



ISRAEL EDITION
VOL 7 • NO 4
ROSH HASHANAH &
YOM KIPPUR 5785

המזרחי



HAMIZRACHI

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Since the beginning of the war, family and friends of fallen Israelis have produced stickers to commemorate the fallen. This collection of memorial stickers was pictured at Kikar Tzion, Yerushalayim, just after Rosh Chodesh Elul.

Dedicated in honour of the Lamm family of Melbourne, Australia. With gratitude for their friendship and amazing support of HaMizrachi Magazine, the Mizrachi Lamm School of Leadership, and much more.



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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.

HAMIZRACHI

PUBLISHED BY WORLD MIZRACHI IN JERUSALEM

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

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"הַיְהִי מָה-טוֹב וַיְמַה-נְעִים
שֶׁבֶת אֲחִים גַּם-יַחַד"

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Choosing the World We Live In

Rosh Hashanah, Simcha and Sukkot

Rabbi Doron Perez



This essay is an excerpt from “Days of Awe in Times of War” a newly published booklet by Rabbi Doron Perez. The booklets have been distributed together with HaMizrachi magazine.

To read a digital copy, scan the QR code.



There is one element of free choice that no one can ever take away from us and that is our ability to choose our thoughts.

As much as we have free choice, others can take away from us almost every freedom. We can be forced into situations where there is nothing we can do. We can be gagged and bound, Heaven forbid, be rendered unable to speak or act. But no human being can ever force us to think something we don't want to think. We have absolute free choice to choose our attitude in every given situation.

Viktor Frankl and the final human freedom

This is one of the great insights into the human condition that emerges from Viktor Frankl's masterpiece, *Man's Search for Meaning*. Frankl writes that no one can tell him as a survivor of the concentration

camps that a human being does not have free choice. He says that he witnessed people in their last moments stealing another person's piece of bread in order to survive. Yet, incredibly he witnessed others who literally give away their last piece of bread. This, he maintains, provides unequivocal evidence of a human being's capacity to choose a course of action even in impossible circumstances. He says that whether we become angels or animals, saints or sinners, it is entirely up to us.¹ Indeed our sages have famously said that “everything is in the hands of Heaven except for the fear of Heaven.” This has been interpreted by many of our great ethicists to mean that everything that happens to us can be beyond our choice and control except our “fear of Heaven”² – how we choose to react to what happens to us.

So many circumstances, as we know all too well, happen without us having any choice or control – they are forced upon us. But

one thing can never be taken away and that is our fear of Heaven. We can always choose our attitude.

When we face challenges in life that shake our world, we have to dig very deeply into our reservoirs of faith and perspective. Vulnerability and excruciating pain need not necessarily beget paralysis or anger, blame or harsh criticism – there is nothing automatic about these responses. As Stephen Covey has said in his *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*: between stimulus and response there is a gap and we live in that gap.³ The things that happen to us – stimuli – need not elicit any automatic uncontrolled response. We have free choice to dig deep within ourselves and to choose our perspective on what happens to us and then to choose our attitude, response, and course of action. To try, despite the pain, to choose a path of hope and healing, light and life. Faith and beliefs impact perception which in turn impact our actions and

performance. We indeed see the world not the way it is but the way we are.

My mental gamble and 'hostage deal' with myself

Having gone through the horrific 163 days of our son being a hostage and thought to be alive, we were full of fear and angst – amongst the most harrowing situations in life. This tested us in a way that nothing previously had. Then, the knowledge that Daniel had been murdered, with his lifeless body held somewhere in Gaza. Just to find the strength to live each day by putting one foot in front of the other required all our inner reserves of strength and resilience to somehow face the valley of death with faith, hope, and positivity. There is a need every day to choose how to confront this challenging reality.

I felt this so acutely, particularly during those 163 painful days. How is one to cope with the knowledge that one's son is being held by Hamas and heaven only knows what they are undergoing? Are they, G-d forbid, being tortured? Is he injured or even alive? When and will we see him again? How is one to handle such impossible thoughts about the fate of one's beloved child? I realized very quickly that if I am unable to be intentional and proactive about my thoughts, they will get the better of me, paralyze and destroy me.

I needed to up my game and do everything I could to think correctly and create the mental paradigm that I wanted to try to live in. I, thankfully, with the grace of G-d, was able to develop the following mind game that I played with myself each and every day. I said to myself as follows: There is a chance that Daniel did not survive the first day of the tank battle and that would mean, G-d forbid, that he is no longer alive. If that is the case, that means I have nothing to worry about – he is not being tortured. They cannot harm him. If it is true that, G-d forbid, he is deceased, then I have a lifetime of loss and mourning to contend with. But I need not worry about that at all now, because hopefully he is alive. If on the other hand, he is alive, then please G-d, we have so much hope and we will, *b'ezrat Hashem* [with G-d's help], see him again.

The choice to view reality as the glass half-full is our choice, and our choice alone. It is possible to see the emptiness and pain

of both sides of the equation, that he is, G-d forbid, either dead or being tortured. But one can choose to do one's best to think differently – that if he is alive, we will, please G-d, see him again. And if, G-d forbid, he has died, then he is not in harm's way and has died *al kiddush Hashem* [lit. for the sanctification of G-d, as a holy martyr].

This is a choice, an almost impossible one. I have come to believe that Hashem gives us seemingly impossible tests to face. Yet, somehow, at the same time, He gives us impossible strength to deal with them.

Rosh Hashanah – head of the year

This is exactly the spiritual focus of Rosh Hashanah – the first of the Days of Teshuva, expressed in the very name of this festival. The Hebrew word our sages have chosen for the New Year is *Rosh Hashanah* – the “Head of the Year” – and not the more obvious term *Reishit Hashanah*, the “Beginning of the Year.”⁴

The reason our sages picked this specific term – the head – is because the head and mind are the keys to understanding the essence of the day.

Rosh Hashanah is a time of deep cognitive reflection – not a time of action. We examine our spiritual and mental paradigms and thought processes in preparation for the year ahead. It's a time for big-picture mind-mapping – not meddling in minutiae, in specific actions. It is, for this reason, we remarkably do not focus whatsoever on individual actions nor any mention of sin or confession throughout the lengthy prayer service. Although part of the essence of *teshuva* is confession⁵ as we do throughout the *selichot* prayers of penitence and hundreds of times throughout Yom Kippur – we astoundingly do not utter one word of confession on Rosh Hashanah! We dare not get lost in the detail, lest we fail to distinguish the woods from the trees. It's not time “to rearrange deck chairs on the Titanic,” but rather to ensure that we are heading in the right direction. Rosh Hashanah is an intense exercise in systematic strategic spiritual thinking.

It is a time to challenge the very way we see the world. Just as “seeing is believing” so too “believing is seeing” – what we think and believe causes us to see our reality in a certain way. If we cannot conceive

of ourselves differently then we cannot chart a different course of action. How we examine ourselves in thought on Rosh Hashanah will determine the type of atonement in action on Yom Kippur. Rosh Hashanah is a day when we create in thought the conceptual reality for the world we choose to live in.⁶

1. *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl, pp. 65–66.
2. *Berachot* 33b, *Megillah* 25a, *Niddah* 16b.
3. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic*, Stephen R. Covey, p.70.
4. *Reishit* is the obvious word as it is not only the first word in the Torah – *Bereishit* (“In the beginning”) – but it is also mentioned in *Devarim* [Deuteronomy] (11:12) as “the beginning of the year” – *Reishit Hashanah*. It is from here the Talmud (*Rosh Hashanah* 17b) learns the concept of annual judgment on Rosh Hashanah. Nevertheless, our sages chose Rosh Hashanah as the name of the festival and the Talmudic tractate.
5. Rambam in his introduction to the *Laws of Teshuva* sees the source of the *mitzvah* of *teshuva* in יָדוּי – confession.
6. Clear support for this perspective of Rosh Hashanah can be found in the writing of Rabbeinu Tam of the *Ba'alei HaTosafot*. He states that the world was created in *thought* in Tishrei and physically in Nissan (*Rosh Hashanah* 27a). This is how he resolves the discrepancy between both Tishrei and Nissan being times of creation according to our Talmudic sages (*Rosh Hashanah* 10). First the world is created in thought, a vision of the world – its ideal potential. Thereafter, in Nissan, it is created in reality. Clearly, the focus of Rosh Hashanah is therefore in the realm of thought. Just as the world was created in thought and potential, so too the service of the day is one of thought – to create the conceptual reality of our world.



Rabbi Doron Perez
is the Executive Chairman
of World Mizrahi.

Gearing up for the World Zionist Congress 2025 Elections

How to Establish a State in a Few Simple Steps: The Vision of Zionism

In the late 19th century, a young Jewish journalist posed a bold question: “How do I establish a state?” This visionary was none other than Theodor Herzl, the father of modern Zionism. His answer was clear – a state needs a people, land, and resources. While the Jewish people existed, they lacked both territory and funds. However, Herzl, ever the optimist, believed that with enough faith in the idea, anything was possible.

Herzl’s first step? Uniting the Jewish people behind a common cause. He envisioned the First Zionist Congress, a groundbreaking event that brought together Jewish representatives from all corners of the world. In 1897, 208 delegates from 16 countries gathered in Basel, Switzerland, igniting a flame of hope and national revival. The Congress marked a crucial moment in Jewish history, as the dream of establishing a Jewish homeland in Israel began to take shape.

But discussing ideas wasn’t enough; Herzl understood that action was needed. The Congress established the World Zionist Organization, tasked with executing its decisions. Three key institutions soon followed: Keren Hayesod, which focused on raising funds; the Jewish National Fund (JNF), responsible for purchasing land in Israel; and the Jewish Agency, which took charge of immigration, settlement, and education.

Over the years, the Zionist Congress met regularly to address pivotal questions such as the choice between settling in the Land of Israel or Uganda, and the struggle for independence from the British. These discussions shaped the future of the Jewish people, and figures like Berl Katznelson, David Ben-Gurion, and



Every 5 years, global Jewry has the opportunity to make its voice heard at the World Zionist Congress. This Congress has a huge impact on Israel and Jewish life around the world – stay tuned for more details of how to vote for the Mizrahi-led Orthodox Israel Coalition in the 2025 elections!

Chaim Weizmann emerged as leaders of the Zionist movement.

Fifty years later, Herzl's vision culminated in the creation of the Jewish state. On May 14, 1948, David Ben-Gurion declared the establishment of the State of Israel. But even as the fledgling nation was born, the connection between Israel and the Jewish Diaspora remained vital. The Zionist Congress continued to serve as a bridge between Jews in Israel and those around the world.

Today, over 120 years after the First Zionist Congress, elections for the Congress still take place every five years. The Congress now includes 525 representatives, with 200 from Israel, 153 from the U.S., and 172 from other countries. Each community's representation is based on the size of its Zionist population.

The Congress elections differ from traditional political races. Instead of a winner-takes-all approach, the outcome is a broad-based coalition. The roles each party assumes are distributed based on election results, ensuring a wide range of voices and perspectives are heard. For instance, in the most recent Congress, the right-wing faction secured key positions, enabling them to implement policies related to settlement and religious affairs.

In the early 2000s, a major shift occurred. Israel had become the largest Jewish community in the world, transforming from a state in need of support to one capable of offering aid. Israel now extends a helping hand to Jewish communities worldwide, from combating antisemitism to fostering Jewish identity and supporting those in need. The institutions

founded by the Zionist movement continue to play a crucial role, both in Israel and abroad, addressing challenges like assisting Ukrainian refugees and supporting Jewish students at prestigious universities.

The Jewish National Fund (JNF), once dedicated solely to purchasing land, now manages a budget in the billions. Its funds are directed toward projects benefiting Israel and the Diaspora alike. Those who participate in Zionist Congress elections help determine how these resources are allocated, influencing the future of Jewish communities globally.

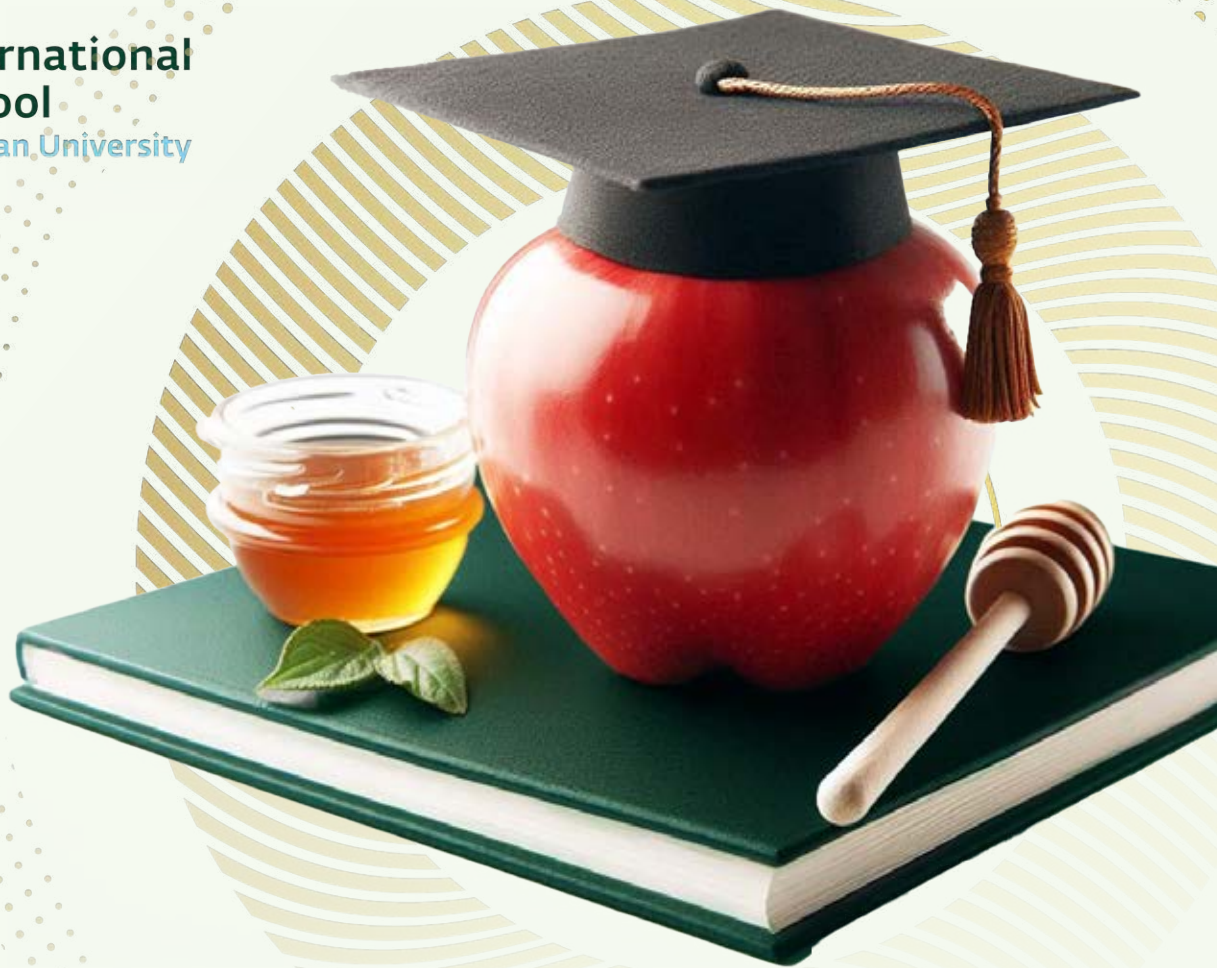
For Jews around the world, participating in Zionist activities means choosing a party that reflects their beliefs. Reform Jews might vote for the Reform list, while Zionist Orthodox Jews would likely support the Mizrahi list. The Reform and Conservative movements have long recognized the importance of these elections, resulting in their large representation in the Congress. However, the Mizrahi movement has also gained strength due to its active role in Jewish communities worldwide.

To ensure the continued influence of Zionist Orthodox Jews, it's essential to mobilize as many voters as possible. Supporting the Mizrahi list helps safeguard the Jewish character of the State of Israel and ensures the continuity of the Jewish people.

Herzl's dream may have been realized with the founding of Israel, but the Zionist movement's work is far from over. Today, as ever, the connection between Israel and the Jewish Diaspora remains a cornerstone of Jewish identity and survival.



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SHANA TOVA

from Bar-Ilan University

As we enter the new year, we wish you a sweet and fulfilling year ahead. Despite the challenges we have faced, our community's strength and resilience shine through.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send us your comments
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Kinot after the Shoah

THANK YOU FOR the very inspiring Tisha B'Av edition, which focused on finding comfort after October 7 in the context of Tisha B'Av.

I found Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter's review of the history of modern *kinot* (for the *Shoah* etc.) to be very informative and relevant ("The Tisha B'Av Kinot and October 7", Tisha B'Av Edition 5784). I would however like to point out that Rav Kasher did not fully abandon his efforts in this regard, and there exists a *kinah* that he composed in memory of the Jewish community of Warsaw (his hometown), entitled "Bacho evkeh mar" ("I will cry bitterly").

May *Am Yisrael* be comforted.

Rabbi Dr. Zvi Leshem

Jerusalem, Israel

HaMizrachi in Gaza

YIGAL GRAYEFF IS originally from the UK and has been living in Israel since 2002. He runs a music school in Jerusalem, and was called up to reserve duty during this war in the Jerusalem Brigade, serving for months in Gaza and the Gaza envelope.

"I am a regular reader of *HaMizrachi* in Katamon," Yigal says. "There have been good in-depth articles, particularly the stories relating to October 7th. Rabbi Perez's articles have been poignant and moving."

For the latest edition, Yigal picked it up in Jerusalem, but then read it while serving in Gaza. We hope that *HaMizrachi* provides inspiration to our soldiers on the front lines.

Special thanks to Josh Fleisher for the photograph.



OUR ACHIEVEMENTS ON THE FRONT LINES

ON THE FRONT LINES
of serving in the IDF

ON THE FRONT LINES
of supporting Torah institutions

ON THE FRONT LINES
of Jewish Unity

ON THE FRONT LINES
of Jewish Destiny

ON THE FRONT LINES
of Shlichut and leading global
Jewish education

ON THE FRONT LINES
of Hityashvut and development
of the Gaza Envelope

290

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

88 million

NIS benefiting 50 yeshivot and seminaries and 3,000 gap year students from the US through Masa funding and other Mizrahi initiatives since the last World Zionist Organization election

27 million

NIS procured for youth villages and Israeli Religious Zionist institutions

60 million

NIS invested in the development of the Golan, Galilee, Negev, Judea and Samaria

2 million

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

5

new communities established: Meital, Shibolet (North) and Mevo'ot Arad Yatir, Hiran and Ir Ovot (South)

4,000

students from 50 yeshivot and seminaries participated in educational activities, including Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut events

800

displaced families provided with emergency war time accommodation in 7 temporary facilities

600

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

35 million

NIS in emergency assistance directed to evacuated communities



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The Religious Zionist voice is needed
now more than ever.

Mizrachi's Religious Zionist global movement
and the Orthodox Israel Coalition
in the US are **ON THE FRONT LINES**
in facing the dangerous security threats
facing Israel.

Sadly, around 50% of the fallen soldiers
since October 7th are from the
Religious Zionist community –
a painful privilege.

We are **ON THE FRONT LINES** of striving for
unity and cohesiveness today. We are often
the bridging and balancing voice in the WZO
where pushing to the extremes on both sides
is common. As we face external enemies who
seek our destruction, our unifying approach is
critical now more than ever.





Jewish Students and the Future of American Universities

A conversation with Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman

Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman is the 5th President of Yeshiva University (YU), a bastion of Modern Orthodox Judaism in America and throughout the world. Since October 7th, he has led YU's response to the crisis and rallied support for Israel across U.S. campuses. As Jewish and international attention focuses on American universities, Rabbi Aron White spoke with Rabbi Dr. Berman to discuss the current situation and future prospects for Jewish students in U.S. higher education.

When you were invested as President of Yeshiva University in September 2017, you put Torat Zion at the center of your role as president of YU. Over the past seven years, how has this manifested itself in the activities of Yeshiva University?

First, thank you to World Mizrachi for inviting me to this conversation. I personally feel very close with Rav Doron Perez and admire him deeply as a *Gibor Yisrael*. I have been so impressed with World Mizrachi's growth under his leadership.

When I started my role at Yeshiva University, I laid out the five core Torah values that everyone knows, but needed to be articulated to put them front and center. *Torat Emet*, the belief that the Torah is true, and that there are truths in our world. *Torat Chaim*, that our Torah is something that we bring out into the world. *Torat Adam*, the belief that all humans are created *b'tzelem Elokim*, in G-d's image, and *Torat Chesed*, that we must help everyone with kindness and compassion. The fifth pillar is *Torat Zion* – not just belief in Israel as our homeland, but that Israel is a vehicle to bring redemption. I thought it was very important for communities around the world to focus on how central how Israel is, and how we are to see ourselves, wherever we live, which the founding of the State of Israel helped bring closer.

I have found that outside of Israel, our communities don't often place themselves in historical terms, and don't contextualize their lives in this great process and purpose of history. We do a lot of replacement, passing on *mesorah* to keep communities going, which is enormously important. However, Judaism can't just be a circle of replacing ourselves, but must be about moving forward. I found that when I made *Aliyah* 15 years ago, in

Israel, and especially in the *dati leumi* community, there is a sense of moving history forward. When you place your life in that context, many decisions are affected and reflected by this perspective.

This has always been true about the Yeshiva University community, so that we all feel we are part of the greatest project in Jewish history.

Where were you on October 7th, and how did Yeshiva University as an institution and students respond?

I was in central Jerusalem praying at Yeshurun synagogue when the siren went off, three times. We knew Jerusalem was under attack. I ran to my mother's apartment in Rechavia to see that she was OK. When I was walking with my son back to *shul*, a friend told him to check his phone. He was called up to the army, and I sent him off to war. Nobody knew what was going to come. That night we were by the TV, glued to the horrific unfolding story as it got worse. My wife stayed in Israel; she could not leave while my son went to the army. But I knew that my *shlichut* (mission) in YU was accentuated in importance.

When I got to YU, we had to operate within two spheres: inside YU, and across American society at large. Within YU, every single person in our undergraduate program is one step of separation from someone who was killed, injured, affected on October 7th, or fighting in the IDF. It was very personal for our students, emotionally and psychologically. As a team, we made sure that our students had directions in which they could channel their pain and their desire to do something. There is nothing that happened after October 7th that is the same as before – our students *davened*, learned in the merit of the IDF, were involved in activism, charity, lobbying, support, at the forefront of the pro-Israel movement in terrain that isn't always welcoming for such activities. A number of students went back as *chayalim* (soldiers) – both undergrad and grad students. We ran missions to Israel; our students went, our leadership scholars went, our Strauss scholars went, our basketball team went. People couldn't just sit here. The intensity of *Tehillim* today is like it was on October 8th – we made a point that while the hostages are in Gaza, while the army is fighting, while Israel is at war, that is our focus.

We also became like an embassy of the State of Israel, with hostage families like John and Rachel Goldberg-Polin and others coming through. Sisters Natali and Rina Har visited and were so moved by their reception at Stern, they said next time they will bring their father with them. Their father is Luis Har, who was freed from captivity by the IDF in February. The day that he was freed, we called up Rabbi Shay Schachter, a Yeshiva University rabbi who was in Israel, and he went to the hospital where Luis was, and he asked Luis if he wanted to *bench gomel*. Rav Hershel Schachter said you need a *minyan* for *gomel*, but it can be over FaceTime. So Luis FaceTimed the *beit midrash* in Washington Heights, and read the *gomel bracha*. It was all so fresh; at that point, he didn't know that people all around the world knew about him, and 500 students from the other side of the world danced and sang for his freedom – he was crying. A few months later, he came with his daughters to visit Yeshiva University. That is the bridge and the bond that Yeshiva University students have created.

Externally, we have taken a public face. I saw what was happening in American society, specifically in higher education, how presidents of universities were not using the right language. It wasn't just how they discussed the horrific nature of October 7th, but also beyond that, when describing Hamas, they wouldn't describe them as terrorists. So I spoke to my colleagues and peers, and created a letter that we stand with Israel against Hamas as universities against terrorism, that spoke in no uncertain terms about the evil



that is Hamas, and that all people of moral conscience stand against Hamas. We started getting signatures – I called up my colleague, the President of the Council for Christian Colleges, which has 150 North American universities, and she signed. I called up the President of a historically black college – she saw how sad I was, and said to me, “The Jews win when Moses holds up his hands. But who holds Moses’ hands up? Let us be your Aaron and Hur. You can lean on us.” I realized that there is a whole other story that people don't know. There are people who can speak with moral clarity and support the Jewish people. I spent many weeks calling presidents all across the country, and everyone wanted to speak to me – because we represent the Jewish people. We got over 100 universities, major public and private universities like University of Texas, University of Miami, Arizona State, really major universities, as well as faith-based schools like Notre Dame, Baylor, Catholic, Liberty, and historically black colleges and universities. I don't know if there has ever been a coalition like this put together. We ran the letter in the Wall Street Journal, and it gave encouragement to so many people. We also ran a social media campaign highlighting the colleges and their logos, with billions of media impressions.

In the front pages we have seen some shocking things in prominent campuses – most famously, the sight of three leading university presidents unable to say that the call for genocide against Jews qualified as hate speech, in December 2023. How did we get here?

Just to clarify – even though there is the story of support for Israel that I mentioned, we definitely need to pay great attention and fight strongly against the other side, and I have dedicated a lot of time to doing that.

There are two factors that have led to this situation. First, we are dealing with a situation that is part of the core culture of universities – the oppressor versus oppressed binary. It's become so deeply rooted, that the postcolonial perspective of colonizer and victim has become a part of the intellectual culture. It does two things. It creates an absurd situation where Jews are seen as the oppressors. At the same time, they can't say that Hamas is a villain, because they don't fit that binary. We experienced the most evil massacres against the Jews since the Holocaust, carried out by a group that self-describes as trying to wipe out all Jews – and the college campuses can't say Hamas is a terrorist organization! A main part of the statement we put out is not just to give language to describe October 7th, but to describe who Hamas are.

The second aspect is that university presidents are afraid of the tinderbox that is their campus. Most of the presidents know that Hamas is a terrorist organization, but they are afraid to call it out.

I thought Rav Doron hit the nail on the head when he spoke at the inaugural *Torat Zion* award. He captured the moment when he said that two of the core values are under attack – *Torat Emet*, the very notion of truth, and *Torat Zion*, the place of Zionism in Judaism.



Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman with the delegation of university presidents visiting Auschwitz.

In today's culture, we have to stand up for the truth against a torrent of lies, and stand up against those who want us to sever Zionism from Judaism.

There is an inherent tension as the President of Yeshiva University. Naturally, I am sure you would like to take all the students that can fit into the dorms, but if the other American campuses become unsafe for Jews, that seems like a dangerous omen. Additionally, it is not practical - there are hundreds of thousands of Jewish college students. How do you see the future of Jews on the American campus?

I have been interviewed all through this year, on all the networks, and I make this point - we are not going to let a Jewish student be endangered, but we can't fit, and it wouldn't be good, if they all came to YU. Campuses have to be safe for Jews, not free from Jews. I have spent a lot of time this year to help protect Jewish students across this country. My coalition wasn't for the inside of Yeshiva University - we don't have to play defense. I am working to defend the rights of Jewish students throughout the country; I know the university presidents and know how universities work.

One of the things we have tried to bring to prominence is the Clery Act, which requires universities to report numbers on crimes - and one of those is hate crimes. So I have been working with Virginia Foxx (NC), of the House Committee on Education and Labor, to publicize this so students should know that they have a voice, and that if they report what happens to them, those numbers show up. The Department of Justice also publicized this Act - it's an important tool for students to make their voices heard.

To educate university presidents and give them a broader experience base to make decisions that affect their universities, March of the Living reached out to me to run a delegation of university presidents. We brought them to Auschwitz and Warsaw. There is nothing as viscerally powerful to express what happens when antisemitism goes unchecked than standing in front of the crematorium and factories of death that the Nazis created. You can read about it, hear about it - but when you are standing there, you learn how to say hatred is unacceptable. If we don't stop antisemitism early, we see what it leads to. We have to ask ourselves what kind of society we want to build.

I often try to bring students with me - our students are amazing, they are the leaders of tomorrow, they have the core Torah values, are immersed in the *mesorah*, engaged in the world, and uniquely

capable of bringing Torah values into the world. Seeing the younger generation, especially when it comes to Israel, gives me hope for the future. The *mesirut nefesh* that my son and his peers are showing, what they are doing, it's holy and inspiring. I'm happy to share that across the globe, a generation of students is being raised to see themselves as leaders in this collective effort to help redeem the world.

Additionally, we are doing many things to partner with organizations in Israel, and Mizrahi is central to that. It's my honor to work with Mizrahi and work with Rabbi Perez - we need to find partnerships not only with the wider world but also within the



Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman with Rabbi Hershel Schachter at the March for Israel in Washington, November 14th 2023.

Jewish world! YU and Mizrachi have deep historical connections, and we continue to partner and work together.

In January of this year you visited Israel and Gaza, and wrote about the sacrifices Israelis have been forced to make and how they compare to the realities of young people outside of Israel. “As someone deeply rooted in both Israel and America, I have never felt such a gap in our contemporary Jewish experiences. While the current crisis is felt by all Jews across the globe, and the threat of antisemitism is real throughout the world, the sacrifices demanded from the families in Israel are extraordinary and ongoing. Returning back to America, one burning question continued to return to my mind: are we worthy of their sacrifices? Do our life choices honor their commitment?” Do you have an answer to that question now?

I still think about that. I inhabit two places. I live in Neve Daniel in Gush Etzion, and I live in Teaneck. My daughter just got married in Psagot. We feel we inhabit both spaces – my whole community, all of our friends, have children fighting this war, who are very seriously *moser nefesh* for the nation. They do it with a sense of *kavod*. Even in the Zionist community in America, when you are not living in Israel, there is a gap in our experiences.

With that said, our communities have far more in common, are deeply connected in values, and share ambitions for Israel and themselves. I feel I can represent each side to the other, as someone on the bridge. Our *roshei yeshiva* put it front and center. Our efforts have not let up at all because we are conscious that there are soldiers risking their lives for Israel's protection.

Overall, your vision of Torat Tzion is empowering and positive, the idea that we can move history forward. Many are pessimistic at the moment, with this war and all it entails. Do you maintain that positive, empowered vision of the future?

Absolutely. There is a need to fight and to combat antisemitism in every form it takes in America. This essential effort must be at the forefront of our minds. At the same time, there are other people and goals. The aim is *safra vesayfa* – we need the sword, but that's not the ultimate goal. The goal is the spread of the book. Many people worldwide are interested in Jewish ideas and values. Our reach is wide, attracting people from deeply Muslim countries to learn from us, to the grand bishop of India who wanted to sign my letter. I just returned from Japan, discussing AI and ethics with leaders of all faith traditions, alongside the president of Microsoft and the vice president of IBM. Across the country, we have a council of faith-based universities, with great interest from many parties who want to build a better world and see the Jewish faith as a guiding light.

I was on a panel about leadership run by U.S. News and World Report with the chancellor of the California State System (250,000 students), the State University of New York (1.4 million students), the undersecretary of education for the United States, and Yeshiva University. I am very proud of our growth at YU; we have doubled in size, though we don't compare in size to others. Why was I on that panel? Not because of the size of our institution, but because we represent 3,000 years of tradition. People are looking to understand the Jewish perspective. YU starts from Sinai. That is a need today; society needs to hear the Jewish voice. It's essential to empower our students to understand the importance of using their Jewish voice. It's hard to see at times when one is at war, but it's there. We need to move on both fronts – defending our security and freedom while bringing out the truth and sharing our core Torah values with society and the world. Both of these efforts will eventually bring redemption. ■

Special thanks to Yeshiva University for providing the photos in this article.



SHAGRIRIM BALEV

Friends Setting Up Friends



Three siblings, one ambassador

Ever since starting my journey at “Ambassadors of the Heart” (AKA Shagririm BaLev), I was excited by the initiative's huge potential. Right away I started to think about who I could add to the database. I enthusiastically told many friends about the project. Soon, I added the twins Bat El and Bet Chen Nave, and their brother Matan. I have known all three of them for many years, and their parents are close family friends from Beit Shemesh.

We embarked on a matchmaking journey together filled with faith and hope, and over time, I got to see the influence Ambassadors of the Heart generated. It does so much good for the Jewish people. One of the most exciting experiences was to see how one after the other, the three siblings met their spouses through Ambassadors of the Heart. These were amazing moments filled with so much happiness and so much gratitude to Ambassadors of the Heart since it would not have happened without the initiative and our wonderful database. I felt so lucky that I was able to be the Shlichah, the ambassador – and set up these 3 beautiful couples. The joke in the Nave family is that since I set up their 3 kids, I should be added to the family WhatsApp group :)

That being said, the journey for the siblings didn't end there. Today, both Bat El and Bat Chen are also ambassadors for their friends.

There's no doubt in our minds that “Ambassadors of the Heart” is a vibrant initiative and is devoted to helping people find true love for friends and relatives, spreading light and hope wherever they go. The future of matchmaking is here!



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Cultivating Hope at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

by Keri Rosenbluh

Amid conflict and uncertainty, hope often emerges, inspiring individuals to come together to drive change. What role do academic institutions play in fostering hope? And how do they transform hope into a force for change? As we usher in the new Jewish year, we're reminded of the enduring power of hope to guide us through challenging times. At Hebrew University, we carry hope forward as a means for change, working toward a more tolerant society, and a brighter tomorrow.

Hope is the Instrument

Israel's 10th president, Reuven Rivlin, an alumnus of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, described the essential role of higher education in shaping Israeli society. "The university is a first meeting place for the various tribes of Israel, and it plays a vital role in formulating the new Israeliness."

Prof. Mona Khoury, Vice President for Strategy and Diversity at Hebrew University, emphasizes hope's role in navigating the complexities of this diverse environment. She acknowledges the tensions between groups on campus – secular and religious Jews, Muslim and Christian Arabs, ultra-Orthodox, international students, new immigrants, and more – yet believes that hope can emerge from these complexities.

According to Khoury, recognizing differences is central to hope. "The goal is to create a space where individuals can learn from their differences and build mutual understanding. Hope is the means for achieving this. When paired with action, hope leads to meaningful change."

Khoury believes that dialogue is key. "People are divided over what has transpired since October 7th, and we need to encourage discussion." The university's Diversity Unit works to foster this dialogue. "While campuses worldwide are ablaze with intolerance, in Jerusalem we've created a safe space for meaningful dialogue. And that's hope."

A Tangible Expression of Hope

Rabbi Adi Isaacs, Director of Jewish Life for Anglo Students at Hebrew University's Rothberg International School and Founder of the Nitzavim Program, views hope as deeply intertwined with Jerusalem. For Isaacs, like many, Jerusalem is the ultimate symbol of hope for the Jewish people – a focal point for prayers, aspirations, and the yearning for unity. "Studying at Hebrew University, in the heart of Jerusalem, is more than an academic pursuit—it's a tangible expression of hope."



Rabbi Isaacs and his team are dedicated to creating a supportive community at Hebrew University, where students can explore their Judaism and be part of the ongoing story of Jewish life in Jerusalem.

Harnessing Hope for Social Action

Dr. Oded Adomi Leshem, political psychologist and Founder of "ReHope," the International Hub for Hope Research at Hebrew University, explores the connection between hope and reality and how it advances social well-being. "Hope is an existential need," Leshem explains. "It's our ability to pick up the slightest positive signal in times of distress."

Leshem describes how hope is deeply rooted in the university's agenda. "Hope occurs when we do something. At Hebrew University we promote science, social mobility, and inclusion, while nurturing talented young people and investing in a hope-filled future."

In "Hope Amidst Conflict," Leshem explores how hope transforms from an abstract idea into a practical tool in crises, driving action. He highlights Israel's civilian mobilization since October 7th as an example of hope-driven action. Leshem asserts, "Those who have volunteered understand the power of hope in action. We must now harness this hope as a force for social change."

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJI), consistently ranked **among the world's 100 leading universities**, is Israel's premier university and research institution. Founded nearly a century ago by exceptional thinkers like **Albert Einstein**, HUJI stands at the forefront of groundbreaking research and innovation.

With 6 campuses, 7 faculties, 315 academic departments, and over 100 research centers, HUJI's world-renowned faculty are recognized by distinguished awards, including **8 Nobel Prizes**. Home to approximately 2,300 international students annually, HUJI offers a broad range of programs, degrees, and research opportunities in English.



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Hope

Is Our Mission

As we usher in the year of our 100th centennial, hope remains central to our mission. Through groundbreaking research, inclusive education, and proactive community engagement, we're committed to nurturing hope as a driving force – for the benefit of humanity.

Shana Tova!

See You Next Year in Yerushalayim.

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem



LAW, LIES, AND JUSTICE

An Interview with Natasha Hausdorff on Israel's Legal Battles

Since October 7th, UK lawyer Natasha Hausdorff has emerged as a prominent advocate for Israel in legal and media circles. As Israel faced serious accusations, including claims of genocide and ethnic cleansing, Natasha has provided strong and articulate defenses against these allegations. Her profile rose significantly when she and Douglas Murray participated in the well-known Munk Debate in May 2024. Their victory in this debate brought Natasha international recognition.

Recently, Rabbi Aron White interviewed Natasha to discuss her experiences defending Israel's position in legal forums.



Tell us about your background, and how you came to focus on international law and its application to Israel?

I studied law at Oxford with a focus on public international law, and it became apparent to me then that one of the big battles Israel would be facing was in the realm of international law. In 2011, Mahmoud Abbas wrote an op-ed in the New York Times which was his declaration of “lawfare” – internationalizing the conflict, making it a legal matter. I also saw many things in academia, such as when I was a fellow at Columbia University with a focus on cyber security. I saw then the prejudices among the professors that have made Columbia famous in these past few months. I saw in Columbia, and in Oxford, how international law was being applied to Israel compared to how it was applied to other countries. There were clear expectations of how academics were supposed to be. I know many people who wanted to pursue a career in academia but who didn’t subscribe to those assumptions, so they pursued other fields.

I also started to see a whole machine being put in place. There were armies of NGOs being set up to put out material that alleged lots of Israeli violations that were factually and legally incorrect, that were feeding into the United Nations system and international bodies like the ICC and ICJ. We are seeing the results of this process in the discourse around this war. The terms that are being thrown around such as war crimes, genocide, targeting civilians, proportionality, provision of humanitarian aid – all of this is underpinned by legal language, which is mostly being deployed against Israel incorrectly. This pseudo-legal language permeates public discourse about Israel. This has now broken into public consciousness, but it has been building in the NGO world and UN world for a long time, so what we see now is in no way a surprise.

At the core of the legal profession is the notion of justice, and a professional tradition of integrity. When I see the law being misapplied, I have a professional obligation to stand up against that. That is what I have been doing regarding Israel and international law – both before this war, but with greater intensity since October 7th.

Before we talk about your recent activities, I want to go back a few steps. How did we get here? International law played a significant role in the creation of Israel. The goal of the Zionist movement as formulated by Herzl in 1897 was to create a home for the Jewish people “secured under public law,” and the legal agreements of the Balfour Declaration, San Remo convention and UN partition plan are seen as significant steps in Israel’s creation. Israel was built through international law, so when and why did international law begin to turn against Zionism?

It was before my time. Most people date the beginning of this legal war against Israel as the UN Resolution from 1975 that Zionism is racism. However, it occurs to me that there are examples of international law being misapplied even earlier. Before the founding of the state, when the British issued the White Paper limiting Jewish immigration in 1939, it was issued in violation of the terms of the British Mandate.

But I would argue that one of the most important examples dates from May 1948, because more or less every single argument that is raised against Israel citing international law misapplies a very significant law about a state’s borders. There is a customary rule in international law called *uti possidetis juris*, which means when a new state forms, unless there is another resolution, then the new state inherits the preexisting administrative lines of the previous administration. This rule goes back to when South America was achieving independence from the Spanish, and has been used in modern cases like the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Except for when it comes to Israel. When the British Mandate ended, Israel was the only state to be formed in that area. There had been a political proposal at the UN to split into two states, but that had not been accepted. So Israel was the only state to form, and thus by customary law, Israel’s borders would be the administrative lines of the British Mandate – meaning, including Judea, Samaria and Gaza. So then, when Egypt occupied Gaza and Jordan occupied Judea and Samaria, it was occupying Israeli territory, and when Israel liberated those areas in 1967, it cannot be considered an “occupation,” as it was legally already part of Israel. So this basic international law utterly destroys this basic belief that Israel is “occupying” land in those areas.

I have spoken to people who have written books on *uti possidetis juris*, and they are convinced this rule doesn’t apply to Israel, without being able to give any reason. Just to give an example: *uti possidetis juris* is the reason that Crimea is considered part of Ukraine. Russia invaded Crimea in 2014. If Ukraine pushes Russia out, no one would say Crimea is occupied Russian territory!

It’s inexplicable, but international law is thrown out when it applies to the Jewish state. This example undermines every argument that Israel is an “occupier” or a “colonizer.” This is the actual legal position, rather than simplistic soundbites and one-liners.

What have you been doing since October 7th?

For the last ten years I had volunteered for UK Lawyers for Israel (UKLFI) and I had spoken quite a lot at conferences, but the work is very responsive – helping students or people in the workplace facing antisemitism, fighting BDS resolutions and UN related initiatives, etc. It’s extremely varied, but it always gave me a sense of purpose – if my day job took energy, this work energized me. I am extremely privileged to have found a network of extremely dedicated and capable lawyers who get it and who are committed to combating the racism, antisemitism, and misinformation about international law which is driving a lot of domestic problems.

This has been turbocharged over the last 9 months. Many people want to volunteer and expand the team. It is a real privilege to do this, to really be having an effect. After October 7th, everyone felt powerless. Having a platform to push back against the falsehood in the media is extremely rewarding and I feel very lucky. Who knows how long it will continue? Not every broadcaster likes having me on. It is the privilege of being able to have an impact.

What’s an example of somewhere where you feel you have made an impact?

In April 2024, the previous government of the UK was contemplating an arms embargo on Israel. 600 lawyers wrote a letter to the Prime Minister which was shocking – it got the law wrong and got the ICJ provisional measure wrong. It was just shocking. We needed to put out a response, but I had no expectation of getting a similar level of response. We got 1,300 signatures, including some of a very high caliber. One colleague commented that he had gone through the names and affiliations on both letters, and

found it quite instructive on the quality of legal practice. Quite a few signatories, both Jewish and non-Jewish practitioners, also wrote in to make it clear how meaningful this was to them.

We were told this letter prevented an arms embargo. It shut down the falsehoods of the previous letter that was putting pressure on the government. At the Business and Trade Committee in the House of Commons, I was called to give evidence, while Lord Sumption spoke for our opponents; he called my position barely arguable. Less than 30 hours later, on Hardtalk, the former chief justice of the ICJ came out and vindicated everything I had said.

I felt a compulsion to respond to this letter. The impact it had on preventing an embargo was amazing.

What is it actually like debating people like Mehdi Hasan about these topics, in front of an audience and with major exposure on the internet?

I've not only debated for over 20 years – I was an avid debater in school and university – but I also have been steeped in these issues for over 20 years. That has a tremendous impact, and having right on my side and the facts and the law is a real advantage. It's never easy, you are dealing with so much misinformation and falsehoods. Our opponents have not been challenged for so long, so they are the “received wisdom.” That is a mountain to climb. But having the truth on my side certainly helps the process. In my profession, it's crucial to articulate arguments in a way that is as accessible as possible. The other side often relies on incredibly simple soundbites, so when we unpack the complexities of the issues, we must focus on making them easy to understand – clear and accessible, but not overly simplified.

Are we fighting a pointless and losing battle?

I don't know if it will be enough, but there's no question that this battle needs to be fought. My efforts are aimed at joining that fight. For a long time in Israel, there was a sense that we didn't need to trouble ourselves with what people around the world were saying or feel the need to explain our position. However, more Israelis are waking up to the necessity of stating the obvious. Alan Dershowitz has also mentioned that his generation dropped

the ball; they didn't push back when these lies started, and now terms like ‘occupation’ have become entrenched. I don't accept that we can't challenge this. You cannot have an international legal system based on general rules with exceptions made for countries people don't like. So, either you get rid of a rules-based order, or someone has to speak up and hold their feet to the fire.

Standing up in this way is making a difference. In the advisory opinion – not legally binding – of the ICJ, Vice President Sebutinde's dissent was an honest and comprehensive assessment of the issues the court was asked to consider. She stuck to her principles, even under pressure from the court's president, who has a biased track record. He was Lebanon's ambassador to the UN with a track record of anti-Israel statements and should have recused himself, but instead, he's been driving this agenda. Justice Sebutinde's dissent is the definition of integrity and proper legal analysis. Pushing back does have results; these issues are being called out. We're continuing to submit our findings to the ICJ and ICC, highlighting the prosecutor's use of falsehoods in his request for arrest warrants. We've already debunked the myth of starvation as a method of war, and more will follow. It's painstaking work, requiring a lot of effort, but the results are visible in dissenting opinions and in the efforts of organizations like NGO Monitor and UN Watch. We provide much of the legal input for a broader effort. I'm privileged to fight this fight, not just with UKLFI, but alongside gifted and committed individuals who have dedicated their lives to this cause, even though they could make heaps of money in the commercial sector.

How can people do this?

This is not for everyone. I speak a lot at universities, and often the things I am saying are the first time they are hearing it, both the students and the academics. To the extent that people feel informed it gives them the confidence to join this fight.

Outside of trained lawyers, we also provide resources for everyone. Many people say to me, “I hear all these accusations in the media. I instinctively know that they are wrong, but I don't know how to respond.” For those things, we have many resources on the UKLFI website. ■

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**"On October 7th, my children learned who hates us, simply because we're Jews. Thanks to OurMishpacha, my children get to learn who loves us, simply because we're Jews."
-Avigayil, Otef Aza**



Religious Zionists leading the way in Argentina

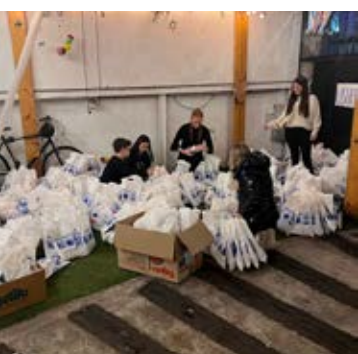
La Casa is the first *Dati Leumi*, Religious Zionist, community in Argentina founded in 2016 in partnership with Bnei Akiva and Mizrahi. Based in Buenos Aires, and led by Israeli *shlichim*, it offers *shiurim*, *tefilot*, Shabbat programs, Shabbatonim, and trips to the more than 400 families in the community. Throughout the year, thousands of people take part in programs of La Casa. When the war started, La Casa was the first community in Argentina to start fundraising for Israel, raising more than \$600,000. The community bought security equipment for towns in the Shomron and for United Hatzalah, and sent over 100 suitcases of donations.

In the first months of the war, between 50 and 60 volunteers were working each day to pack suitcases or raise money for Israel. One of La Casa's programs is called the Shabbat box, where they provide *challot*, *kiddush* wine and Shabbat candles to Jews, many of whom are unaffiliated. Since the war, La Casa has provided 40,000 of these boxes to Jews around Argentina, with each one bearing the name of a hostage or a fallen soldier.

La Casa initiated public displays and rallies for the hostages, raising awareness for them throughout Buenos Aires.

The community also created a support group called Achva, to provide support to parents whose children are serving in the IDF. The community has also bought a house in Netanya, which currently provides a home to 50 lone soldiers in Israel.

From the other side of the world, La Casa has provided strong support for Israel during this war. The Jewish community in Argentina is 200,000 strong – and La Casa has been leading the way.



Over 200 community leaders from around the world came together for a memorable two-day mission in Israel to mark the launch of the Simchat Torah Project, a global project spearheaded by Mizrachi UK which produces special Torah covers to remember those who were murdered on October 7th and in the ensuing war. Over the course of the mission, the group visited various sites in the Gaza Envelope, ending at the site of the Nova Festival where the group held an emotional ceremony at the site of the Nova festival; special tours with top guides; and a mini-conference with guest speakers concluding with Mincha overlooking Har HaBayit.

The mission culminated in the deeply moving launch event at the Southern Wall, where the community representatives were presented with their Torah cover by the family of the victim that features on their cover. Rabbi Andrew Shaw, Chief Executive of Mizrachi UK, told the gathering that over 500 communities are currently involved in the project from over 30 countries – including Dominican Republic, China, Russia, Latvia, Chile and Argentina – and thus far those communities have ordered a total of 613 Torah covers.





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What is Rosh Hashanah?

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Rosh Hashanah is the day the world was created (*Rosh Hashanah* 27a, according to Rabbi Eliezer). In the Torah, this day is called “Zikaron, Remembrance – a memorial proclaimed with the blast of horns” (*Vayikra* 23:24). Therefore, the holiday is called “*Yom HaZikaron*, The Day of Remembrance” in our *tefillot*. This Day of Remembrance expresses G-d’s providence over the world, and in light of this it is also called the Day of Judgment (*Mishnah, Rosh Hashanah* 1:2). This is why we recite the special prayer of “*U’Netaneh Tokef*” on this day.

The Day of Judgment arouses trepidation. However, the Sages (following *Nechemiah* 8) taught us that Rosh Hashanah is a festival, on which we eat special foods, meat, and drink wine (*Shulchan Aruch* 597). How can this be? It is a Day of Judgment! The Sages (*Tur* 581:4) taught us that indeed it is a Day of Judgment, but the Holy One desires our good. If we make good decisions and try to be good, we know that G-d will seal our verdict favorably.

The shofar blasts

The Torah also calls Rosh Hashanah “*Yom Teruah*, the day of the sounding of the horn” (*Bamidbar* 29:1). Therefore, there is a biblical commandment to blow the *shofar* on Rosh Hashanah. What is the meaning of the *shofar* blowing? The blowing consists of a simple sound (*tekiah*), a groan and a wail (*shevarim* and *teruah*). Ostensibly, the blasts are meant to shake us up and awaken us (*Maimonides, Laws of Repentance* 3:4).

However, there is room to examine this reasoning. While the *shevarim* may symbolize weeping and create a “shaking,” the *teruah* in the Torah is specifically a sound of joy associated with coronating a king: “With trumpets and the blast of the horn, raise a shout before the L-rd, the King”

(*Tehillim* 98:6). If so, it is unclear – does the *shofar* blowing symbolize weeping and brokenness or the coronation of a king and joy?

Shofar blowing is meant to remind us of our role in the world, our mission. On the one hand, there is apprehension: perhaps we have failed in our mission, perhaps there are things we did not act properly in, and we must fix them. On the other hand, the very privilege we have to coronate G-d shows how much G-d loves us, how much G-d believes in us. G-d’s love for us gives us the strength to fix, gives us the strength to reach a pure and clean place even after the brokenness (*shevarim*).

How many blasts are required? Strictly speaking, it suffices to blow thirty blasts. Meaning, three sequences of *tashrat* (*tekiah, shevarim, teruah, tekiah*), three sequences of *tashat* (*tekiah, shevarim, tekiah*), and three sequences of *tarat* (*tekiah, teruah, tekiah*). These blasts are sounded in the synagogue before the *Musaf* prayer. In addition, another thirty sounds are blown according to the order of the *Amidah* blessings (ten for *Malchuyot*, ten for *Zichronot*, and ten for *Shofarot*). Some have this custom for both the silent *Amidah* and the repetition by the prayer leader, while others only during the repetition (and complete another thirty blasts after *Musaf*). It became customary to complete one hundred blasts (*Tosafot Rosh Hashanah* 33b), therefore adding another ten at the end: *tashrat, tashat, tarat*. Hence, ideally one should hear all the blasts, but strictly speaking thirty blasts suffice. For this reason too, when sounding for women or others who could not attend services, thirty blasts are sounded.

Why is Rosh Hashanah two days?

Rosh Hashanah is the only holiday that lasts two days (in the Land of Israel).

Since the Hebrew calendar is determined according to the moon, each month witnesses would come and testify that they saw the new moon, and the rabbinical court would declare that day as the new month (today we do this based on the calendar and not witnesses).

Rosh Hashanah is the only holiday that begins at the start of a new month. Consequently, it was difficult to notify everyone when the holiday began, so they established Rosh Hashanah as two days, to remove doubt. Today, Rosh Hashanah is two days by law, according to the Sages’ enactment and the custom of the Jewish people. The first day is biblical (and therefore we are more stringent regarding uncertainties about *shofar* blowing), and the second day is rabbinical.

There was a dispute whether the two days of Rosh Hashanah are considered like one long day (“*yoma arichta*”) or like two separate festival days outside Israel. Therefore, there is a doubt regarding the *Shehecheyanu* blessing on the second day. In practice, we say *Shehecheyanu* in the *Kiddush* for the second day as well, and try to have a new fruit (or new garment) so that the blessing applies to it too (*Shulchan Aruch* 600:2).



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

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מכון תורני לנשים ע"ש שרה בת יצחק יעקב רעננערט
The Sadie Rennert Women's Institute for Torah Studies

Unity and Resilience: The Matan Summer Program Amidst War and Peace

This past summer, Matan ran an innovative three-week program centered around the poignant theme of War and Peace. Under the leadership of program director Sarina Novick, over 200 participants from Australia, the USA, and various parts of Israel came together, creating a powerful sense of unity during these challenging times.

The participants were not only empowered but also inspired, drawing strength from the wisdom and reflections shared by Matan scholars. Participants actively contributed to initiatives that are making a significant impact in Israel today.

The distinguished faculty for the program included Rabbanit Malke Bina, Rabbanit Shani Taragin, Dr. Tanya White, Dr. Yael Ziegler, Rav Menachem Leibtag, and Rabbanit Nechama Goldman Barash.

The program extended well beyond the classroom, offering participants the chance to engage in numerous meaningful projects. It commenced with the annual Rosh Chodesh Tamuz musical Hallel for women, led by Rabbanit Oshra Koren. Following a festive breakfast, the group embarked on various tours and experiences around the Old City.

Throughout the summer, participants learned to tie tzitzit for IDF soldiers and created care packages, which they personally delivered to an army base in the Gush. Many of the soldiers in the reserves, despite being exempt from service, felt a profound sense of duty to serve.

The group also visited the Galil, guided by Tamar Weissman, to explore the area's historical and contemporary significance. They planted trees and served lunch at a soup kitchen run by Sandy Ben Zaken, who has established a farm to support soldiers with PTSD. The produce from this farm benefits the soup kitchen, which employs many volunteers with special needs.

One morning, the Matan summer program organized a special volunteer event at Crave! Restaurant, where participants prepared 100 sandwiches for the families of soldiers in Mitzpeh Yericho. These sandwiches, accompanied by heartfelt notes, were donated at a summer carnival to support the families. The volunteering sessions began and concluded with uplifting song and dance, adding to the meaningful work.

Participants also had the opportunity to hear from several guest speakers. They were deeply moved by Rabbanit Noa Lewis, who spoke about her sacred work with the Chevra Kadisha of the IDF, ensuring the dignified care of those who have fallen in the war. Rabbi Haber led a tour that highlighted the rise and fall of Gush Etzion, showcasing the resilience of the Jewish people. On a tour of Sha'ar Hagai with Shulie Mishkin, participants learned about the sacrifices made to provide relief for those under siege in Jerusalem.

Each lecture, volunteer activity, and tour added new layers of understanding to the current times. Towards the end of the program, participants gathered for an emotional and personal session to share how the summer experience had uplifted them and provided deeper insights into Am Yisrael and Medinat Yisrael.

Stay tuned for Matan programming coming up in Elul and our yearlong classes which begin in November (on zoom and in person).

Save the dates for next summer: June 26 to July 17, 2025.



In engaging with the participants, it was clear that this was a highly motivated group who came to grow in Torah and connect with Am Yisrael. As well as our programs throughout the year, the summer program offers the ability to immerse oneself in the unique environment at Matan, and to gain inspiration from Torat Eretz Yisrael.

Mrs. Miriam White, Program Director for Eshkolot Professional Development at Matan



The Matan summer learning program was an oasis for me. Every day was filled with innovative Torah study from women and men who have a breath of Torah knowledge, passion for teaching and insight into the humane psyche. I was filled with chizzuk to go back to my congregation in Oakland, CA and spread the inspiration gained to them.

Meira Albert, ASW, Rabbanit of Beth Jacob Congregation of Oakland



Simanim of Rosh Hashanah

Swords of Iron War



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

At this time, when the people of Israel are facing difficult and complex challenges, the customs of Rosh Hashanah take on a deeper meaning. The simanim we eat on the eve of the holiday provide an opportunity not only to ask for personal blessings but also to pray for the entire people of Israel, for the hostages, for the soldiers, for the injured, and for the bereaved families.

Therefore, this year, we can add a short request after each siman for the victims of the war and for the soldiers. Let us try to pray and elevate ourselves through the power of the faith of the people of Israel, through the heroism of the soldiers and all security forces, and through our privilege of being a generation of redemption, a generation of Israel's return to its land, a generation that has merited a state and an army after thousands of years.

Tapuach Bidvash (Apple in Honey)

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' א-לקינו וא-לקי אבותינו שתחדש עלינו שנה טובה ומתוקה, ותתן מתיקות ושמחה גם בקרב המשפחות שאבדו את יקיריהם הקדושים.

May it be Your will, L-rd our G-d and G-d of our fathers, that You renew for us a good and sweet year, and grant sweetness and joy also among the families who have lost their holy loved ones.



Tamar (Date)

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' א-לקינו וא-לקי אבותינו, שיתמו אויבינו ושונאינו וכל מבקשי רעתנו, שחילי צה"ל ינצחו את האויב, ושיתורו בריאים ושלמים בגופם ובגורלם.

May it be Your will, L-rd our G-d and G-d of our fathers, that our enemies, haters, and all who seek to harm us come to an end, that the IDF soldiers defeat the enemy, and that they return healthy and whole in body and spirit.



Rimon (Pomegranate)

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' א-לקינו וא-לקי אבותינו שנהיה מלאי מצוות פרמון, ושנזכה לראות טוב בכל אחד ואחת מעם ישראל.

May it be Your will, L-rd our G-d and G-d of our fathers, that we be as full of mitzvot as a pomegranate, and that we merit to see good in each and every one of the people of Israel.



Rubya (Fenugreek/Beans)

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' א-לקינו וא-לקי אבותינו שירבו זכויותינו ותלכבנו, שמור והגן על היהודים בתפוצות מפני שונאיהם, ותן בלבם ובלב כל ישראל עז רוח ודבור לעם ולארץ.

May it be Your will, L-rd our G-d and G-d of our fathers, that our merits increase and that You encourage our hearts. Protect and defend the Jews in the diaspora from their enemies, and place in their hearts and the hearts of all of Israel strength and connection to the people and the land.



Karti (Leek)

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' א-לקינו וא-לקי אבותינו שיקרתו אויבינו ושונאינו, ותכרית רשע מן העולם, שלא יוכלו לפגוע בעם ישראל לרעה.

May it be Your will, L-rd our G-d and G-d of our fathers, that our enemies and haters be cut off, and that You eradicate evil from the world, so that they cannot harm the people of Israel.



Silka (Beet)

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' א-לקינו וא-לקי אבותינו
ש'יסתלקו אויבינו ושונאינו וכל מבקשי רעתנו,
וש'שובו במהרה לבתיהם כל המפנים מהדרום ומהצפון.

May it be Your will, L-rd our G-d and G-d of
our fathers, that our enemies, haters, and
all who seek to harm us depart, and that
all those evacuated from the south and
north return quickly to their homes.



Kara (Pumpkin/Gourd)

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' א-לקינו וא-לקי אבותינו
ש'תקרע רע גזר דיננו, וש'תשלח מהרה רפואה
שלמה מן השמים לכל הפצועים.

May it be Your will, L-rd our G-d and G-d
of our fathers, that You tear up the evil of
our verdict, and that You quickly send
complete healing from heaven to all the
wounded.



Gezer (Carrot)

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' א-לקינו וא-לקי אבותינו שתגזר
עלינו גזרות טובות, ותשיב את החטופים במהרה,
בריאים ושלמים בנפשם ובגופם.

May it be Your will, L-rd our G-d and G-d of
our fathers, that You decree good decrees
upon us, and return the hostages quickly,
healthy and whole in body and spirit.



Rosh shel Dag (Fish Head)

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' א-לקינו וא-לקי אבותינו שנהיה
לראש ולא לזנב, וש'נזכה ללכת קוממיות בארצנו
בזקיפות קומה, בשלום ובבטחה.

May it be Your will, L-rd our G-d and G-d of
our fathers, that we be as the head and not
as the tail, and that we merit to walk
upright in our land with pride, in
peace and security.



Fish

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' א-לקינו וא-לקי אבותינו שנהרה
ונרבה פדגים, מן פני פח להתאחד ולהתלמד ותמלא
הארץ דעה את ה' פנים לים מכסים.

May it be Your will, L-rd our G-d and G-d of
our fathers, that we be fruitful and multiply
like fish. Give us the strength to unite and bond
together, and may the earth be filled
with knowledge of the L-rd as
the waters cover the sea.



One may add this Tefillah:

מודים אנחנו לפניך ה' א-לקינו וא-לקי אבותינו,
ש'זכינו לחיות בדור של גאולה, וש'זכינו לראות
בתקומת מדינתנו.
ש'זכינו לראות בגבורת עמנו, וש'זכינו לנשים
ולנפלאות כפי שהבטחתנו ביד עבדיך הנביאים.
יהי רצון מלפניך ה' א-לקינו וא-לקי אבותינו, שתהא
השנה הזאת הבאה עלינו ועל כל עמך בית ישראל,
שנת אורה ושמחה, שנת אחדות ואהבה.
ש'שובו במהרה כל החטופים לחיק משפחותיהם,
בריאים ושלמים בגופם ובנפשם,
ואלו שאינם עוד בין החיים יובאו לקבר ישראל.
תן שלום ושלוח בכל גבולות ארצנו,
חזק את ידי חילינו ומגני עמנו.
תן כוחות ושמחה למשפחות השכולות,
ושלח רפואה שלמה לכל הפצועים.
השב את תושבי הצפון והדרום לבתיהם,
בשמחה ובבטחה.
תן בלבנו שזכרה לראות טוב בעמנו,
במדינתנו ובמשפחתנו.
תקן בעצה טובה את מנהיגנו ותטע אחדות ואהבה
בתוכנו, במהרה בימינו ונאמר אמן.
יהי רצון ש'נזכה לראות בשמחת ציון וירושלים,
בביאת משיח צדקנו ובבנין בית מקדשנו
במהרה בימינו, אמן.



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Where Leadership Begins

Rabbi Reuven Taragin

We generally meet leaders only when they assume their roles, knowing little about their early lives or what shaped them. What traits do future leaders possess, and what qualities should those aspiring to lead develop?

This challenge applies to the Torah's leaders too, who are usually introduced at the start of their leadership. However, we encounter *Moshe Rabbeinu* from birth, learning about his early life to understand why Hashem chose him to lead the Jewish people. Despite his speech impediment and upbringing in Pharaoh's palace, Moshe was chosen – raising the question, why him?

Compassion and self-sacrifice

There are many answers to why Hashem chose Moshe as a leader. The first comes from Moshe's first recorded action: leaving the palace to witness the suffering of the Jewish people. Before the Torah describes what he saw, it emphasizes that he “saw their suffering” – that he empathized with them (*Shemot Rabbah* 1:27).

Though raised as Egyptian royalty, Moshe nevertheless chose to identify with the Jewish slaves. He felt connected to them, seeing them as his “brothers,” and shared in their pain, even taking on their burdens (*ibid.*).

His compassion wasn't limited to his own people. When he arrived at the well in Midyan, he intervened to defend Midyanite women being mistreated at the well. Even animals were recipients of his care. He encountered the burning bush after pursuing a lost lamb and carrying it back to the flock on his shoulders (*Shemot Rabbah* 2:2).

Moshe's own survival was rooted in the self-sacrifice of others – his mother, sister, and Pharaoh's daughter. Named *Moshe* (“draws”) rather than *Mashuy* (“drawn”), his name foretold his role in saving others (*Seforno*, *Shemot* 2:10). The one saved by others “paid it forward,” embodying the power of self-sacrifice in leadership.

This selflessness defined his leadership. When Hashem offered to wipe out the Jewish people and start a new nation with

Moshe's descendants, he refused. He tied his fate to theirs, asking that if Hashem would not forgive them, his own name be erased as well. Moshe's identity and fate were inseparable from those he led (*Avnei Miluim*, *Hakdama*).

Stepping up

In Egypt, Moshe didn't just empathize with the suffering of the Jewish people – he took action to save them, even when others wouldn't and at great personal risk. When he saw an Egyptian assaulting a Jew, he “looked both ways and saw that there was no man.” Though others were likely present, no one intervened. Moshe stepped up, saving the Jew by killing the Egyptian, knowing it might force him to flee Egypt. He embodied Hillel's words: “In a place where there is no man, try to be the man” (*Avot* 2:6).

“Responsibility” is at the heart of leadership. A leader is not just someone who takes charge but takes responsibility for the well-being of others and the world around them. Nachshon ben Aminadav is a prime example. When *Bnei Yisrael* stood at the sea, afraid to move forward with the Egyptians behind them, Nachshon led the way with a leap of faith into the sea (*Sotah* 37a).

Non-Jews have also shown this kind of leadership. During the Holocaust, nearly thirty thousand “righteous gentiles” risked their lives to save Jews, stepping up when no one else would. Their actions, like those of Nachshon and Moshe, remind us that leadership is a universal responsibility, not limited to a particular group.

Reflectiveness

Moshe paid a price for killing the Egyptian, fleeing Mitzrayim and living in exile in Midyan for forty years.

His return was sparked by his attentiveness and reflectiveness, as seen in his encounter with the burning bush. While others may have passed by, Moshe stopped to investigate. He noticed something unusual – the bush burned without being consumed – and felt compelled to understand it.

It was through this reflection that Moshe received Hashem's revelation (*Midrash*

Tanchuma, *Shemot* 15). Leaders, like Moshe, must be attentive to what happens around them. True leadership requires sensitivity to the subtle “winds” of divine guidance, which can only be discerned by those who pause to reflect.

Humility

Moshe's reaction to Hashem's call reveals a vital leadership quality: humility. When instructed to confront Pharaoh and lead the Jews, Moshe humbly questioned, “Who am I?” Moshe was “the humblest of men.” Similarly, *Yirmiyahu HaNavi* responded with humility when appointed as a prophet, saying “I do not know how to speak; I am a (mere) lad.”

Unlike many leaders driven by ambition, true leaders recognize their authority comes from a higher power. Moshe and Yirmiyahu understood that their strength was not their own but from Hashem, who assured them, “I will be with you” and “Don't fear them because I am with you.” Their humility allowed them to fulfill their divine missions with the recognition that they were merely instruments of G-d's will.

May the Torah's depiction of Moshe inspire us to cultivate the qualities that enable us to embrace our true leadership potential.



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



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The Five Mothers of Rosh Hashanah

Rabbanit Shani Taragin

The Torah and *Haftarah* readings instituted by *Chazal* on holidays are meant to direct our thoughts and focus of the day to specific messages. *Chazal* selected the readings of “And G-d visited Sarah” (Bereishit 21) and the story of Chana for the first day of Rosh Hashanah, and “And G-d tested Avraham” (Bereishit 22), and “Is Ephraim My dear son?” (mentioning the tears of Rachel) for the second day (*Megillah* 31a). Three of the readings focus on three barren women who were all remembered by Hashem and conceived on Rosh Hashanah – Sarah, Rachel, and Chana (*Rosh Hashanah* 10b).

Ironically, in the story of Sarah giving birth to Yitzchak, we also learn of another mother, Hagar, the mother of Yishmael, who, upon Sarah’s suggestion, is sent away by Avraham with her son who will not inherit with Yitzchak. The Torah tells us of her tears as she casts her son under a terebinth so she will not see him die of dehydration and how Hashem answered not her cries – but those of her son! Further tears of another mother become central to the Rosh Hashanah themes as we blow one hundred “wails” of the *shofar* to recall the “*yevavot*” of Sisera’s mother anxiously awaiting her barbaric son to return from war against Israel (*Tosafot, Rosh Hashanah* 33b).

Rabbi Norman Lamm poignantly contrasts the tears of Hagar and Sisera’s mother with those of Rachel, who cried for her children in exile and hostage. Sisera’s mother soothes her own cries by imagining her son tarried by the division of spoils of victory; she refuses to face the reality of her son’s demise. “When you live in a dream world, you must expect nightmares. She had imagined that her exalted position as mother of a successful conqueror inured her to pain and tragedy – that was reserved only for the contemptible enemy, Israel. She was guilty of an immoral optimism, the kind of outlook that characterizes the unthinking and arrogant of all ages. Hers was a strutting and pompous dream which collapsed under the weight of its own illusions” (*Three Who Cried*, 1962).

Hagar’s cries of desperation, along with her fatalistic surrender to the perilous situation without trying to save her son, as she “beholds the great desert of life – and submits to it,” are a reminder not to let hopelessness paralyze us. “The tears of Hagar and her whole frame of mind suggest a despair of which is born delinquency.”

The perspectives and “crocodile” tears of Sisera’s mother and Hagar are dangerously wrong. “A society, like an individual, which alternates between the moods of exhilaration and depression... shows symptoms of moral mania and spiritual psychosis. Neither the one weeping nor the other is for us. Rather, it is the tears of a Jewish mother which inspire us this day.” The *Haftarah* of the second day describes Rachel relentlessly crying from Ramah over her children, banished from their homes by the Baylonians.

Unlike Sisera’s mother, she recognizes the bitterness of reality, but unlike Hagar, she refuses to despair and surrender to final exile and destruction. “They are not the tears of vain sentiment and self-pity, but of powerful protest; they are a sign not of weakness, but of strength; not of resignation or frustration, but of determination.”

The tears of Rachel on Rosh Hashanah are accompanied by the tears of Sarah and Chana. Though Sarah’s cries are not explicit in the text, *Chazal* understood that she is a central persona of proper Jewish motherhood represented on Rosh Hashanah. Instead of learning the sound of the *teruah* blasts from the wails of Sisera’s mother (*Rosh Hashanah* 33b), the *Midrash* cites the cries of Sarah upon hearing of the sacrifice of Yitzchak as the basis for the sounds of the *shofar* (*Vayikra Rabbah* 20:2). Similarly, Chana’s sincere tears and prayers lead to the birth of Shmuel. The tears of Sarah, Chana, and Rachel are tears of mothers who will not yield to the realities of the world but will help transform them. Unlike the tears of Hagar and Sisera’s mother, they are not the end of stories, but rather the beginning of legacies of salvation and redemption.

This Rosh Hashanah, we must reflect on these five mothers and contrast the tears of Sarah, Rachel, and Chana with those of Sisera’s mother and Hagar. The Jewish mothers represent a deep awareness of harsh realities – personal loss, frustration, and national division. Yet they are neither blinded by complacency and false hopes, nor consumed by despair and resignation. Their tears are born of determination, leading to redemption. These are the cries we should focus on during Rosh Hashanah: as we study the Torah and *Haftarah* readings, hear the *shofar*’s call, and pray with tears and hope. These are the tears of relentless pleading to Hashem, with faith that He will hear and respond, fulfilling the promise of return – “*veshavu vanim ligvulam*.”



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The Fourth Kingdom: Edom and Yishmael Unite

Rabbi Elie Mischel

“**N**evuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, and his spirit was troubled” (Daniel 2:1). The great Babylonian king was chosen by G-d as the conduit for a critical prophecy of exile and redemption. “You, o king, saw... a mighty image... The head... was of fine gold, its front and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of brass, its legs of iron, and its feet partly of iron and partly of clay...” (Daniel 2:31-33). Daniel explained that the statue’s materials represent a succession of empires – four great kingdoms that will oppress Israel but eventually fall. Ultimately, Hashem’s eternal kingdom will triumph over these human oppressors.

The head of gold symbolizes Babylonia, and the Sages agree that the second kingdom corresponds to Persia and Media, while the third symbolizes Alexander the Great and the Greek empire that followed his reign. The great question, debated for millennia, is the identity of the fourth kingdom, more powerful than all the others, but also “a divided kingdom” of “iron mixed with clay.”

Chazal identified the fourth kingdom as Edom, the descendants of Eisav (*Midrash Tanchuma, Terumah 7*). Ibn Ezra, however, argued that Edom is included in the third kingdom with Greece, and that the fourth kingdom is Yishmael (see *Sefer HaGeulah, 3:238*). Rav Sa’adia Gaon, however, believes the key to identifying the fourth kingdom is understanding the parable of iron and clay: “You saw the feet and the toes, part potter’s clay and part iron; that means it will be a divided kingdom... they shall intermingle... but shall not hold together” (Daniel 2:41,43). The fourth kingdom will be divided in two, between Edom, the nation of “iron” and Yishmael, the nation of “clay.” The implication is that Edom will be militarily powerful like iron, while Yishmael will be ever-present like clay, capable of overwhelming his enemies through sheer force of numbers.

I believe the events of our time have proven Sa’adia’s view correct. Working in tandem, Edom and Yishmael are the fourth and final kingdom to persecute Israel before redemption. But who are the modern nations of Yishmael and Edom? Josephus, the Roman-era Jewish historian, referred to Yishmael as the “founder of the Arabs.” Later on, after the establishment of Islam, Rashi and others frequently equate Yishmael with “Arabs” and “Islam.” Muslims themselves believe Yishmael to be the forefather of Mohammed.

The identity of Edom, however, is more complex. Many prophecies describe the fate of Edom; the problem, however, is that the original nation of Edom no longer exists. By the time the Romans destroyed the second *Beit HaMikdash*, the Idumeans, the descendants of Edom, had disappeared from history. What, then, are we to make of the many prophecies concerning the future of Edom? Are they still relevant today?

After the Romans conquered Israel, Chazal began using the term “Edom” to describe the Roman Empire, which adopted much of the Edomite belief system (*Malbim, Ova-diah 1:1*). At the center of this connection was the reviled Herod, appointed by Rome as king of Judea and a descendant of an Idumean family that converted to Judaism. It was only natural for Chazal to draw parallels between the biblical conflict of Eisav and Ya’akov and the contemporary struggle between Rome and the Jews.

With the fall of the Roman Empire, the question of Edom’s identity arose once again. As the Roman Catholic Church came to dominate Europe, Jews suffering from Christian antisemitism naturally began to conflate the Church with Edom. But while many commentators associated Christianity with Edom, I believe this view does not align with Chazal’s original understanding of the spiritual qualities of Edom and Rome. The Romans arrogantly rejected the G-d of Israel: “After Hadrian, king of Edom... returned to Rome, he said to his

officers: ‘I want you to make me a god, since I have conquered the world.’ They said: ‘But you have not yet established your rule over G-d’s city and His house.’ He went, destroyed the Temple, exiled Israel, and returned to Rome. He said: ‘I have now destroyed His house and burned His Temple and exiled His people. Make me a god’” (*Midrash Tanchuma, Bereishit 7*). Though the Roman Catholic Church committed great evils against the Jewish people, it does not fit this description of Edom as a G-d-hating, pagan empire.

Who, then, is Edom in our time? I believe that the modern Edomites are the cultural heirs of the pagan Roman Empire – namely, the antisemitic secularists of the West who have declared war on G-d, Torah, and the Jewish people. “For they have taken counsel with one accord; against You they form a pact. The tents of Edom and Yishmael” (*Tehillim 83:7*). Yishmael and Edom, radical jihadists and antisemitic secularists – these are the enemies of Israel that together make up the fourth kingdom in our time. Ultimately, the iron will not hold together with the clay, and their alliance will collapse – and “on that day Hashem will be one, and His name one.”



Rabbi Elie Mischel

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



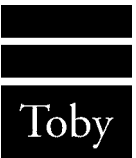
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What is the “Real” Nature of Rosh Hashanah?

Dr. Ilana Turetsky

The character of Rosh Hashanah can be quite confusing. Indeed, there seem to be conflicting messages about the nature of this holiday. Certain indicators point towards a day of joy and happiness, while others suggest a serious and perhaps even morose nature. Let us consider some of these data points and then attempt to make sense of the character of Rosh Hashanah.

Perhaps the most famous primary source can be found in *Sefer Nechemia*. The Jewish people recognize their less-than-stellar spiritual transcript. Fearing the harsh judgment of Rosh Hashanah, they fast and mourn. Ezra, seeing this behavior, promptly redirects them: “Go eat, rejoice, and don’t be sad, since Hashem is your strength” (Nechemia 8:10). Ezra rejects the nation’s perception of Rosh Hashanah as a day of sadness and instead emphasizes the joyful and celebratory nature of the day.

In contrast, a well-known Gemara paints a very different portrait. The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 32a) recounts that angels were surprised that *Am Yisrael* wasn’t reciting *Hallel* on Rosh Hashanah. They approached Hashem for clarification, and Hashem explained, “When the King sits in judgment with the Books of Life and Death open, would it be appropriate to sing *Hallel*?” This Gemara ascribes a heavy seriousness to the day, one that’s incompatible with celebration and joviality.

In line with these differing perspectives on Rosh Hashanah, many debate whether it is forbidden, permitted, or even encouraged to cry on Rosh Hashanah. The Ariz”l suggests that not only is crying desirable on Rosh Hashanah, but one who doesn’t cry likely suffers from a degree of spiritual numbness. In contrast, the Vilna Gaon argues that it’s inappropriate to cry on Rosh Hashanah. Based on the words of Ezra, the Vilna Gaon explains that our

certainty in Hashem’s mercy should cultivate a more joyful disposition.

The *shofar*, as well, seems to contain the duality of these themes. On the one hand, the *shofar* represents our celebratory coronation of our King. With confidence and joy, we crown Hashem as our King and enthusiastically reaffirm our allegiance to only Him. At the same time, the *shofar* also awakens us from our spiritual slumber and spurs us to brutally honest self-assessment, since our status quo is far from sufficient. Furthermore, according to others, the piercing sound of the *shofar* conveys vulnerability and despair, representing prayers that are too vast, too desperate, and too emotionally laden to articulate in coherent sentences.

How does one make sense of these very divergent messages regarding the fundamental nature of Rosh Hashanah? While some sages decide that one side or the other is more reflective of the essential character of Rosh Hashanah, Rav Yisrael Salanter offers a different perspective on these conflicting messages.

Regarding the dispute about whether to cry on Rosh Hashanah, Rav Salanter suggests that it depends on the person. If one is very emotional and tends to cry easily, they should try to restrain themselves from crying on Rosh Hashanah. On the other hand, if one isn’t naturally a crier, they should try to rouse themselves to shed authentic tears.

Though Rav Yisrael Salanter may have been emphasizing the inherent value of broadening oneself, perhaps one can deduce that both themes reflect true and real dimensions of the day. Maybe we aren’t meant to reconcile the conflicting elements and should instead hold onto these disparate themes that coexist alongside each other. Rosh Hashanah is both a

day of great joy through our confidence in Hashem’s mercy and a time of solemnity, confronting how much is at stake as we are put on trial. It is both a day to celebrate Hashem’s sovereignty and an opportunity to recognize responsibilities we have sorely neglected as servants of that King.

Taking this one step further, perhaps the conflicting themes are actually anchored in one another. Our vulnerability leaves us feeling helpless and terrified, but we can manage this emotion knowing that we are in the hands of He who heals, protects, and provides. Our shortcomings are blindingly highlighted in the glare of self-reflection, but we have been chosen with love by the ultimate King, and we rejoice in His kingship and in our role in bringing Him honor.

This year, our nation has unfortunately had too much practice holding conflicting emotions. We have encountered bravery, grief, heroism, evil, despair, persistence, gratitude, and generosity of spirit all wrapped together. We pray that this be a year where *Am Yisrael* can rejoice in our role as servants of Hashem amidst healing, blessing, and tears of joy.



Dr. Ilana Turetsky

is a full-time faculty member at Azrieli Graduate School of Yeshiva University.



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Olim Giving Back to Israel



Dalia

On August 8, 2023, I made *Aliyah* from New Jersey on a Nefesh B'Nefesh group flight. I had always wanted to make *Aliyah* and decided to serve in *Sherut Leumi* as my way of contributing to the country.

I work at Zalman Aran, an elementary school, in a first-grade classroom. My role primarily involves assisting the teacher with whatever she needs. This ranges from decorating the classroom to helping students who have fallen behind, and sometimes just playing games with them when they need a break or some attention. The staff I work with are amazing, and I truly feel cared for.

Living in a country without any family can be tough, but over time, I've built a second family here that I can lean on for support. I have an adopted family in Chashmonaim, who I can visit anytime I need to feel at home. I've also made truly incredible friends – most of whom are going through the same experiences as me. Being a lone immigrant (*bodedah*) would be impossible without this kind of support.

Israel definitely has its culture shocks. At least once a week, an older Israeli woman offers her unsolicited opinion on something. It's usually a cashier commenting on something I'm buying or an elderly lady at the pool critiquing my (and everyone else's) swimming form. I think it's adorable how, even if they've never met you, Israelis treat everyone like family.

Yael

I made *Aliyah* with a lifelong dream of coming to Israel to establish roots and serve my country. I came to protect my people, so that one day my extended family can say, "I have family in Israel."

My commitment has deepened during the war. I was visiting family in America when the war broke out, and although I was scheduled to return later for my university *mechina* year, the urgency of the situation compelled me to fly back early. Watching nearly everyone on my flight heading to join the reserves filled me with pride and emotion – nowhere else do you see such unity and sacrifice.

Upon landing, I was immediately drafted under a *tzav 8* (emergency reserves call-up) and assigned as a combat soldier in the search and rescue brigade. Our mission was to protect civilians from potential rocket attacks, particularly safeguarding kindergartens and daycares. Later, we were relocated to different areas in the south to continue supporting and protecting the citizens.

I loved seeing how the entire country came together to support one another in a time of need. Life here is different. Another highlight for me has been all the new friends I've made through *milu'im* (reserve duty). We were just a group of people from different draft dates and parts of the army, but now we're friends.

After making *Aliyah*, I drafted through the *Garin Tzabar* program, and my cohort lived in Kibbutz Maoz Haim, in the middle of nowhere. My base was in the south, and it took me about five to six hours to get home. My host parents always made sure I had a ride from the train or bus station. Once, they even drove almost an hour to pick me up when I got stranded on a Friday. They took in this 18-year-old American girl who didn't know any Hebrew and took care of her.



We asked three accomplished Jews from around the world: What is your most formative Rosh Hashanah memory?



Ariel Chesner

A memory that comes to mind takes me almost 20 years back, back to the days of my army service in the Giv'ati brigade. We were in advanced training, waiting for news on whether we would be going home for Rosh Hashanah.

Much to our dismay, our commander stepped out of the officers tent, and informed us that we all would be spending Rosh Hashanah on base. Wiping away our tears (internal tears of course), we started to plan how our Rosh Hashanah would look.

A good friend and I were asked to be *chazanim* for the *tefillot*. What started off as a big disappointment, soon grew into an unexpected, uplifting and most memorable Rosh Hashanah. We prayed together: observant and non-observant soldiers, united as one **לְפָנַי אָבִינוּ שְׁבַשְׁמִיִּים**.

Since then, I often *daven* before the *amud* on Rosh Hashanah, and I find myself thinking about the special *tefillot* we had on that memorable Rosh Hashanah on base.

Ariel Chesner is the Director of the Center for Religious Affairs in the Diaspora of the World Zionist Organization.



Shira Lankin Sheps

When I was a little girl, my Abba, Rabbi Dr. Eric Lankin, was a congregational rabbi. Every Rosh Hashanah, he would take me on a very important mission – to visit all his congregants who were too ill or elderly to make it to *shul* to hear the *shofar* blasts.

We would walk hand in hand, my little feet keeping up with his long strides, his *shofar* tucked under his other arm, to what felt like the furthest corners of our community to do the *mitzvah* of *bikur cholim*. While he would blow the *shofar* over and over again, I would watch the faces of people we had come to visit; sometimes expressions of gratitude, tears streaming down their cheeks, or just eyes closed tight reflecting on what the sound meant to them in their time of need.

It was a gift for me to see a side of the holiday that people don't usually see, giving me context into how we can be more inclusive in our communities around the *chagim*.

Shira Lankin Sheps, MSW, is the executive director of The SHVILLI Center, the publisher of The Layers Press, and co-editor of the new anthology "Az Nashir – We Will Sing Again; Women's Prayers for our Time of Need."



Rabbi Ariel Konstantyn

One of my most cherished memories from Rosh Hashanah is the first time we organized *tashlich* on the beach. Fifteen years ago, when my wife and I founded The Tel Aviv International Synagogue (affectionately known as The Frishman Shul), there was little Jewish life in Tel Aviv. The synagogues were mostly empty, kosher food was scarce, and we faced considerable anti-religious sentiment in the neighborhood. Yet, we held steadfast in our belief that every Jewish soul carries a spark, and we built a thriving community based on love, acceptance, and mutual respect.

With our synagogue just a block from Frishman Beach, we decided to bring *tashlich* down to the sea (most stay on the *tayelet*). I was initially concerned about the reaction of beachgoers as hundreds of observant Jews made their way to the shore. To my surprise, they warmly embraced the moment – men covered their heads with towels, women in swimsuits asked for prayer sheets, and everyone joined in tossing their bread "sins" into the sea.

As the sun set over the Mediterranean, I blew the *shofar*, and together we sang *Am Yisrael Chai*, *Avinu Malkeinu*, and other holiday songs. That unity and shared joy fills my heart each year with hope for a future blessed with life, peace, and prosperity.

Rabbi Ariel Konstantyn is the Founding Rabbi of The Tel Aviv International Synagogue (TAIS) and Founding Chairman of ME-Tzion – The Institute of Zionism and Jewish Heritage. In addition, Rabbi Ariel serves as a commentator for ILTV and i24 News. He is an active member of Beit Hillel and World Mizrahi.

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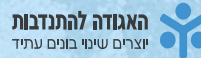
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The Scapegoat

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks 5"צז

The strangest and most dramatic element of the service on Yom Kippur, set out in *Acharei Mot*, was the ritual of the two goats, one offered as a sacrifice, the other sent away into the desert “to *Azazel*.” They were to all intents and purposes indistinguishable from one another: they were chosen to be as similar as possible in size and appearance. They were brought before the High Priest and lots were drawn, one bearing the words “to the L-rd,” the other, “to *Azazel*.” The one on which the lot “to the L-rd” fell was offered as a sacrifice. Over the other the High Priest confessed the sins of the nation, and it was then taken away into the desert hills outside Jerusalem where it plunged to its death. Tradition tells us that a red thread would be attached to its horns, half of which was removed before the animal was sent away. If the rite had been effective, the red thread would turn to white.

Much is puzzling about the ritual. First, what is the meaning of “to *Azazel*,” to which the second goat was sent? It appears nowhere else in Scripture. Three major theories emerged as to its meaning. According to the Sages and Rashi, it meant “a steep, rocky, or hard place.” In other words, it was a description of its destination. In the plain meaning of the Torah, the goat was sent “to a desolate area” (*el erez gezerah*). According to the Sages, this meant it was thus taken to a steep ravine where it fell to its death. That, according to the first explanation, is the meaning of *Azazel*.

The second, suggested cryptically by Ibn Ezra and explicitly by Ramban, is that *Azazel* was the name of a spirit or demon, one of the fallen angels referred to in Bereishit 6:2, similar to the goat-spirit called ‘Pan’ in Greek mythology, ‘Faunus’ in Latin. This is a difficult idea, which is why Ibn Ezra alluded to it, as he did in similar cases, by way of a riddle, a puzzle, that only the wise would be able to decipher. He writes: “I will reveal to you part

of the secret by hint: when you reach thirty-three you will know it.” Ramban reveals the secret. Thirty-three verses later on, the Torah commands: “They must no longer offer any of their sacrifices to the goat idols [*se’irim*] after whom they go astray” (Ramban, Vayikra 17:7).

Azazel, in this reading, is the name of a demon or hostile force, sometimes called Satan or Samael. The Israelites were categorically forbidden to worship such a force. Indeed, the belief that there are powers at work in the universe distinct from, or even hostile to, G-d, is incompatible with Judaic monotheism. Nonetheless, some Sages did believe that there were negative forces that were part of the heavenly retinue, like Satan, who brought accusations against humans or tempted them into sin. The goat sent into the wilderness to *Azazel* was a way of conciliating or propitiating such forces so that the prayers of Israel could rise to heaven without, as it were, any dissenting voices. This way of understanding the rite is similar to the saying on the part of the Sages that we blow *shofar* in a double cycle on Rosh Hashanah “to confuse Satan” (*Rosh Hashanah* 16b).

The third interpretation, and the simplest, is that *Azazel* is a compound noun meaning “the goat [*ez*] that was sent away [*azal*].” This led to the addition of a new word to the English language. In 1530 William Tyndale produced the first English translation of the Hebrew Bible, an act then illegal and for which he paid with his life. Seeking to translate *Azazel* into English, he called it “the escapegoat,” i.e. the goat that was sent away and released. In the course of time, the first letter was dropped, and the word “scapegoat” was born.

The real question, though, is: what was the ritual actually about? It was unique. Sin and guilt offerings are familiar features of the Torah and a normal part of the service of the Temple. The service of Yom Kippur was different in one salient respect: in every other case, the sin was confessed

over the animal that was sacrificed. On Yom Kippur, the High Priest confessed the sins of the people over the animal that was not sacrificed, the scapegoat that was sent away, “carrying on it all their iniquities” (Vayikra 16:21-22).

The simplest and most compelling answer was given by Maimonides in *The Guide for the Perplexed*: “There is no doubt that sins cannot be carried like a burden, and taken off the shoulder of one being to be laid on that of another being. But these ceremonies are of a symbolic character, and serve to impress people with a certain idea, and to induce them to repent – as if to say, we have freed ourselves of our previous deeds, have cast them behind our backs, and removed them from us as far as possible” (III:46).

Expiation demands a ritual, some dramatic representation of the removal of sin and the wiping-clean of the past. That is clear. Yet Maimonides does not explain why Yom Kippur demanded a rite not used on other days of the year when sin or guilt offerings were brought. Why was the first goat, the one of which the lot “to the L-rd” fell and which was offered as a sin offering, not sufficient?

The answer lies in the dual character of the day. The Torah states: “This shall be an everlasting statute for you: on the tenth day of the seventh month you must afflict yourselves; you shall perform no work at all... On this day, [*yechaper*] atonement shall be made to [*le-taher*] purify you; of all your sins you shall be purified before the L-rd” (Vayikra 16:29-30).

Two quite distinct processes were involved on Yom Kippur. First there was *kapparah*, atonement. This is the normal function of a sin offering. Second, there was *taharah*, purification, something normally done in a different context altogether, namely the removal of *tumah*, ritual defilement, which could arise from a number of different causes, among them contact with a dead body, skin disease, or nocturnal discharge.

Atonement has to do with guilt. Purification has to do with contamination or pollution. These are usually two separate worlds. On Yom Kippur they were brought together. Why?

We owe to anthropologists like Ruth Benedict the distinction between shame cultures and guilt cultures (*The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*). Shame is a social phenomenon. It is what we feel when our wrongdoing is exposed to others. It may even be something we feel when we merely imagine other people knowing or seeing what we have done. Shame is the feeling of being found out, and our first instinct is to hide. That is what Adam and Eve did in the garden of Eden after they had eaten the forbidden fruit. They were ashamed of their nakedness and they hid.

Guilt is a personal phenomenon. It has nothing to do with what others might say if they knew what we have done, and everything to do with what we say to ourselves. Guilt is the voice of conscience, and it is inescapable. You may be able to avoid shame by hiding or not being found out, but you cannot avoid guilt. Guilt is self-knowledge.

There is another difference which, once understood, explains why Judaism is overwhelmingly a guilt rather than a shame culture. Shame attaches to the person. Guilt attaches to the act. It is almost impossible to remove shame once you have been publicly disgraced. It is like an indelible stain on your skin. It is the mark of Cain.

Lady Macbeth exclaimed, after her crime, "Will these hands ne'er be clean?" In shame cultures, wrongdoers tend either

to go into hiding or into exile, where no one knows their past, or to commit suicide. Playwrights in these cultures have such characters die, for there is no possible redemption.

Guilt makes a clear distinction between the act of wrongdoing and the person of the wrongdoer. The act was wrong, but the agent remains, in principle, intact. That is why guilt can be removed, "atoned for," by confession, remorse, and restitution. "Hate not the sinner but the sin," is the basic axiom of a guilt culture.

Normally, sin and guilt offerings, as their names imply, are about guilt. They atone. But Yom Kippur deals not only with our sins as individuals. It also confronts our sins as a community bound by mutual responsibility. It deals, in other words, with the social as well as the personal dimension of wrongdoing. Yom Kippur is about shame as well as guilt. Hence there has to be purification (the removal of the stain) as well as atonement.

The psychology of shame is quite different to that of guilt. We can discharge guilt by achieving forgiveness – and forgiveness can only be granted by the object of our wrongdoing, which is why Yom Kippur only atones for sins against G-d. Even G-d cannot – logically cannot – forgive sins committed against our fellow humans until they themselves have forgiven us.

Shame cannot be removed by forgiveness. The victim of our crime may have forgiven us, but we still feel defiled by the knowledge that our name has been disgraced, our reputation harmed, our standing damaged. We still feel the stigma, the dishonor, the degradation. That is why

an immensely powerful and dramatic ceremony had to take place during which people could feel and symbolically see their sins carried away to the desert, to no-man's-land.

Judaism is a religion of hope, and its great rituals of repentance and atonement are part of that hope. We are not condemned to live endlessly with the mistakes and errors of our past. That is the great difference between a guilt culture and a shame culture. But Judaism also acknowledges the existence of shame. Hence the elaborate ritual of the scapegoat that seemed to carry away the *tumah*, the defilement that is the mark of shame. It could only be done on Yom Kippur because that was the one day of the year in which everyone shared, at least vicariously, in the process of confession, repentance, atonement, and purification. When a whole society confesses its guilt, individuals can be redeemed from shame.



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A Real and Raw Prayer

Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb

The highlight of the ancient Yom Kippur service was the entrance of the *kohen gadol* into the *Kodesh Kodashim*, the Holy of Holies. This once-a-year event provided for the “triple crown” of holiness: the convergence of the holiest person, the holiest place, and the holiest time. The combined intensity was such that one slip of the *kohen gadol*'s concentration could result in the loss of his life. Upon safely completing this most important and daunting task, there was understandable relief on the part of the *kohen gadol* and, as a result, he offered a heartfelt and beautiful prayer to Hashem.

In our *machzorim* there is a poetic embellishment of this prayer, arranged alphabetically, of a shorter text found in the Mishnah and Talmud (*Yoma* 53b). The beauty of the prayer lies in its authenticity and directness, encompassing all our aspirations, from the mundane to the profound, as it addresses both our spiritual and physical needs.

Interestingly, upon closer study it becomes clear that there is something surprising about the structure of this prayer. After 22 different requests – corresponding to the entirety of the Hebrew alphabet – there are a few additional requests. Rabbi Bernard Weinberger (*Shemen HaTov*) observes that the inclusion of these additional entreaties after the prayer should ostensibly have been completed suggests that they must contain messages of particular significance.

The first request is that no woman should miscarry in the coming year. But why is this specific tragedy singled out among all the possible hardships? Perhaps miscarriage is mentioned because it carries additional and deeper significance.

Pregnancy is full of all sorts of discomforts, ranging from physical to emotional. Yet all of this is courageously accepted in the great anticipation of the reward of a healthy and beautiful baby. When a miscarriage occurs, all of the previous sacrifice goes for naught. All of the hopes that pushed the expectant mother through the hardships are dashed; all of her dreams go unfulfilled. The searing pain from such a tragedy cannot be overstated.

Thus understood, this prayer has far-reaching relevance. One doesn't have to be an expectant mother to experience the pain of unfulfilled dreams and unredeemed sacrifices, and it is for protection from this that the *kohen gadol* prays. We are willing to sacrifice – but we pray that our sacrifice not be for naught but, rather, in service of a higher purpose.

A second request found at the end of the prayer is that our *Aliyah* to Israel be joyous. The focus here isn't on the move per se but the circumstances that surround it. Over the millennia, Jews have fled to *Eretz Yisrael* to escape persecution. The *kohen gadol* prays for a different reality. He prays for a time when people aren't forced to flee from somewhere else but freely choose to run to Israel; not because they have to but because they want to.

And perhaps this request also expresses a broader theme. There are many other forms of “*aliyah*” – spiritual growth – that we seek, and the motivation for this growth can come from various sources. Moments of great crisis or calamity, just as experiences of great achievement and accomplishment, can lead to spiritual *aliyah*. This prayer expresses the hope that the inspiration for our aspiration comes not from trial or tribulation but from G-d's manifest blessing.

Finally, the *kohen gadol* requests a year in which we are each able to maintain our independence, not reliant on the help of others. In addition to the obvious benefit of self-sufficiency, there may be an additional meaning as well. The more others are necessary for our material success the greater the risk that, like in a game of “spiritual telephone,” we may forget that G-d is the ultimate source of our sustenance. Financial independence will enable us to preserve a direct connection to Hashem as the source of blessing in our lives.

As we prepare for Yom Kippur this year let us recall the crucial components of the *kohen gadol*'s prayer. May any difficulties that we endure be redeemed as sacrifices on the altar of a larger good and may the “*aliyah* of our lives” be inspired by love not fear, and that we remain independent enough to realize our direct dependence on Hashem.



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“The Plot Against Jacob”

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm zt”l

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Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm zt”l was one of the great leaders and thinkers of our time. Elected president of Yeshiva University in 1976, he brought the institution to new heights. He was honorary president of Religious Zionists of America – Mizrachi, and led the Religious Zionist slate for the World Zionist Congress. This derasha was given a few months after the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War. Following the events of last Simchat Torah, these messages and ideas carry new resonance.

There is an important and apparently ancient theme in the *agadah* concerning the episode of Jacob and his children that is both intriguing and disturbing.

The Scriptural tale is well known. The brothers decided to sell Joseph as a slave, removed his “coat of many colors” and dipped it in blood, and then showed it to their father Jacob. Jacob was convinced that the blood-stained coat indicated that Joseph had been devoured by a wild beast. He went into mourning for Joseph, and refused ever to be consoled.

For 22 years, Jacob did not find out that Joseph was still alive. So many people

knew the truth, but the secret was never revealed to the old patriarch. Was this a plot against Jacob?

Indeed so! It was a true conspiracy.

The *agadah* tells us that the brothers, in order to protect themselves against the wrath of their father, pronounced a *חַרְם* or excommunication against anyone who would reveal the true story to Jacob. They even included G-d, as it were, in their ban! And the Almighty went along and agreed to be bound by the excommunication uttered by the brothers. Thus, the *agadah* states, G-d withdrew His *שְׂכִינָה* or Presence from Jacob, and it did not return to him until he learned, over two decades

later, that Joseph was indeed alive. (Thus, “וַתְּחִי רוּחַ יַעֲקֹב אַבְיָהֶם” and the spirit of their father Jacob lived again,” is interpreted as referring to the “spirit of G-d” or the presence of the *שְׂכִינָה*.) Joseph himself did not contact his father during this time. Moreover, the rabbis interpret the words “וַיִּבֶךְ אוֹתוֹ אָבִיו” and his father wept over him,” as referring not to Jacob weeping over Joseph, but to Isaac weeping over Jacob! At this point, Isaac was still alive, and he knew that Joseph had been sold by his brothers. He wept bitter tears over the anguish that his son Jacob was going through, but he did not reveal the secret to Jacob *מִפְּנֵי כְבוֹד הַשְׂכִינָה*, “out of respect for the Divine Presence,” arguing that if

G-d wanted to keep the secret from Jacob, he had no right to break the confidence.

So we have the makings of a true plot. The members of the cabal were Jacob's sons and his daughter, Joseph himself, his own father Isaac, and even G-d!

Why this strange and apparently heartless plot against the old man?

Many answers have been offered in explanation. The brothers' action is unquestioned, because what they did was in their self-interest. But why did G-d, as it were, cooperate in this conspiracy? Some answer that it was a punishment in kind (מִדָּה כְּנִגְדָּה) for Jacob's neglect of the commandment to honor his father, when for the 22 years that he was in exile, fleeing from Esau, he made no effort to contact Isaac.

But there is one special answer which I would like to bring to your attention and which I consider most troubling and most enlightening.

This response (offered by the author of שְׂפָתַי הִתְקַמְּיָה) was that the conspiracy was used by G-d in order to move all participants to a goal that none of them was able to discern at the time. G-d had promised Abraham כִּי גֵר יִהְיֶה זְרָעְךָ, that his descendants would be strangers, exiles in a foreign country, and only after this period of exile would they emerge to become not only a family or a tribe, but a great nation. First they would have to endure the pain of exile, and only then could they be redeemed to the dignity of nationhood.

Therefore, Joseph had to go down into Egypt and have enough time available to him to become second to Pharaoh. Only thus would Jacob and his children later come into Egypt to begin the Israelite exile, later to leave and make their way to the Promised Land. But in order for this to be accomplished successfully, the secret had to be kept from Jacob, for had he known, he would most certainly have moved heaven and earth to get Joseph back. He simply loved Joseph too much, as a father, to sacrifice him for all that time in order for the promise to Abraham to be fulfilled.

Thus, the plot against Jacob was the entry into גְלוּת (exile) for the purpose of a greater גְּאֻלָּה (redemption); a יְרִידָה לְצַרָּה, descent for the sake of ascent, pain for the sake of greater pleasure, suffering for the sake of more exquisite bliss. It was part of the growing pains of a chosen people.

This is what the conspiracy teaches us: that often it is necessary to endure a lesser evil for the sake of a greater good. And it

reminds us that at the time that we are suffering, we must have a measure of confidence that "כָּל מָה דְּעָבִיד רַחֲמָנָא לְטָב" עָבִיד, all that the Merciful One does is for the good" – even if we do not realize or appreciate it at the time.

Who knows but that this same principle was operative in our own times! The Yom Kippur War has revealed the ghastly loneliness of our people. It seems as if there was a plot against Israel, when all her former friends have become her enemies, when we sometimes feel that, כְּנִגְדָּה, the Almighty Himself was against us!

If so, we must appreciate that this suffering we have endured is defeat for the sake of triumph, loss for the sake of greater gain. Its purpose was to improve us, to make us worthier, better, nobler, and more deserving of the greater dignity that awaits us.

What exactly can we learn from the Yom Kippur War, other than the need for a better evaluation of military intelligence reports? What may we learn from it on a larger and more meaningful level?

I offer the following analysis in fear and trepidation. I hope I will not be misunderstood, although I probably will.

Why this hesitation? – Because who are we to criticize Israel? And is it not ungracious and presumptuous to sit here, in the comfort of the Diaspora, and pick out faults in the character of Israel when it has suffered so grievously?

Nevertheless, I shall proceed, and shall say what I genuinely believe, both here and in a week or so אֵי"ה in Jerusalem, because *we are one people*, sharing one faith and one destiny. I shall say it, despite my own hesitation, because I have already said these things much before the Yom Kippur War, and have said them in Israel, to the people most directly concerned, the military academies. I shall say it because I love Israel, and to love means to refuse to be indifferent to flaws in the beloved, but always to seek to improve the beloved.

In the course of our long stay in the Diaspora, we have developed an unhealthy *galut* complex. Jewish character developed the traits of timidity and self-abnegation, self-blame and a sense of helplessness, a passion for invisibility and an aversion to "making waves." In order for the State of Israel to be born and to survive, Zionist leaders consciously had to change that image. Deliberate efforts were made to inculcate in Jews a sense of pride and self-determination, resolve and autonomy, a do-it-yourself attitude to life.

These efforts were successful – too successful! We disengaged ourselves from the *galut* complex so well, that we went to the opposite extreme. From 1948 through 1956, through 1967 and up to the Yom Kippur War, we developed a national psychology that was unhealthy, unrealistic, and ultimately un-Jewish.

Unquestionably, Israelis developed some character traits that were noble, beautiful, and admirable. Israelis fought difficult wars, and yet never hated their enemy. They administered the occupied territories in a manner that will forever be a model for other nations. They demonstrated an exemplary openness to immigrants that is unprecedented in human history.

Yet, certain mass attitudes that have developed in Israel are less than lovable or liveable with. Self-reliance has merged into self-confidence, with a remarkable lack of humility. Israeli leaders quite unself-consciously preached a doctrine against which Moses warned us in the Torah: the illusion that כְּחִי וְעַצְמִי יְדִי עָשָׂה, that all my success in the result of my own power, strength, and wisdom. Israeli leaders do not tire of the old litany, that "we can rely only upon our own strength, sometimes including the financial cooperation of American Jews." We have now learned that that is not enough! Israel's own strength was simply insufficient in this time of crisis. They had to rely not only on their own strength and the UJA, but on the good will of the government of the United States. And, perhaps, did G-d too have something to say about all this? Have we not yet learned that reliance on G-d is not a sign of weakness? That humility can be a sign of inner strength?

At bottom, Israel is or was obsessed by an exaggerated and extravagant notion of עֲצָמָאוּת, independence. I have always faintly disliked that word, although it is a thousand times better than the obsequiousness that characterizes Diaspora Jewry. Modern Jews began to act as if national independence is not simply a desirable political state, but that it is all that counts, and that it is an absolute. We made a fetish of independence, and some of us declared our independence from G-d too.

But is "independence" really an absolute value? Is Israel all that independent? Indeed, who is completely independent today? The Arabs – who need the U.S.S.R.? The U.S.S.R. – which needs American know-how and trade and most-favored-nation status? France and England and Japan and the United States – which

need Arab oil? Let us face a fact of life: we are all of us dependent, beggars, even sycophants. There is no absolute independence. All of us are caught in a cycle of dependency.

Of course we must fight unto death to retain our political integrity and national independence. But we must never make a psychological or ideological or theological absolute out of it.

For centuries, Jews were militarily important. In the past 25 years, we have demonstrated the exemplary qualities and bravery of the Israeli soldier. כָּל הַכְּבוֹד לְצִה"ל. Full honor to the Israeli Armed Forces! But does that warrant the attitude that Tzahal (the Israeli Defense Forces) is the culmination of Jewish history, for which all the ages labored? Does it warrant the attitude of pity-cum-contempt by the Sabra for the victims of the Holocaust? Does it warrant the smugness and over-blown self-esteem which too many Israeli military officers have evinced? Does it warrant the vague threat of militarism – as in the over-production of generals who are going into government and industry in Israel?

Religious Jews have not fared much better. The dominant ideology of Religious Zionism in Israel by and large presses the idea that the State of Israel represents a Messianic stage, the *אֶתְחֵלְתָּא דְגְאֻלָּה*, the first stage of Messianic redemption. I have always been annoyed by the presumptuousness and the arrogance in this dogmatic certainty that we know what G-d is doing in the great perspectives of history, that we can even dictate to G-d the scenario of redemption. For with it had come the tendency to absolutize politics, to endow conquered territories with sanctity, to make popular ideas (and even policies of the State) immune to criticism.

And we Diaspora Jews? If anything, we have sinned more. The great majority of American Jews, from 75–80%, have given not one penny to UJA or bought one [Israel] Bond! Does it mean that our majority does

not sympathize with Israel? No, they certainly do! What then? They are satisfied to sit on the side and talk glowingly about “tough, little Israel.” So, it is *tough* and can fend for itself without our help; and it is *little* – so it is too small for me to visit for more than once or twice during my lifetime, certainly too small for me to want to live there. And so American Jews develop a vicarious thrill in the national machismo of Israel, a thrill which comes very, very cheap.

The Yom Kippur War has changed all that. It has smashed more than one myth which has victimized us. The war was *זִרְיָדָה לְצֶרֶף עֲלֵיָהּ*, a shock which will make us better. On the pattern of the conspiracy against Jacob, it was the prelude to national greatness.

The Yom Kippur War has made us humble, without making us timid; made us more aware of the limitations of independence and the perils of self-confidence. We have learned that we can fight and fight brilliantly, but that we are not omnipotent; that our leaders are often wise, but never infallible; that we must be strong, but we cannot put all our faith in our strength; that we do need others, and we may even be in need of *דְּשִׁמְתָא דְּשַׁמַּיָא*, the help of Heaven.

Was it worth twenty five hundred young lives, of the best of our youth and the flower of our people, to learn this bit of humility? Absolutely not. But we are not asked; it is not for us to negotiate the price in advance. Jacob suffered 22 years of agony, and more after that, so that his descendants would experience *גְּאֻלָּה* and nationhood. Yet unquestionably Jacob would have given all that up in order to get back his beloved son Joseph – and it is for this reason that the conspiracy was necessary in the first place.

What I am saying, then, is that events are not always what they seem to be, and that it is uniquely Jewish to exploit adversity and find in it the *זִרְיָדָה* or spark of hope.

The silver lining on the cloud indicates the sun shining above it. The *agadah* on Jacob teaches that we must not give up hope or faith, that we must never despair!

Up to this past Yom Kippur, we (and especially the Israelis) were too self-confident, too smugly optimistic. Now we (and, again, especially the Israelis) are too fearful, too depressed, too pessimistic. A little more true *emunah* (faith), proper Jewish trust in the Redeemer of Israel, would have counseled us against the illusion of *הַזָּה פְּחֵי וְעֵצָם יְדֵי עֶשָׂה לִי אֶת הַחַיִּל הַזֶּה*, that our own power and wisdom caused us to succeed, and does now summon us to greater hope and confidence in the future.

We have suffered a setback, yes, but defeat – *חֵס וְחֵלִילָהּ*! no! Heaven forbid for anyone to assert that our present difficulties will lead to *הַסּוּל הַמְדִינָה*, to the undoing of statehood. Jacob lived to proclaim “עוֹד יוֹסֵף חַי, Joseph lives yet!” and his children reported to Joseph “עוֹד אֲבִינוּ חַי” our old father still lives.”

We shall do the same. עוֹד יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי – Israel lives and will live, and not only will it live but it will live on as a greater and stronger people, as a finer and nobler people, as a people worthy not only of political wisdom and military strength and economical well being and scientific progress, but also of exemplary character and moral discipline.

In a word, we shall yet become *מְמַלְכָת* *מְמַלְכָת* *וְגוֹי קְדוֹשׁ*, a holy nation and a kingdom of priests. ■



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In Memory of Zechariah Haber: Elevating Repentance Beyond Sin

Aharon Haber

My son, Dr. Zechariah Haber, *hy"d*, was killed in battle in Gaza on January 16th at the age of 32. He was fighting to defend the rights of Jews to live in peace and security in the Land of Israel and to help locate hostages taken into Gaza on Simchat Torah. He left behind a beloved wife, three small children, parents, three brothers, and many others who loved him deeply. Though his life was tragically cut short, Zechariah was already an accomplished plant scientist with several peer-reviewed articles published. Tel Aviv University posthumously awarded him a doctorate in June 2024 for his groundbreaking work on using advanced computational tools to develop wheat genes capable of withstanding drought and other adverse conditions.

Zechariah was also a *talmid chacham*. He completed the *Hesder* program at Yeshivat Har Etzion and often gave *shiurim* and *chaburot* after graduating, some of which are available on YouTube. Due to his extreme humility, most of our family (myself included) only learned after his death that Zechariah had written an encyclopedia of Talmudic topics for in-depth study during night *sefer* in his last two years at *yeshiva*, after returning from his army service as a tank commander. He often worked late into the night in the *beit midrash*. This encyclopedia, a highly condensed Word document, was shared with friends at the *yeshiva* upon request and otherwise remained on his personal laptop. It is extensive, covering all sections of the *Shulchan Aruch* as well as the laws of the Temple and sacrifices. It is currently being edited for publication by Yeshivat Har Etzion.

One of the questions Zechariah frequently returned to in his encyclopedia is the objective of *mitzvot* – G-d's commandments. Are they meant to be practical responses to our imperfect world, addressing spiritual and physical needs and gaps? Or is the physical world merely a foundation upon which *mitzvot* are anchored, with their ultimate purpose being to elevate ourselves and draw closer to Hashem? According to this second



understanding, *mitzvot* transcend the original circumstances associated with them and take on a spiritual meaning of their own. Zechariah often explored this question by analyzing the particulars of a *mitzvah* to determine how closely they are linked to their initial circumstances. If the *mitzvah* exhibits characteristics that seem unrelated to those circumstances, it suggests that the second approach is more dominant for that commandment. Zechariah frequently employed this method of analysis in his encyclopedia.

Zechariah's treatment of repentance through the laws of *viduy*, confession, is an excellent example of his exploration of this question. Our sins are the immediate triggers for the necessity of repentance, but does our repentance transcend the original sin to encompass a loftier goal beyond merely blotting out the sin itself? Zechariah brings several Talmudic sources to set the stage for this discussion, with a primary focus on sources he cites from Maimonides (Laws of Repentance, 1:1-3, and Guide to the Perplexed, 3:36). After presenting these sources, Zechariah summarizes this central question in one of his characteristic formulations: "For whom (i.e., which rabbinic opinion) is the goal of repentance the atonement of sin and for whom is the goal to come closer to G-d?"

I believe Zechariah chose these particular Maimonidean sources to build the case that for Maimonides, repentance is not only essential for addressing sins but is transformative in its own right. The first indication of this transformative nature comes from the *Guide to the Perplexed*:

It is clear that repentance is likewise included in this class; that is to say, it is one of those principles which are an indispensable element in the creed of the followers of the Law. For it is impossible for man to be entirely free from error and sin; he either does not know the opinion

which he has to choose, or he adopts a principle, not for its own merits, but in order to gratify his desire or passion. If we were convinced that we could never make our crooked ways straight, we should forever continue in our errors, and perhaps add other sins to them since we did not see that any remedy was left to us. *But the belief in the effect of repentance causes us to improve, to return to the best of the ways, and to become more perfect than we were before we sinned.* For this reason many things are prescribed for the promotion of this very useful principle: e.g., confessions and sacrifices for sins committed unknowingly, and in some cases even for sins committed intentionally, and fasts, and that which is common to all cases of repentance from sin, the resolve to discontinue sinning. For that is the aim of this principle. Of all these precepts the use is obvious. (*Guide to the Perplexed*, 3:36)

Incredibly, Maimonides assigns an indirect but powerful psychological benefit to the gift of repentance given to us by G-d. Repentance is useful not only for treating the spiritual harm caused by sin; it is the very belief in its effectiveness that encourages us to walk the righteous path and not fall into despair from our sinful ways. The related acts of confession, sacrifice, and fasting are meant to strengthen the institution of repentance in our eyes, ensuring that we truly turn away from sin.

In addition to this indirect benefit, Maimonides asserts that repentance is so powerful it can elevate us to a state even better than before we sinned. In other words, beyond atonement for sin, repentance (and indeed even the act of sinning itself, as we shall see) serves as an engine for spiritual improvement.

But how does repentance accomplish this? How can we become better than we were before we sinned by simply confessing the sin and resolving not to repeat it? Zechariah's answer begins with a citation from Pinchas Peli's book *Soloveitchik On Repentance*:

And yet, when man sins he creates a distance between himself and G-d... The whole essence of the precept of repentance is longing, yearning, pining to return again to being 'before you' [explaining the "*Lefanecha*" from Maimonides' first *halacha* in the Laws of Repentance]... Sin pushes man far away and stimulates his longing to return, so that when man comes to the point of confessing he must say, "I have sinned, I have acted perversely, I have transgressed before Thee," that is to say, free me from the tangling web of my sins and allow me to return and stand "before Thee." Restore me to where I was before. (*Soloveitchik On Repentance*, 83)

When we repent, our act of confession includes offering up a prayer – not just to blot out the sin but to return to G-d's presence.

Later in *On Repentance*, in the chapter entitled "Blotting Out or Elevating Sin," Rav Soloveitchik further expands on this notion of longing, echoing Maimonides' statement that repentance can, in fact, advance man's spiritual condition:

Repentance of this sort (i.e., of the sort that "elevates" the sin) does not require man to return to the starting point where he was originally, but rather infuses him with a

burning desire to come as near as he can to the Creator of the universe and *attain spiritual heights undreamed of before he sinned* (254).

Rav Soloveitchik then poses the question mentioned above:

You may ask: How is it possible for one who has repented to get nearer and ascend higher than he was before he sinned? How is it possible for sin to act as a dynamic force leading to holiness?

Rav Soloveitchik's primary answer is that the estrangement from G-d and the longing we feel when we sin causes us to search for G-d with even more vigor than before. Before sinning, we may be complacent, but afterward, we understand what we've lost and appreciate our relationship with G-d even more.

Rav Soloveitchik compares this longing to the loss of a loved one (in his personal case, his wife and parents). We may only fully understand the enormity of the loss after a loved one passes away. Of course, we cannot return to the state prior to the loss of a loved one, but our relationship with G-d does allow for return. This is the special power of repentance that transcends the sin itself and impels us to greater closeness to G-d than before we sinned.

While triggered by sin, repentance is an essential tool for reaching greater levels of spirituality. The atonement for the sin, though important in its own right, becomes secondary to this loftier purpose.

As I mentioned in the introduction, repentance is just one of many examples Zechariah presents in his encyclopedia of commandments that transcend their proximate triggers. Unfortunately, Zechariah can no longer help us understand his Torah. This is a tremendous loss for those of us, even his close family, who are only now fully appreciating what Zechariah could have continued contributing to Torah Judaism. This loss leaves us feeling like Rav Ada bar Ahava, as underscored by Rav Soloveitchik (258), who mourned a second time for his master Rav when he realized he no longer had access to Rav's *halachic* decisions. Zechariah's loss will be felt by his family for a very long time, while his loss to society may never be fully known. But through the study of his Torah, and especially through the philosophical underpinnings of Judaism that were important to him, we hope to continue his thought and ideas and ultimately to become better Jews. ■

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While triggered by sin, repentance is an essential tool for reaching greater levels of spirituality.

We invite you to learn more about Zechariah *hy”d* at www.zechariahhaber.com

A YEAR OF YOM KIPPUR

DR. JULIE GOLDSTEIN

Images from last Simchat Torah are indelibly seared upon our consciousness. The nine-day-old baby lying exposed on a windowsill symbolized our nation's newfound vulnerability. The crumbling of Israel's "Iron Wall" as terrorists infiltrated twenty-nine points along its perimeter undermined the self-image of Israeli invincibility. The border surveillance guard observed Hamas terrorists creating a replica of her observation tower and rehearsing the murder of her and her fellow soldiers, only to have her warnings dismissed by military brass, symbolizing the misconceptions that plagued us in the years leading up to this war.

Experts describe October 7th as a failure of conceptualization, known in Israel as "*conceptzia*." We uncritically accepted certain truths and narratives about ourselves and our enemies, and this flawed understanding led to the catastrophic events of that day.

October 7th was a shock to our system, forcing us to reassess where we are, how we got here, and where we are going. We have lived through a year of Yom Kippur, the day of vulnerability, destabilization, questioning prior assumptions, and overturning preconceived notions.

VULNERABILITY

The words used for "sin" in the thirteen *middot harachamim* raise awareness of vulnerability for each and every person, whether or not we see ourselves as overt wrongdoers. "*Avon*, iniquity"; "*pesha*, recklessness"; "*chata'a/chet*, erring or missing the mark"; and even "*aveirah*," which does not appear in the *middot harachamim* but suggests crossing a line or going too far, all define "sin" as an off-kilter state or lack of balance, to which everyone is susceptible. On Yom Kippur, *viduy* serves as confession to that vulnerability, which becomes a call to action, *teshuvah*, precipitating an evening out of the scales.

DESTABILIZATION

Yom Kippur removes us from our comfort zones, subverting our usual inclination toward self-care and ease to focus our attention uncomfortably inward,

compelling us to withdraw from our echo chambers and question everything. The five *innuyim* (prohibitions against eating, drinking, washing or anointing the body, wearing leather shoes, and marital relations) purposefully redirect our thoughts. Like Yonah, who initially sought consistency, predictability, and "justice" (where Nineveh should be punished), but was roused by G-d from physical and ideological sleep, denied the comfort of the *kikayon* tree, and whose boat was literally and figuratively rocked, we are forced to reassess our own assumptions and draw new conclusions.

CONCEPTZIA

Opening Yom Kippur with *Kol Nidrei*, designed to absolve us of oaths, marks this day as a time for release from narrow-minded modes of thought, pre-existing narratives, and mentalities. Though oaths can sometimes be helpful, Chazal strongly discourage oath-making. "Anyone who takes a vow is considered as having built a private altar. If he transgressed and took a vow, it is a *mitzvah* to ask [a sage] to absolve it, so that he will not have an obstacle before him" (Rambam, *Nedarim* 13:25, citing *Nedarim* 22a).

Why such disapproval? In the prior *halacha*, Rambam distinguishes between a vow and an action, stating: "Instead [of taking vows], one should abstain from those things from which one should abstain without taking a vow." Instead of locking oneself into narratives about actions to be taken, characterized by "oath-making," one should simply act. Rambam exhorts us not to become stuck in a static way of thinking, creating internal schemas that are resistant to change. The absolutions of our oaths at the very start of Yom Kippur represent a retreat from "*conceptzia*."

By reminding us of our vulnerability, disturbing our self-perceptions and removing us from stagnant frames of mind, Yom Kippur this year will be the concentrated expression of the last twelve months. But there is another feature of Yom Kippur that requires special mention.

The last *Mishnah* in *Masechet Yoma* states that "for transgressions between a person and G-d, Yom Kippur atones; however, for transgressions between a person and another, Yom Kippur does not atone until he appeases the other person." When it comes to interpersonal relationships, *teshuvah* is results-oriented, requiring not just a change of action but the reestablishment of fellowship and unity.

We are all familiar with the tremendous acts of *chesed* that have persisted throughout the country since the beginning of the war. What is harder to articulate are the feelings of closeness, affinity, and familial affection that transcend the actions. From the moment the sirens sounded on October 7th, there has been a tangible sense of camaraderie, empathy, and love between people who had never before met, sometimes with deep differences. As I write, our collective hearts are shattered at news of Hamas' brutal murder of six hostages. But even as some revert to factionalism and civil strife over who is to blame, there is deeply-shared pain and an existential state of being that connects us to each other here, perpetuating our "year-long Yom Kippur."

We hope and pray that the experience of our personal Yom Kippur will connect us to the experience of all of *Klal Yisrael*, thereby bringing us a year of peace and healing.



Dr. Julie Goldstein
is Rosh HaMidrashah of Midreshet Amudim.



A member of the Mizrahi Speakers Bureau
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The Reawakening of Young Leadership

Rabbi Ya'akov Trump

Once asked Rabbi Berel Wein if Judaism fared better with persecution from the outside or with integration among its neighbors. He responded without hesitation that Judaism has been a much more successful enterprise when surrounded by antagonists. As sad and surprising as this observation is, it makes a good deal of sense. During periods of societal acceptance, Jews have achieved greatly in Torah scholarship and secular endeavors. However, these same eras often challenged Jewish identity as integration increased. Many Jews were lost to assimilation. Conversely, times of persecution compelled Jews to confront and defend their identity more strongly.

Consider American Jewry in 2020: Of an estimated 7.5 million Jews, 27% don't identify with the Jewish religion, and 32% don't associate with any Jewish stream. Inter-marriage rates reach 72% outside Orthodoxy. Only 56% of those raised by one Jewish parent identify as Jewish. Despite the blessings of American life, these statistics suggest that Jewish continuity isn't guaranteed in welcoming societies.

Since Simchas Torah 5784, Jewry has been under attack in almost every corner of the world. The epicenter of this war is obviously in Israel, where civilians were violently attacked, abused and captured. The ensuing war has claimed the lives of hundreds of brave young soldiers. But the battle against Jewry has not been limited to Israel. Already on October 7th, pro-Hamas rallies erupted around the world in an orchestrated effort to delegitimize and malign Israel and any Jews who support it. The effort to attack world Jewry has moved to campuses, businesses, city

councils, synagogues, Jewish neighborhoods, seats of government, city streets and beyond. For many, it has felt like a siege. Western complacency and an expansive interpretation of free speech has enabled these attacks to continue without consequence. Jews find themselves on the defense around the globe.

But this is also an opportunity. In the last year, Jews from around the world have displayed leadership we could only imagine a year ago. In Israel, we witnessed young men leave their families for months on end, endangering their lives to protect their people and their country. We saw brave women acting as single mothers, wives, breadwinners and homemakers while their husbands and sons were at the front. In the Diaspora, the response has been equally impressive. People have committed themselves to numerous pro-Israel initiatives. Some flew to Israel with supplies, while others led missions or offered professional services to those in need. Many organized Shabbatons, BBQs, and concerts. Some found niches collecting gear and supplies for soldier friends. Others confronted campus bigotry and antisemitism, lobbied governments, joined letter-writing campaigns, or counter-protested pro-Hamas rallies. Some visited Israel and brought heroes and traumatized families to their communities for respite and fundraising. A few even left their jobs to fundraise or establish *chesed* centers for Israel.

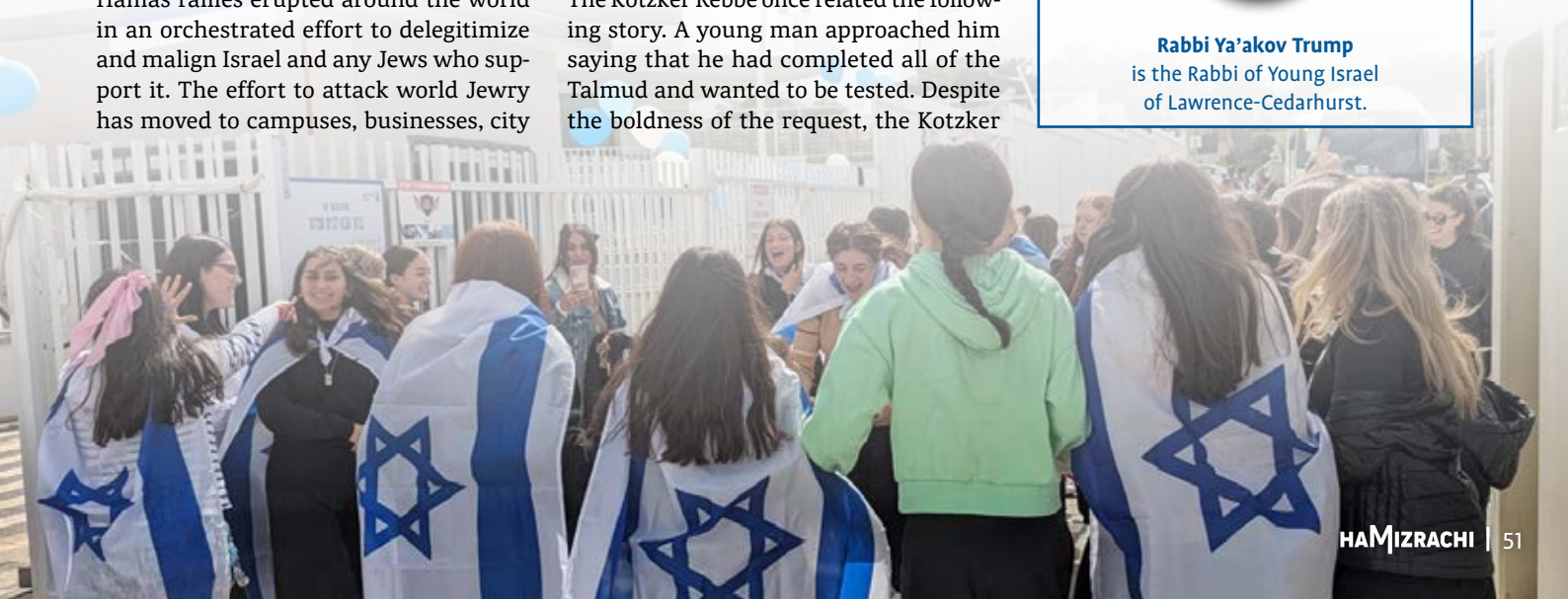
The Kotzker Rebbe once related the following story. A young man approached him saying that he had completed all of the Talmud and wanted to be tested. Despite the boldness of the request, the Kotzker

Rebbe responded unperturbed. "What is the answer to the captain's question?" he asked. "The captain's question?" the young man asked. "Yes, what is the answer to the captain's question?" The young man demurred. He could not remember any captains asking any questions in the Talmud. The Kotzker Rebbe explained: "In the book of Yonah, Yonah tried to run away from Hashem. He boarded a ship to Tarshish, which soon was caught in a terrifying storm as a result of Yonah's actions. Yonah removed himself from the experience by going to sleep in the hold of the boat. The captain of the ship found him there and demanded - 'Why are you sleeping?' That is the captain's question."

Even people who are well versed in all of Judaism can remain asleep while the storm rocks the boat. Are we awakening to Hashem's message? The past year's events have stirred a dormant sense of Jewish pride. While not everyone has awakened, and many are fatigued from months of effort, this period has undeniably reminded us of our Jewish identity's significance. Our task now is to kindle Jewish pride among all willing Jews and help them find their place on the deck of this ship as we navigate this violent storm together.



Rabbi Ya'akov Trump
is the Rabbi of Young Israel
of Lawrence-Cedarhurst.



Rav Kook's Pioneering Years in Yafo

Shaping the Future of Religious Zionism

Rabbi Aron White

On the 28th of Iyar 5664 (May 1904), Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook arrived at the port of Yafo, having been appointed as the rabbi of Yafo and the newly established agricultural communities founded by the nascent Zionist movement. Although his reputation was well-known, few could have anticipated the profound impact his arrival in the Land of Israel would have. Now, 120 years later, Rabbi Aron White reflects on the influence of Rav Kook's early years in Eretz Yisrael.

Ninety years after his passing, Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook remains the foremost spiritual figure in the national religious community. His writings are widely studied and taught in high schools and *yeshivot*. Politically, he is often viewed as the spiritual inspiration for the movement to settle Yehuda and Shomron, even though this movement was led by his son, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook. Additionally, Rav Kook served as the first Chief Rabbi of *Eretz Yisrael* under the British Mandate.

Those seeking to understand Rav Kook's worldview often turn first to his extensive writings, particularly his philosophical works like *Orot*. However, much can be learned about Rav Kook simply by studying his life story. Far from being an isolated philosopher, Rav Kook's core beliefs were deeply intertwined with his rabbinic career, and his first ten years as a rabbi in *Eretz Yisrael* offer valuable insights. These years not only shed light on a significant portion of his life but also provide a fascinating glimpse into the early formation of Israeli society.

The decision to move to Eretz Yisrael

Rav Kook is so closely associated with *Eretz Yisrael* that it's easy to forget he was born in Russia, spent much of his life in the Diaspora, and came close to never making *Aliyah* at all.

Born in Griva in 1865, Rav Kook grew up in a home that blended the *Chassidic* influences of his mother's background with the *mitnagdic* traditions of his father. A precocious *talmid chacham*,

he received *semicha* from the *Aruch HaShulchan* before turning 20. He studied in Volozhin as a close student of the *Netziv* and went on to serve as a rabbi in Zeimel and Boisk, gaining recognition both in his own right and as the son-in-law of the *Aderet*, Rabbi Shmuel Salant's assistant as Chief Rabbi of *Yerushalayim*.

After serving as a rabbi in Europe for about 15 years, Rav Kook was invited in 1902 to become the rabbi of Yafo, a port town in *Eretz Yisrael* with a growing Jewish community. Despite the community's growth due to waves of Jewish immigration, Yafo remained a small town, part of a relatively small Jewish population in *Eretz Yisrael* – around 50,000 at the time, compared to one million Jews who had already emigrated to the United States and ten million living in Europe.

Rav Kook sought advice from several rabbis and Jewish leaders, many of whom, including Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski, advised him to stay in Europe. Some warned that the community in Yafo would be too divisive – the old *yishuv* was too traditional for him, while the new secular *yishuv* had little interest in rabbis. Why go somewhere that could tear you apart?

At the same time, Rav Kook was also offered the position of *mashgiach* at the *Telshe Yeshiva* by Rabbi Eliezer Gordon and spent a few days there considering the opportunity.

What led Rav Kook to leave Europe and take a chance on the relatively unknown opportunity in Yafo? While we can't know for certain, an article he published in 1901 in the journal *HaPeles*

offers insight into his thinking. Following the Zionist Congress in 1897, the Jewish world was grappling with how to relate to the Zionist movement, and Rav Kook was invited to contribute an article to this generally anti-Zionist publication. In his first public commentary on the topic, Rav Kook acknowledged the positive aspects of the burgeoning Jewish nationalism while critiquing its secular outlook. He argued that Jewish nationalism was inherently valuable and holy, and that religious Jews had a responsibility to engage with the movement rather than reject it: “The leaders of the Zionist movement are surprised at those Torah Jews who are keeping their distance from the movement for our national revival. And indeed, one should be surprised – not because they have differences with a movement in its current state, but because they are staying away and not trying to make an impact, something that can bring *Am Yisrael* closer to its Father in Heaven.”

This article was published in 1901, and it seems reasonable that this approach played a significant role in his thinking when he decided to move to Yafo in 1904 – when presented with an opportunity to indeed play a role in the nascent Jewish culture, he took the opportunity and moved to *Eretz Yisrael*.

Rabbinic leadership in Yafo

Rav Kook arrived in Yafo on 28th of Iyar 5664. His role encompassed traditional rabbinic duties – answering questions, giving *drashot* – but he also played a pivotal role in establishing the institutional framework that would later define the Religious Zionist community.

At that time, the Jewish community in *Eretz Yisrael* was largely divided between the Old *Yishuv*, which had been in the land for many decades, and the New *Yishuv*, which lived in emerging towns like Petach Tikva, Rechovot, and Gedera. The Old *Yishuv* had many religious schools and *yeshivot*, but they were deeply conservative, teaching in Yiddish and refusing to include secular studies. The New *Yishuv* established numerous schools, but most were not religious. In fact, there was a debate over what language should be used for instruction in the new schools, with some teaching in Hebrew and others in German and other languages. Herzl, in his book *The Jewish State*, expressed skepticism that Hebrew could be the language of a modern state.

Rav Kook was instrumental in establishing Tachkemoni, a religious elementary school that taught in Hebrew and included both secular and religious studies. While such schools are taken for granted today, this was an innovative concept in 1905. By 1912, the Mizrachi movement was running Tachkemoni, marking it as the first Religious Zionist school in Israel. In the following decades, Religious Zionist high schools and *yeshivot* would be founded, but Rav Kook was involved in the creation of the very first Religious Zionist schools in Israel.

In addition to his role as rabbi of Yafo, Rav Kook also served as rabbi of the *moshavot*, the new agricultural communities. In this capacity, he made critical decisions regarding *mitzvot hateluyot ba'aretz*, the agricultural commandments specific to the Land of Israel. He provided guidance on issues such as tithes and forbidden mixtures, helping the developing Jewish agricultural sector navigate how to observe *halacha*. Most notably, he addressed questions about the *Shemitta* year, balancing the laws of the sabbatical year with the needs of religious farmers. His decisions on *heter mechira* played a crucial role in shaping the policies that allowed religious farmers to thrive while remaining observant.

Rav Kook and the wider Zionist society

One of Rav Kook's most significant contributions during this period was bridging the gap between his rabbinic world and the broader Zionist movement. Just a few months after his arrival, he was invited to eulogize Herzl, who had passed away in Europe. Agreeing to give this eulogy was itself a statement, as it signaled his participation in a ceremony of the Zionist movement. In his speech, Rav Kook discussed the religious significance of the secular Zionist movement.

Rav Kook maintained relationships with and respect for the Zionist movement, even as he offered critiques. He wrote letters to Keren Kayemet LeYisrael (KKL) urging them to ensure that their settlements observed Shabbat. He criticized the secular nature of the new Herzliya school founded in Tel Aviv but encouraged his followers to focus on strengthening the religious Tachkemoni school rather than engaging in public disputes with Herzliya.

In 1913, Rav Kook organized a month-long trip for rabbis to visit numerous secular *moshavim*, with the goal of bringing them closer to Judaism. When Rav Soloveitchik visited Israel in 1935, he met a man who credited Rav Kook's trip with keeping their *kibbutz's* kitchen kosher. Beyond the concrete impact, the trip also set a precedent for a traditional rabbi who, while disagreeing with the path of many Zionists, sought to engage with them, visit them, and make a positive impact rather than retreating into isolation.

Rav Kook's relationship with secular Zionist endeavors was complex and multifaceted. He respected the concept of Jewish nationalism and saw deep spiritual significance in the movement, despite its secular nature. He critiqued institutions and individuals for not adhering to *halacha*, but his criticism was always coupled with practical steps to bring those distant from religion closer. During his early years in Yafo, Rav Kook exemplified this balanced approach – respectful, critical, and intent on influencing the secular Zionist movement.

In practice, Rav Kook helped shape the DNA of Religious Zionism. While the issues and circumstances have evolved, and debates within Religious Zionism continue over how to express these values, the core multifaceted relationship with secular Zionism remains a central feature of the movement today.

Rav Kook's early years in *Eretz Yisrael* laid the foundation for the modern Religious Zionist movement, as much – if not more – than his written works. By creating modern religious infrastructure and engaging respectfully with the Zionist movement while criticizing its secular excesses, Rav Kook blazed a path that Religious Zionism continues to follow.



Rabbi Aron White
is the Managing Editor of HaMizrachi magazine.

הַמִּזְרָחִי HAMIZRACHI

COMPILED BY: JACQUI AUSTEN
DESIGNED BY: LEAH RUBIN

KIDS CORNER

UPSIDE-DOWN APPLE CAKE FOR ROSH HASHANAH

Ingredients:

Cake

- ¾ cup margarine, softened
- 1 ½ cups sugar
- 3 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ cup milk
- 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon
- 4 apples, peeled and cut into ¼-inch (6.3mm) thick slices, recommended: granny smith or pink lady

Sauce

- 1 cup margarine, melted
- 1 cup brown sugar

Instructions:

1. With help from a parent, preheat your oven to 350°F (180°C) and grease a 9-inch (23cm) cake pan.
2. In a bowl, cream together the margarine and sugar.
3. Whisk in the eggs, vanilla and milk until they are fully mixed together.
4. Add the flour, baking powder, salt, and cinnamon. Whisk until combined.
5. For the sauce, with help from a parent, melt margarine in a saucepan over medium heat, and stir in the brown sugar. Bring the mixture to a boil and continue to stir for 30 seconds, or until vigorously bubbling.
6. Pour the sauce into the greased cake pan.
7. Arrange the apples on top of the sauce in a circular pattern. Pour cake batter on top of apples and smooth the top of the batter.
8. Bake for 45-55 minutes, or until the cake is done (you can check with a toothpick).
9. Cool for 10-15 minutes. With help from a parent, loosen the sides of the cake by running a butter knife around the edge.
10. Place a plate upside down on top of the pan, then invert the pan, flipping the cake onto the plate.
11. Optional: Decorate with ice cream or whipped cream.



What did one pomegranate say to another?

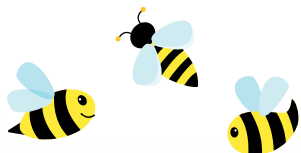
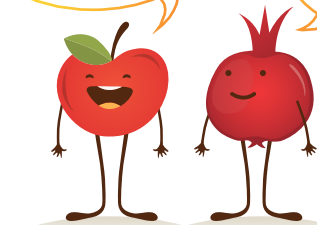
Seed you next year!

HAVE A GRAPE NEW YEAR!

One shofar says to the other, "How's your Rosh Hashanah going?" The other shofar replies, "Shofar, shogood!"

What's the most popular instrument during the High Holidays? The shofar – it's a real blast!

HAVE A PEARY EASY FAST!





MEET LILLIAN WALD



March 10, 1867 - September 1, 1940 (3 Adar 5627 - 28 Av 5700)

Despite being born to a wealthy family in Ohio, Lillian chose to spend her life helping the underprivileged. When her sister was in labor, she went to bring a nurse and bombarded her with questions. It was then that she decided to become a nurse herself. Studies in the nursing school gave Lillian a lot of practical experience but little theoretical learning; she wanted to understand the human body, and therefore registered as a medical college. In parallel, she began to teach Jewish immigrant women basic hygiene who had escaped from the pogroms in Russia to the United States. They didn't speak English nor did they understand the way of life in the new land, and Lillian took it upon herself to teach them. After a harrowing experience in the Lower East Side of New York, which was at the time the most crowded neighborhood on earth, Lillian was introduced to the abject poverty of immigrants. After graduating, Lillian moved to the middle of the neighborhood with another nurse, where they cared for the sick and taught the people how to stay healthy. More nurses eventually joined their forces and they bought a building on Henry Street. She was also a very strong advocate for many other important movements and the building she created is still active even today.



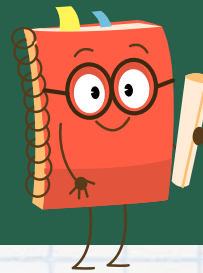
Adapted from *Iconic Jewish Women* by Dr. Aliza Lavie. Scan the QR code to purchase on Amazon.



DID YOU KNOW?

- The term "scapegoat" originated from the Yom Kippur service back in the times of the Beit HaMikdash.
- There's a tradition to use round challot on Rosh Hashanah.
- It's a tradition to wear white on Yom Kippur.

Test Your Knowledge



What is the name of the first prayer on Yom Kippur?

Why do we eat honey on Rosh Hashanah?

What is the name of the meal we eat before Yom Kippur?

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

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WORD SCRAMBLE

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HROS NAAHSAH _____ ☆

UAESTHV _____ ✉

RZHCOAM _____ ⚡

MAMIYA ROMANI _____ 0

ELSPPA _____ 🌿

MZOT HALEDAIG _____ 🍞

MOY VOT _____ ☁

YOHEN _____ 📍

EWN GLOITHNC _____ 🖐

RSAPREY _____ 👑

MYO PIKUPR _____ ☀

FROHSA _____ 🍵



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