit.

On this Yom HaAtzmaut, as we declare "This is the day Hashem has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it," we hold all of it together: the pain of the *meitzar* we have lived through; Hashem's closeness and protection even in the darkest of straits; the wonder of salvations unfolding before our eyes; the obligation to thank Him and proclaim His name before the world – and the privilege of walking through the gates of righteousness in Jewish history.



Rabbanit Sharon Rimon

is a staff member at Mizrahi's Lapidot program, teaches Tanach, and is Content Editor for the HaTanakh website.

JEWES with VIEWS

We asked five Bnei Akiva shlichim: What will you miss most about Yom HaAtzmaut in Israel this year while you are on shlichut?



Sasha Tschernia

What I will miss most this year on Yom HaAtzmaut is the deep sense of belonging that only Israel can give you. A day like Yom HaAtzmaut, especially in the times we are living through now, strengthens something essential: the connection within the Jewish people, and within our own families.

Being in Israel on this day always brings that feeling into sharp focus. There is something powerful about celebrating the country's independence surrounded by your loved ones and by an entire society sharing the same emotions at the same moment.

It will be interesting to experience Yom HaAtzmaut from afar this year. Celebrating while on shlichut offers a different perspective, and I'm curious to see how the day will feel outside of Israel. But if I'm honest, no matter how meaningful the experience abroad turns out to be, it's my family I will be thinking about.

Sasha Tschernia is originally from Kibbutz Tirat Zvi, Israel, and is married to Roi. Together they are parents to Shalem. Since last August, they have been serving as shlichim on behalf of the Jewish Agency and Bnei Akiva in Zurich, Switzerland.



Shivi Himmelstein

What I will miss most about being in Israel on Yom HaAtzmaut is something harder to name: the feeling of living through history, even when it looks like ordinary life. Over the past two-and-a-half years, since October 7th, Israelis have been living through some of the most intense and defining moments in our country's existence. The news cycle moves fast – another operation, another development – but underneath it all is a quiet awareness that future generations will look back on these years in awe.

I will miss being surrounded by a society that understands this instinctively. For thousands of years the Jewish people dreamed of returning to this land and defending themselves in it. Today, Israel is not only sovereign but strong enough to protect its people and shape the future of an entire region. Celebrating Yom HaAtzmaut in Israel means feeling that transformation not as distant history, but as something unfolding beneath your feet.

And I will miss the day itself – the atmosphere that is unlike anything else, where pride, gratitude, and the memory of sacrifice fill the air, and the entire country somehow smells like one enormous BBQ. Every person around you is part of the reason there is something to celebrate.

Yom HaAtzmaut in Israel is a constant reminder that the miracle of Jewish independence did not end in 1948. It is still unfolding – in our generation, right now.

Shivi Himmelstein is a graduate of the Shalhevet program of the Religious Zionist Shlichut Center founded by Mizrachi and previously worked in Israel as a social worker. Since 2022, he and his wife Shira have been serving as Bnei Akiva and Mizrachi shlichim in Perth, Australia.



Michal Stramer

As Yom HaAtzmaut approaches, our hearts fill with longing. There are two special events that have become traditions for us over the years, and we know we will miss them deeply. The first is the festive prayer on the eve of Yom HaAtzmaut at the *beit midrash* of Rabbi Drukman, of blessed memory. For Afek, this is a long-standing tradition – prayer, dancing, and thanksgiving. It is a prayer he has never missed, and the atmosphere there is etched in the heart.

The second is the morning after – a hike in nature with friends, and a BBQ like every Israeli. Once we even found ourselves at Superland, Israel’s popular amusement park, when it was completely empty – a once-in-a-lifetime experience that became an especially sweet memory. More than anything, Yom HaAtzmaut for us is a day of prayer, friends, and family – a day to pause, give thanks, and celebrate together.

Michal Stramer and her husband Afek are parents to two young daughters, Be’eri and Alma, and are originally from Israel. They currently serve as Bnei Akiva shlichim in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



Asaf Leybovich

This year, what I will miss most about Yom HaAtzmaut is simply being in Israel – feeling the air, the energy, the atmosphere of an entire nation celebrating its own birthday. There is something impossible to put into words about walking outside and knowing that every person around you is marking the same moment.

I will especially miss the BBQ with family and friends. And for me, Yom HaAtzmaut has always been more personal than most: it is also my birthday. Growing up, my own joy and the joy of the State were inseparable. This year, for the first time, I will be marking both from far away.

And yet I think this distance offers something rare. Celebrating Yom HaAtzmaut as a *shaliach* abroad means experiencing the day from a different – and perhaps deeper – angle. Watching a proud Zionist community mark the occasion thousands of miles from home is a powerful reminder: our connection to Israel is not a matter of geography. We are not merely citizens of a state. We are one people, bound together across continents, united in celebrating the miracle and the weight of Jewish sovereignty.

Asaf Leybovich, 23 years old, is originally from Petach Tikva, Israel, and a graduate of the World Bnei Akiva Mechina. He currently serves as a Bnei Akiva shaliach in Gothenburg, Sweden.



Shani Levine

Have you ever counted how many people you pass during the day? On a normal day I would smile and keep walking. But on Yom HaAtzmaut, something in the air is different. Suddenly I feel connected to every stranger around me – at the performances in the community at the start of the celebrations, where everyone crowds around the stage singing the same song, and the children take the stage with the same dance I once performed myself. Or simply on the street, on the way to the next show.

The person singing next to me will recommend where the best performance is and the quickest way to get there. In return, I’ll tell them about the stand with the cheapest popcorn and cotton candy. That feeling carries into the next day as well. Sitting with neighbors on a mat at the beach, someone cuts open a watermelon, I pull out Bamba, and suddenly everyone is sharing without a second thought – while the breathtaking air show passes overhead.

That sense of mutual responsibility, almost effortless, is what I will miss most. The pride, the gratitude, the small moments when strangers feel like one big family for a single day of the year. The sound of the celebrations, the smell of barbecues, the feeling that everyone around me is celebrating the same story – the same story that is mine too.

Shani Levine, 20 years old, is originally from Yad Binyamin, Israel. She currently serves as a Bnei Akiva shlichah in Dortmund, Germany.



Kuma: The Strength to Rise Again

Hadas Hershkovitz

This article is based on the personal reflections of Hadas Hershkovitz and was adapted for publication by Inbar Gabay Zada, Director of Development at Sulamot.

My name is Hadas Hershkovitz. I am Yossi Hershkovitz's wife - his widow. We live in Gush Etzion, in a very special place called Gevaot, where together Yossi and I raised five incredible children. Yossi was forty-four years old when he went out to war and fell in Gaza.

Before I share what happened to Yossi, it is important to understand who he was - not just what happened to him.

A life of mission

Yossi was an educator - the principal of a boys' high school in Jerusalem, Ohr Pelech. He was busy and did many things, but everything he did came from a deep sense of mission. Not ego. Not pressure. Mission. Through all of it, he was first and foremost a father. No matter how full his days were, he was insistent on being home in the afternoons, on being present, on being part of our family.

Yossi was born in the Old City of Jerusalem, and he was a man of Jerusalem before anything else - deeply connected to Jewish history, to *Tanach*, and to the ability to see the broader picture of *Am Yisrael* and where we are headed. In the army he served in special units, first in a special navy unit and later in a special

paratroopers unit. When he finished his service, he was already in the selection process for the Mossad.

Then someone needed help at a school. They were looking for a substitute teacher for a short time, and Yossi - being Yossi - of course said yes. Within a day or two, he fell in love with education, changed his plans completely, and decided to become a teacher.

At first he worked with students from very difficult backgrounds - boys from low socioeconomic situations and boys at high risk. In the mornings he would go to their homes, get them out of bed, and get them moving. At night he would find them on the streets, sometimes collecting them from police stations. Over more than twenty years, over a thousand students became deeply connected to him. He wasn't just a teacher. He changed their lives.

Yossi had an extraordinary ability to truly see people. He could look at each student - and each teacher - and identify the special character, the unique piece inside them that could give them wings and help them rise. After a few years, we were asked to serve as *shlichim* at SAR Academy in Riverdale - at the time, this kind of *shlichut* was not common - and we decided to go.

SAR is a very unique school. The way education happens there is different, rooted in a deep belief in openness, trust, and

connection between teachers and students; the physical space reflects that as well, with learning happening with transparency and closeness, not behind closed walls. For us, those four years were a gift – truly life-changing. We came to know Jews living outside of Israel not as an idea but as people, as families and communities, and we learned how Judaism is lived beyond Israel in a way that changed us deeply. I am not a teacher by profession, but during those four years I was “Morah Hadas.” Yossi and I worked together constantly – planning classes, teaching side by side, literally spending twenty-four hours a day together.

The families at SAR inspired Yossi to return to Israel and build differently. When we came back, Yossi eventually served as a school principal, and the first thing he did at his school was break down walls – literally. People thought he was crazy. But Yossi was a principal like no other. He was there for his students, playing the violin with them, earning their trust and their respect.

The violin had begun as a hobby but became part of who he was. Yossi started playing at age six, and years later, at least once a week, he would go to hospitals to play for sick patients. Today this is more common, but back then almost nobody did it, and people were deeply moved by his playing.

October 7th, 2023

That Simchat Torah morning, we were preparing a *kiddush hodayah* – a thanksgiving *kiddush*. Yossi was *chatan Torah* that year, and one of our sons had been very sick and had recovered. I was chopping vegetables and warming up *kugel* when I went to *shul* with the children – and on the way, suddenly, there were sirens.

Where we live, there are no bomb shelters, not at home and not in the *shul*. We lay on the ground together with our children, hands over our heads, listening to the sirens. Yossi told everyone in the *shul* to go home. He volunteered with the *yishuv*'s security team and went out to check what was happening. He came back very quickly and said to me, “Des” – that’s what he called me – “Des, there is a war.”

I didn’t understand what was happening. But Yossi did. For a long time he had been waiting for something like this. Ever since the *milchemet achim* – the deep internal strife that had torn at Israeli society in the previous year – he had felt that something was coming, that this was not a fluke, not a one-day event, not something that would simply pass. By around 9:30 that morning, he told me there were hostages. Not many people understood that yet, but Yossi knew.

He said to me, “I need to go fight. I need to defend Israel.” I said to him, “I know this is your instinct, but think for a minute. Where are you needed most? You have six hundred students. So many teachers rely on you.” If this had been only about me – or even only about our children – there would have been nothing to discuss. Thousands of women across Israel were in the same position at that moment, sending their husbands to fight. But Yossi’s life carried a responsibility beyond our home.

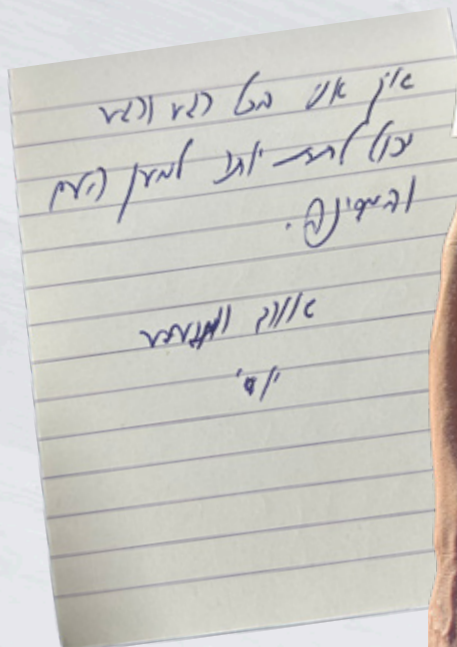
And still, for him, it was not a question. Yossi was forty-four years old. He had celiac. He took medication. But he looked at me and said, “For me, it’s not a question. I have to go. I have to be with our brothers and sisters. I have to help the hostages.”

He spoke to the children and told them he was going and that it would be for a long time. And then he did something I didn’t understand: he went through every holiday with them. He said, “I will be gone, and it will be Chanukah, the holiday of light, and then Purim, and then Pesach, the holiday of freedom.” I listened to him reviewing all of the holidays he would miss because he would be fighting, and I had a very bad feeling.

Yossi went, and I stayed home with the children. Every few minutes there were sirens. We were terrified – we live surrounded by Arabs, and we genuinely thought they might infiltrate. For the next month, my heart was breaking. I couldn’t even speak.

Two weeks later, on a Friday night, I got a phone call from Yossi. It was Shabbat, and the children saw his name on the phone and were scared. He told me, “We are going into Gaza.” No one knew officially yet; it was quiet and secret. But he told me so that I would know he would not have cell phone access.

Before going in, Yossi sent a final WhatsApp message to his staff – to the teachers at his school. It wasn’t a technical message and it wasn’t instructions. It was Yossi speaking from who he was. He wrote about humility – that before he was created he was unworthy, and that even now, his life was never his own. He reminded them that throughout Jewish history, when people were sent on missions by Divine Providence – according to their strength – they answered “*Hineni*, Here I am.” He wrote that for weeks we had been at war, a



Yossi, and the last note he wrote.

war G-d had placed upon us: to extinguish the fire of evil in the world, to spread goodness, and to remove wickedness. Now G-d had sent him on another mission, and so he was stepping away. At the end, he thanked them – because he knew what they were carrying too, and he wrote to them as people who each bear a great burden. I believe Yossi wrote this message because he understood exactly where he was going, and why.

Only later did I understand that Yossi was the first to walk into Gaza, and that after him 3,000 Israeli soldiers followed. He wasn't the youngest. He wasn't the strongest soldier or the best fighter. But he was the right person to lead. Yossi could hold many things at once – he was very tough and very soft, very deep and also very funny, the funniest person I ever knew. He was an *ish emet*, a man of truth, with no ego, who did what he believed was right. He gave the soldiers something essential: *bitachon* – calm, trust, a sense of meaning and faith in Hashem.

For two weeks they fought inside Gaza, and there were many miracles during that time. Then, on a Thursday, we received word that they were coming out to rest. We wouldn't see them, but I was so relieved – I was just waiting to speak to him. That night, another message came: there was critical intelligence. They needed to stay for one more mission, just one more day. I told myself: okay. Just one more mission.

That Friday morning, I woke up completely broken and didn't know what to do with myself. I drove to Jerusalem, then told myself, *Hadas, you have children. You need to get yourself together*, and I drove back home ready to face another Shabbat with Yossi in Gaza. At 3:30 that Friday afternoon, I suddenly felt a terrible pain in my stomach. I felt that something very bad was happening. I asked my neighbor to come sit with me and told her, "Something very bad is happening." She tried to calm me down and said everything would be okay, but I was crying, and then the children started crying because they had never seen me cry like that. I asked my children something I had never asked them before: I asked them to go to *shul* and pray. I asked my oldest son – sixteen at the time – to take our three-year-old and go. After they came back, we ate Friday night dinner at our neighbor's house. We tried to be okay. We sang. The children played. Everything calmed down a little.

Then, in the middle of Shabbat dinner, there was a knock at the door. I knew. I opened the door and saw three officers standing there and said, "I know. You don't have to say anything." I also told them: this is a *mega pigu'a* – a mass-casualty event – because Yossi's death will touch so many lives. And I said, "I'm actually glad for you that you don't know who Yossi was. Because if you knew, you wouldn't be able to tell me what you're here to tell me."

Sergeant Major (res.) Yosef Chaim ("Yossi") Hershkovitz, of blessed memory, fell on 26 Marcheshvan 5784 (November 10, 2023), at the age of 44. He was laid to rest at the military cemetery on Mount Herzl on Sunday, November 12, 2023.

Kuma

This was never supposed to be my story. Yossi was not a career soldier, and I never believed, even in my worst nightmares, that this would be my life. I have five amazing children who lost the best father they could have had. I don't think I would be able to stand here and tell this story without the people who held me and continue to hold me – among them, Kuma.

For me, Kuma is a *galgal hatzala* – a life raft. What is so important about Kuma is that the staff understands that widows are not all the same. Each of us has different children, different lives, different needs, and we need different kinds of support at different times. Kuma knows how to see us as individuals – sometimes that means daily support, sometimes support at a moment of crisis, sometimes something very specific.

Last summer, during the war with Iran, my children panicked. They barely slept, and since we do not have a shelter nearby, every siren meant driving together to a public *miklat* (bomb shelter) in the middle of the night. My children couldn't handle it, and neither could I. I realized the only solution was to build a safe room in my house; it was a significant undertaking, but essential for my children to feel safe. Now, we have more peace of mind as Iranian missiles pass above us.

While many partners helped create the room, Kuma navigated the process with me, providing the professional guidance and backing needed to move forward. When the construction damaged our garden, Kuma acted with urgency to fund and restore it just in time for Yossi's memorial (*azkara*).

Beyond the larger projects, Kuma is there for the daily challenges of solo parenthood. Whenever I face home repairs or logistical challenges, I know I can turn to them; they immediately step in to help me find a solution.

Kuma provides this same standard of care to every widow in the program. Beyond the monthly stipends, financial guidance and rights advocacy we are all offered by Kuma, it is this personal, professional accompaniment that allows us to truly rise. Today, there is a feeling that everyone is moving forward with "real life," while we – the widows – often feel left behind. Yet, Kuma stays. They walk with us in this new mission, holding us so we can rise again.

For me, this is an opportunity to say thank you – to Rav Rimon and to all of Sulamot's Kuma staff. I hope with all my heart that Kuma continues to have the support it needs to go on supporting us, the widows of the Iron Swords War.



Heroes fell. And the women left behind rise – quietly, step by step – holding their children and rebuilding life as everyday heroines.

Kuma is an initiative of Sulamot, founded by Rav Yosef Zvi Rimon, and supported by generous partners around the world, including Mizrahi Canada and the World Mizrahi Movement.

To learn more and partner:

<https://kuma.sulamot.org/en/eng/>
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The Strategic Impacts of the War with Iran

Brig. General (res.) Yossi Kuperwasser

Operations “Roaring Lion” and “Epic Fury” are a major strategic turning point for all the parties involved. They have strategic impacts across a wide array of areas and create a new strategic situation in the Middle East and beyond.

First, they clarify that from now on the strategic approach of the United States and Israel is to deal with imminent threats when they are still manageable, and not wait and adopt a policy of containment until it's too late. This is of course a direct lesson from the horrors of October 7th. It was this policy that enabled Iran to build a “ring of fire” of proxies around Israel, equip itself with thousands of missiles of various ranges (including some that can reach western Europe), and accumulate enough highly enriched uranium (even to 60%) to allow it to build, within a short period of time, a dozen nuclear warheads for its long-range missiles. It was this policy that enabled Hezbollah to acquire an enormous number (approximately 150,000) of missiles covering all of Israel from Lebanon. It was this policy that allowed Hamas to prepare and execute the terror attack of October 7th and exact from Israel the heavy price that it entailed.

This is over. The United States, under President Trump, and Israel are not going to wait any longer until their enemies approach the point of no return.

This policy is now being implemented by Israel not only vis-à-vis Iran, but also in Lebanon, in Gaza, in Syria, and in Judea and Samaria. Israel's new national security strategy is to deny its enemies the ability to deploy terror armies along its borders, through the use of force and diplomatic activity.

Second, the United States and Israel operate as a team. The two countries are not shy about calling evil evil, and have demonstrated their capabilities to address threats emanating from evil actors, including Iran, the number one sponsor of terror around the globe. This show of force and resilience is bound to change the strategic architecture of the Middle East. After decades in which this architecture was shaped primarily by Iran through its proxies, the United States and Israel now have an opportunity to strengthen their alliances with stable and peace-seeking countries in the region, proving to them that the benefits of cooperating with the “axis of good” considerably outweigh the destruction caused by cooperating with Iran and other radical Muslim countries – not only in the realm of security and protection against enemies, but also in the economic and technological arenas. The Abraham Accords framework proved resilient to the threats of Iran and its proxies, and may serve as an example for other countries in the region and beyond.

Third, on the eve of its 78th anniversary of independence, Israel proved its ability to contend successfully with threats from several fronts simultaneously, and must now be regarded by other players in the region as a major power in the Middle East (some dare to use the term “regional superpower,” and perhaps more



than just regional) – even if American interest in the region wanes in the future. Israel’s cooperation with the United States is a force multiplier, but it has the capability to achieve a great deal on its own. This development is extremely important in view of the growing criticism of Israel in American public opinion and in the public opinion of other Western countries. On the one hand, Israel has proven what a valuable ally it is for the United States; on the other, it has already clarified its intention to reduce its dependence on American financial assistance for its security needs. Israel has also shown how strong its civil society resilience is (Israel ranks eighth on the World Happiness Index) and how strong its economy is – which, despite two-and-a-half years of fighting an ongoing war, continues to show remarkable results. In spite of all of that, it would be advisable for Israel to remember that it is a small country of around 10 million people fighting states with populations almost ten times larger, and to practice caution and modesty in the use of its force.

Fourth, globally, the United States proves to be the leading superpower with an unprecedented and unchallenged military power, with only one real ally that can be counted on – namely Israel. The United States and Israel have taken upon themselves to do what needed to be done in order to secure the West in the face of the threat of radical Islam, and without the American contribution the rest of the West is unable to protect itself. The reluctance and inability of Europe, Canada, Japan, and Australia to contribute to the American effort to defeat a very dangerous enemy of the West – even after safe shipping through the Strait of Hormuz was challenged, and Iran demonstrated its capability to attack Europe with missiles in addition to its support for the Russian war machine in Ukraine – is a painful manifestation of how weak and out of touch with reality these countries are, and of the extent to which their readiness to allow Muslim immigration has affected their decision-making. Not only did these countries fail to thank the United States (and Israel) for their sacrifices in protecting them while they sat on the sidelines, but some of them (Spain, for example) sided with the enemy and criticized those who fought for their rescue. NATO and the UN proved once again to be irrelevant. China and Russia are also in a complicated position: their ally Iran was attacked and there was nothing they could do about it beyond calling for a ceasefire and offering Iran diplomatic and financial support.

Fifth, these strategic changes may present great opportunities for Israel and its allies. They may lead to a change of regime in Iran,

the disarmament of Hamas and Hezbollah, and normalization of relations with many of Israel’s neighbors – including Iran, if the regime there changes. However, we should not underestimate the challenges and threats still ahead. Radical Islam as an ideology – with Iran as its Shiite hub and Turkey and ISIS as leaders of two versions of Sunni radical Islam – remains a force to be reckoned with. The Palestinian issue is not going away and may serve as a source of instability, especially if Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) leaves the stage and Hamas remains in control of part of the Gaza Strip. Antisemitism and anti-Zionism around the globe, fomented by the Red-Green Alliance and by the extreme right, will continue to pose a threat to the security of Jews around the world – including in Australia, as was manifested in the Bondi Beach attack – and these forces will continue to portray Israel as evil and as dragging the West into unnecessary and unjustified wars. Trump will not last forever, and Israel and Jewish communities must prepare for all kinds of eventualities, especially at a time when attitudes toward Israel have become a partisan issue in many countries, including, to a large extent, the United States itself. Israel must invest not only in maintaining its military capabilities and economic fortitude, but also in shaping world public opinion and blocking its enemies – who invest enormous resources in this area – from further weakening its standing.

This Israel Independence Day is marked by the vitality and strength of Israel and its ability, together with the United States, to make the Middle East and the world a better place, and to lend new meaning to the notion of *tikkun olam*.



Brig. General (res.) Yossi Kuperwasser
is head of the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security.



When Herzl Refused to Kiss the Pope's Ring

Rabbi Elie Mischel

In January 1904, six months before his death, Theodor Herzl entered the Vatican for an audience no Jew had ever been granted before. He came as the representative of the Jewish people, asking for recognition of their right to return to their Land after centuries of exile.

Herzl had been briefed carefully on Vatican protocol. He knew exactly what was expected of him. Every visitor to Pope Pius X knelt. Every visitor kissed the pope's outstretched hand. Herzl did neither. He remained standing, with his back straight and head held high.

The Pope, to put it kindly, was not amused. "The Jews have not recognized our Lord," Pope Pius X declared. "Therefore we cannot recognize the Jewish people." He left no room for misunderstanding: "We cannot give approval to this movement. We cannot prevent the Jews from going to Jerusalem, but we could never sanction it. *Gerusalemme* must not get into the hands of the Jews" (*Diary of Theodor Herzl*, January 26, 1904).

This was not an isolated incident. Chaim Weizmann later wrote that "in his meetings with various heads of states, Herzl adopted a proud attitude that bordered on arrogance and often seemed inappropriate in light of the political insignificance of the movement he represented" (Introduction to *Theodor Herzl: Medinat HaYehudim*).

Chazal teach that "one who walks even four cubits standing fully erect is as if they were showing disrespect to the Divine Presence" (*Berachot* 43b), and "Be very, very humble, for the hope of mortal man is worms" (*Pirkei Avot* 4:4). Our tradition prizes humility before both G-d and man. Yet when Herzl stood tall before the Pope, he did exactly the opposite. Was the founder of modern Zionism completely out of sync with these Torah values when he insulted the Pope?

"I am Hashem, your G-d, Who took you out of the land of Egypt from being slaves to them; and I broke the pegs of your yoke and led you upright (*komemiyut*)" (*Vayikra* 26:13). The word *komemiyut* appears nowhere else in the Torah. Rashi explains it simply as "with upright posture, with one's head high, with dignity." Rav Zadok HaCohen of Lublin, writing in 1890 as Jews were beginning to return to the Land, explained: "Erect, standing upright, not like those who travel to the Holy Land today to grovel and be in exile among the peoples that govern it, for this is not a true return to our Land and our holiness" (*Yisrael Kedoshim*, 34). Groveling in our own homeland before those who rule over us contradicts the very purpose of Jewish return.

But how does this attitude fit with *Chazal's* call for humility? The distinction, explains Rav Shlomo Aviner, lies between an individual Jew and the collective nation of Israel: "Private pride is a bad trait, but national pride is a good trait. What we lack is tremendous national pride, because for many generations we had no state. Worse than this, even the heart has been emptied of national pride, after we were so humiliated, until we forgot what national pride is" (*Commentary to Eicha*, 24).

Chazal themselves make this distinction, poetically teaching that G-d weeps "because of the pride of Israel that was taken from them and given to foreigners" and "because of the pride of the Kingdom of Heaven" that is "despised and trampled upon" (*Chagigah* 5b). National Jewish pride represents the honor of Heaven itself. When a Jew bows before a foreigner, he diminishes G-d's glory in the world.

At the Vatican, Herzl did not stand as a private individual but as a representative of the Jewish people. Personal humility was not his to display because he carried

the dignity of an entire nation on his shoulders.

Herzl grasped instinctively what the Vatican feared: that after two millennia of exile and humiliation, the Jews were emerging from the shadows to speak for themselves. His upright posture in the Pope's presence declared that the days of Jewish groveling had ended. His refusal to kiss the papal ring announced that the heirs of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would no longer seek validation from those who had spent centuries trying to replace them.

His "arrogance" was actually *komemiyut*, the upright posture that G-d commanded His people to maintain when they walk in freedom.

Herzl must guide us today. Individual Jews must cultivate personal humility before G-d. But when representing the Jewish people, when speaking for the State of Israel, when confronting those who would deny Jewish national rights, *komemiyut* is not optional. It is a divine command. Standing tall in such moments honors both the dignity of our people and the G-d who shattered the yoke of our exile to lead us upright into freedom.



Rabbi Elie Mischel

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

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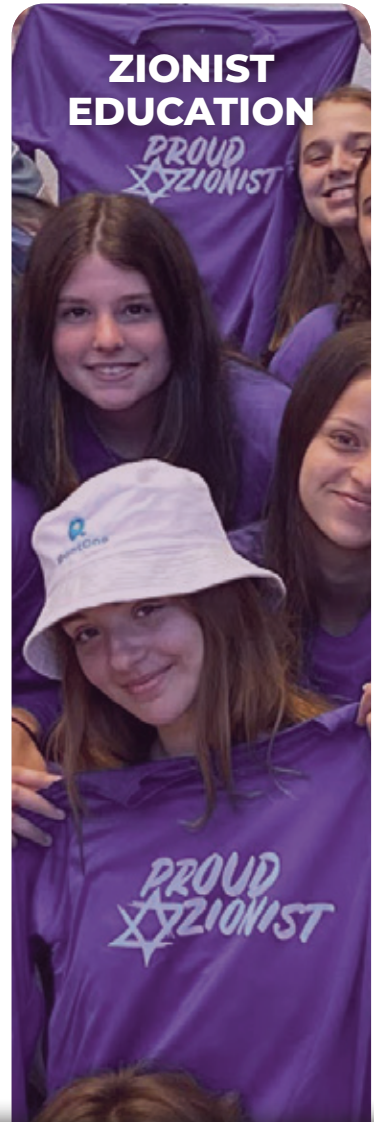
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More Than a House: Building a Home in Our Homeland



Aleeza Ben Shalom

On Yom HaAtzmaut, we celebrate a miracle that once felt impossible: we reclaimed our homeland. After centuries of exile, dispersion, and longing, the Jewish people returned home – not just to a place on a map, but to a promise. To build a home in our homeland. The real question Yom HaAtzmaut asks of us now is: What are we building here?

There is a difference between building a house and building a home. In English, a house is structure – walls, windows, a roof – while a home is warmth, belonging, safety, and shared purpose. A house can be purchased; a home must be created. In Hebrew, however, there is only one word: *bayit*. Physical structure and emotional sanctuary. Shelter and soul. A *bayit* is not complete with walls alone – something must fill the space between them. It needs to be both a physical and spiritual space, practical and purposeful.

When we reclaimed our homeland, we built houses at remarkable speed. Cities rose, neighborhoods expanded, and infrastructure flourished. Thank G-d, we are no longer wandering. But Yom HaAtzmaut is not only about where we live – it is about how we live. There is a *mitzvah* to settle the land, to build, to plant, to establish roots. But there is also a responsibility that goes deeper: to help our people not only settle the land, but settle down within it.

As a matchmaker, I see this clearly every day. We have thriving communities – schools, *shuls*, businesses, organizations – yet within those same communities are singles who feel alone, new *olim* who feel disconnected, widows, widowers, and divorcees who feel unanchored. A homeland without belonging is just geography.

The strongest communities understand this: helping someone build a home is one of the greatest contributions you can make to the Jewish future. Sometimes that means inviting someone for Shabbat who would otherwise eat alone. Sometimes it means introducing two people you think might connect, or checking in on the single neighbor you haven't seen in a while. When you make a thoughtful introduction, you are not meddling – you are building the future. When you create spaces where singles feel welcomed rather than pitied, you strengthen the fabric of our people. When you ask someone “Who are you becoming?” instead of “Why are you still single?” you shift the conversation from pressure to possibility.

Our homeland was not rebuilt by isolated individuals. It was rebuilt by a people who believed they were responsible for one another, and the same must be true for our homes. In Hebrew, *bayit* is singular, but its impact is communal: one stable home strengthens a block, many stable homes strengthen a neighborhood, and entire neighborhoods filled with strong homes create a resilient nation.

If you want to honor Yom HaAtzmaut in a deeply personal way, ask yourself one simple question: Who can I help? It is easy to focus inward – on our mortgage, our renovation, our family schedule – and of course, tending to our own home matters. But Jewish life has never been only about the individual household. Imagine a community where every married couple felt responsible to help at least one single person feel less alone. Imagine if every *shul* saw connection as sacred work, and if we treated introductions not as awkward risks, but as acts of *chesed*.

Settling the Land was historic. Helping our people settle down in it – that is ongoing

holy work. A homeland filled with disconnected individuals is fragile; a homeland filled with rooted families, supported singles, and caring neighbors is unshakable. On Yom HaAtzmaut, we wave flags and celebrate independence, but independence is only powerful when it leads to interdependence – when we choose to build together.

We reclaimed our homeland. Now we must fill it with homes. Not just houses made of stone, but *batei Yisrael* – spaces of commitment, kindness, shared values, and enduring love. My blessing for all of us this Yom HaAtzmaut is that we continue to have the energy to build the future of our homeland together, with love.



Aleeza Ben Shalom

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



Jewish Matchmaking MOVEMENT

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



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with Aleeza

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JEWISH FUTURE
THROUGH MARRIAGE

APR
2026

SOUTH CAROLINA

Jewish Federation Columbia

MAY
2026

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JUNE
2026

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2026

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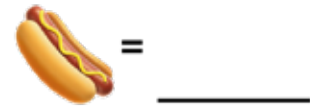
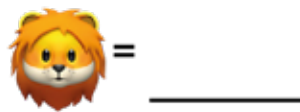
HAMIZRACHI

KIDS CORNER

COMPILED BY: JACQUI AUSTEN
DESIGNED BY: LEAH RUBIN

SOLVE THESE PUZZLES TO FIND THE YOM HA'ATZMAUT RELATED WORDS!

★ EASY ★



★★ MEDIUM ★★



★★★★ HARD ★★★★★



Answer Key: Easy - Magen David, Lion, Hot Dog; Medium - Flags, BBQ, Kotel; Hard - Ben Gurion, Parade, Fireworks



MEET BRACHA HABAS



January 20, 1900 - July 31, 1968 (20 Shevat 5660 - 6 Av 5728)

The Land of Israel's First Female Field Reporter

When the State of Israel was founded in 1948, it contained 197 reporters. Of these, seven were women and the only one who was a reporter and not an editor was Bracha Habas. Bracha was always stationed where the action was. Born in Russia, Bracha grew up speaking Hebrew at home thanks to her mother. At a young age she and her parents moved to Israel eventually settling in Neve Shalom. She was a star throughout her education and in 1925 she joined the Davar newspaper where she wrote about everything and anything. She was present during the Arab Revolt in 1936 and during WWII she traveled to neighboring countries to report on the situation. After the Holocaust, she interviewed survivors in Italy. Over the course of her life she wrote dozens of books and along with two others, founded Davar LeYeladim where she treated children with respect and dignity and put them at the focal point of her stories.



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



DID YOU KNOW?

- Israel has more start-up companies per person than almost any country in the world!
- The Waze navigation app was created in Israel.
- Modern drip irrigation was invented in Israel by engineer Simcha Blass and his son Yeshayahu.

Test Your Knowledge



Who was the first Prime Minister of Israel?

In which city was Israel's Declaration of Independence announced?

What symbol appears in the center of the Israeli flag?

Look for the answers in the Parshat Acharei Mot-Kedoshim Youth Edition – see below for more details!

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YOM HA'ATZMAUT WORD SEARCH

M E T A Z S H Y Z N T G B K U Z C U M R
 N R H L M I N D E P E N D E N C E S U D
 G A N G T H M V P E N D H Y Z I E L A G
 G Q O N C A C M T H G I E Y T N E V E S
 A S R D K I M A H L I E B X M L S N C T
 L Z A I W H I T E T I U Y R M U B N O O
 F I K D J K N A H A V K I T A H U L A T
 Z B I F U D R H K E T I H W T U G X U N
 M H Z K G S Q G J U S U M E D I N A H E
 R A S S I N G J U S H A V I T I K U M T

CAN YOU FIND ALL THE YOM HA'ATZMAUT RELATED WORDS?

- FLAG
- INDEPENDENCE
- SEVENTY EIGHT
- ZIKARON
- WHITE
- BLUE
- IDF
- ISRAEL
- HATIKVAH
- MEDINAH





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