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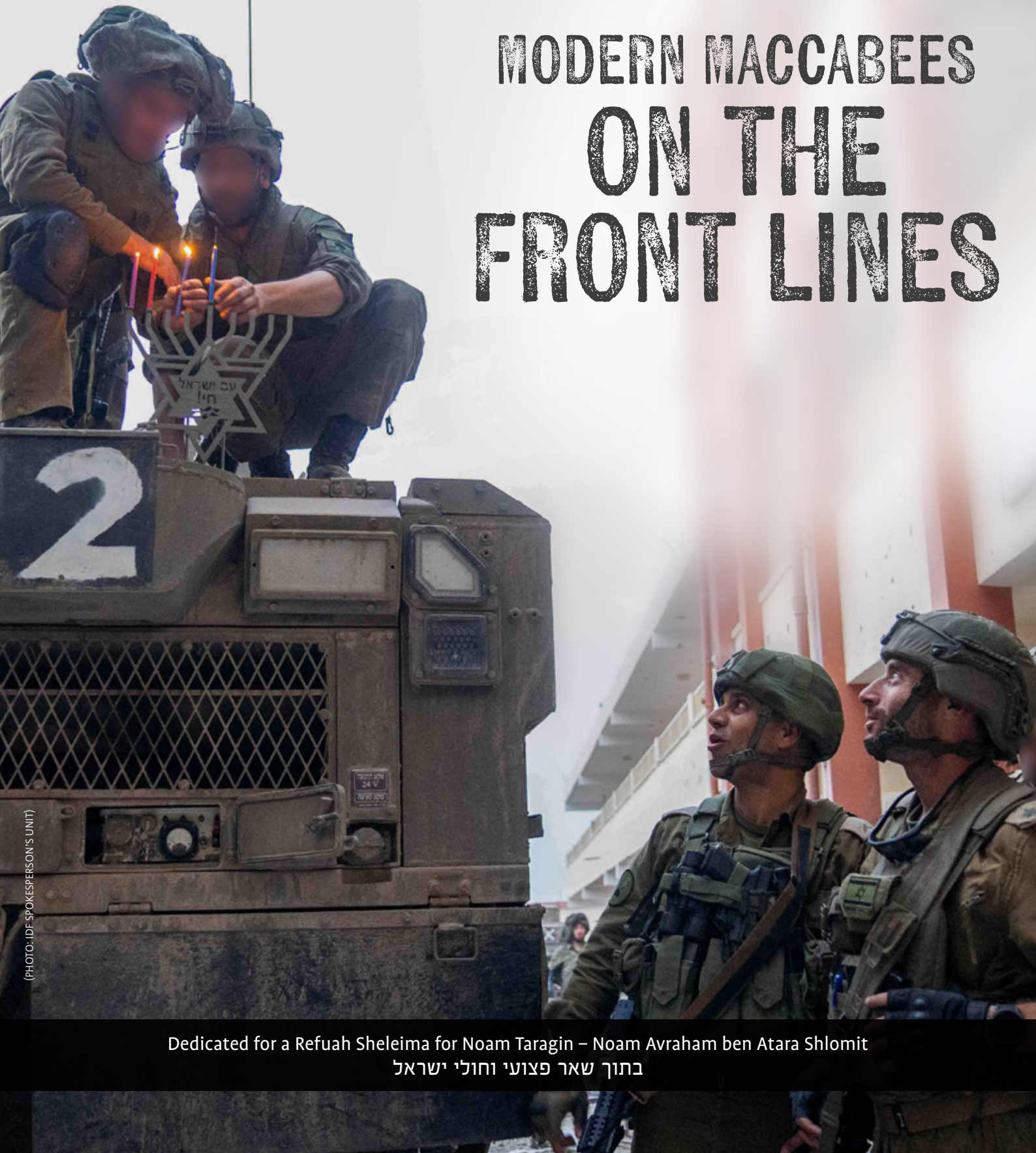
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HAMIZRACHI

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MODERN MACCABEES ON THE FRONT LINES



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Dedicated for a Refuah Sheleima for Noam Taragin – Noam Avraham ben Atara Shlomit
בתוך שאר פצועי וחולי ישראל



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

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Who is Holy?

Today's Modern-Day Maccabees

Rabbi Doron Perez

Who is a holy and pious person today? What is the Jewish view on saintly and holy behavior?

The image many of us have is of a pious, ascetic person, quite separated from normative life, steeped in learning and religious observance on a personal level. This image, though, maintains Rav Kook, is a function of thousands of years of exile, when we were stripped of statehood and collective Jewish living.

During our exile from Jerusalem and wholesome national life, holiness retreated into the precincts of personal life and spiritual intensity – what our sages term “the four cubits of Jewish law” as opposed to the broader realm of societal spiritual life. This, though, says Rav Kook, is not the ideal holiness of the Torah. This is a holiness and piety of exile and statelessness and not one which reflects the full gamut of the spiritual life of sovereignty and statehood. One is a function of exile, the other of redemption.

The ideal holiness – Avraham Avinu

The best place to examine Jewish holiness would be to look at the path blazed by Avraham, the first Jew and founding father of the Jewish people.

The moment Avraham hears of his nephew Lot's captivity, he takes all 318 of the able-bodied members of his household and immediately pursues the captors. In a daring night mission, he attacks the mighty enemy, chases them to Damascus, and returns all the property and people that had been stolen, including his nephew Lot. The fact that Avraham and his followers, numbering only a few hundred people, could subdue mighty kings implies not only courage and daring but also a preparedness to fight in war. Indeed, Ralbag says that here “תַּלְמִידֵי אֲבִירָה”, apprentice, means not only apprentices in following *mitzvot* (as Rashi says) but also apprentices in courage and battle preparedness. They were trained warriors in order to defend themselves.

It is Avraham's kindness and sensitivity and love of his family that finds expression

in his pursuit of justice. Not only is this not a contradiction to the Jewish view of holiness and G-dliness, but it is its very fulfillment. In the Jewish view, holiness and righteousness are inextricably linked to collective care for society and social justice.

War is not something any moral person craves and desires – it is ugly and every sensitive holy person would love to avoid it. But in a world where there is so much barbarism and brutality, good people are called upon to defend themselves. Evil happens in the world not only because of evildoers but because of the silence and impotence of the good. Avraham, as a source of goodness and blessing, could not stand by the side, certainly not when his own nephew, a family member, had been taken captive. He had to fight for justice and return the hostages.

Rav Kook on holiness

Indeed, says Rav Kook (*Orot HaMilchama* 2), this is the way of all our great spiritual giants in Tanach.

It was not only Avraham who was both the paragon of kindness and the warrior of justice but also the greatest spiritual giant, Moshe, the very man who brought the Torah down from Sinai and revealed the word of G-d to the people. It was Moshe who directed the battle against Amalek and he who led the people against the mighty kings Og and Sichon. Moshe's greatest student and successor Yehoshua, about whom it says "he never left the tent" was always engaged in learning, yet was the same one to lead the conquest of the land as commanded by G-d. Was it not David, the sweet singer of Israel and author of the deeply stirring and spiritual *Tehillim*, who was at the same time the fearless and fearsome warrior who defeated Goliath, becoming head of the army and then King David - monarch of all Israel.

Avraham, as the founding father of our people, was a man of incomparable kindness as well as a warrior for justice. A man of love and peace and a man of war in fighting against oppression. Avraham, Moshe, Yehoshua, and David are towering examples of Jewish holiness - being a scholar and a soldier; a man of morality and the military; to be holy and heroic are seamlessly part of the Torah's wholesome view of holiness.

Rav Kook says (*Orot HaTehiya* 8) that when the Jewish people return to full national life, the same holiness which appeared previously predominantly in the form of submission and obedience appears now also in the form of the glory of dignity and heroism. We return to a more full and holistic Jewish life - of both personal and public aspirations of holiness.

The Hasmoneans and the era of post-prophecy

Is perhaps the fusion between Torah and societal life, between the saintly and the soldier, something which perhaps only belongs in the era of prophecy, in the biblical era? Are we lesser mortals, who live in the era of Talmudic scholars and wisdom, as opposed to that of the prophets and seers, on a lower level and perhaps therefore unable to fuse the two together?

The answer to this question is clearly given in the story of Chanukah which took place after the time of Tanach. Here the Hasmoneans, or *Maccabim* as they became known, clearly highlight the answer.

Matityahu was an elderly *kohen* of the Hasmonean family and together with his five sons, decided to declare war on the

Greek occupation of *Eretz Yisrael*. They felt this was a situation of *pikuach nefesh*, affecting the very spiritual existence of the Jewish people and their Torah. The destructive decrees against Torah Judaism threatened to uproot our holy way of traditional Jewish life.

They chose not only to secretly go into the halls of Torah study and the *beit midrash* but rather to bring the *beit midrash* to the battlefield - to engage in a necessary *milchemet mitzvah* and to fight for the future of the Jewish people.

What is transformative about this is that we are no longer in a biblical era. The last of the prophets ceased in the beginning of the Second Temple. The *Chashmona'im* lived in the time of the Greek Empire, towards the end of the Second Temple when prophecy had long ceased.

Yet, the same very holy and saintly priests understood that if they would not stand up for the future of Jewish destiny, there might not be a future. They took up arms in the most courageous way as described in detail in the "Book of the Chashmona'im" (alternatively known as the "Book of the Maccabees"). A few hundred soldiers against many thousands, then a few thousand soldiers against tens of thousands - always the few against the many, just like Avraham and his 318 soldiers against four kings, and just like Gideon and his 300 men against the mighty army of Midian.

This is the reason we light Chanukah candles in every household today and why Jewish destiny has continued. It is because of the courageous and heroic actions of the saintly priests and scholars who took up arms to defend their people.

It must be pointed out that the decision of the *Chashmona'im* to take up arms was a controversial one. The Ramban explains this in depth and just how controversial the decision to fight was (Bereishit 49:10). After all, it was *halachically* contentious for *kohanim* to take up arms and certainly to take on political leadership. Taking up arms was not within the priests' regular precinct, and certainly political leadership which they assumed was the clear designation of the tribe of Judah. Additionally, there was little initial support in the nation for the *Chashmona'im*, as many felt that it was a war that the Jewish people could not win, even after some early victories. Yet as the Maccabees continued to succeed and eventually managed to re-inaugurate the temple, slowly but surely they were accepted, and the festival was embraced for posterity.

The modern-day Maccabees

After 14 months of battling Hamas and Hezbollah, new heroes are emerging for the Jewish people, some of whom we have highlighted in this magazine. One of many is Rabbi Avi Goldberg *hy"d*, a remarkable Jew - a *mensch*, exceptional educator and Torah scholar so deeply committed to Torah and kindness and to every detail of *halacha*, while at the same time spending almost a year in reserve duty, far from his wife and children, fighting for the future of Israel.

Or like my friend and colleague Rabbi Zvi Elon, who should be well *ad 120*, the head of the World Bnei Akiva movement, who also is an exemplary *mensch* and Torah scholar and teacher. He heads a global religious youth movement, gives *daf yomi shiurim* every day and gives countless inspiring *shiurim* in Israel and around the world. He was on reserve duty for almost 300 days, far from his wife and family, serving as both the rabbi of a brigade as well as a combat fighter as part of the brigade commander's team.

There are so many others. This is the holiness of our generation, the holiness of sovereignty and statehood, the holiness of Avraham, Moshe, Yehoshua, Gideon, David and the Hasmoneans. The holistic holiness of those who know how to combine the *beit midrash* with the battlefield, the beauty and sweetness of Torah learning and observance, with the needs and cries of their people.

It was specifically the *Chashmona'im* who ensured that the light of Jewish destiny would continue. And it is these modern-day Maccabees, so many of whom herald from our Religious Zionist world, that I feel so privileged that our families are counted amongst them.

Who is holier than the students and apprentices of Avraham, Moshe, and David today - those who combine a life of studying Torah and righteousness in their personal lives with heroic selflessness for the defense of their brothers and sisters on the battlefield?



Rabbi Doron Perez
is the Executive Chairman
of World Mizrahi.



MIZRACHI

MIZRACHI'S GLOBAL REACH



The Mizrachi Poland and Lithuania Tour visited the *shul* in Tykocin, which features wording of some *tefillot* written on the walls. The group, comprised of participants from around the world, was led by Rabbi David Milston, Jeremy Kurnedz, and our Executive Chairman Rabbi Doron Perez.



To begin the semester of the Shlichut Center's Shalhevet program, the group held a panel on college campus life after October 7, featuring both current and former *shlichim* who held positions on campuses. The panel was moderated by Dr. Elliott Malamet.

Mizrachi Mexico hosted a conference for all the Religious Zionist communities across South and Central America. The conference brought together the rabbinic and lay leadership and all our *shlichim* from many countries, and were honored by the presence of special guest Miriam Peretz, with Rabbi Doron Perez, Rabbi Yechiel Wasserman, Gael Grunewald, and Roi Abecassis of World Mizrachi, Zeev Schwartz of Torah MiTzion, Rabbi Zvi Elon of World Bnei Akiva, and many others.



Participants of the Musmachim Semicha Program went on a Mizrachi tour to the south, including to the site of the Nova festival where they heard from Idan Rakovsky, former *shaliach* in Toronto, whose brother-in-law Avidan Tordjman was murdered there. They also met with the rabbi of Kibbutz Sa'ad, Rav Ari Satt, who gave the group a tour of the *kibbutz* as well as their cow sheds where he discussed with the group issues of *kashrut* of *mehadrin* milk, milking on Shabbat, milking by non-Jews, and more.



Over the course of Hoshana Rabbah night, Rabbi Doron Perez gave over *Divrei Torah* and *chizuk* to a variety of communities across Israel – including in Ra'anana, Modi'in, Binyanei Ha'uma (ICC Jerusalem) and Heichal Shlomo in Yerushalayim – in both Hebrew and English, to youth and adults.



WORLD MIZRACHI MARKS A YEAR SINCE OCTOBER 7TH

To commemorate October 7, World Mizrachi together with the World Zionist Organization Center for Religious Affairs in the Diaspora produced 3 ceremonies. Two of the programs were for over 1,000 *midrasha* students and the third, in partnership with Yeshivat Hakotel, was for 600 *yeshiva* students.

At the ceremonies they heard from Shira Perez, sister of Captain Daniel Perez *hy"d* who was killed fighting by Nachal Oz, Galya Hoshen, mother of Hadar Hoshen *hy"d* who was murdered at the Nova festival, and the Morell family, parents of Staff Sergeant Maoz Morell *hy"d* who succumbed to his injuries suffered while fighting in Gaza.

They also heard words of *chizuk* from Rabbi Baruch Wieder, Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon, Rabbanit Shani Taragin and Rabbi Leo Dee.

(MIDDLE 2 PHOTOS: REBECCA KOWALSKY)



"...this house should make that resolution to bring them home, [for] humanity to bring them home, this house can bring them home."

Rabbi Doron Perez gave a powerful speech on October 7 at the United Nations, representing the families of the hostages. In his speech, he told the packed crowd, which included many ambassadors including the US Ambassador to the UN, about his family's journey throughout the past year. He reminded the world how the UN was created to stand for universal humanism, to rise above politics, and has the moral authority to demand the immediate release of all the hostages.

(PHOTOS: PERRY BINDELGLASS)

On October 7th, thousands of students from around the world came together to learn *Mishnayot* in memory of the *kedoshim* who fell on October 7th and in the Swords of Iron War.

In a special gathering, students joined to learn, pray, and remember together. The learning was led by Rabbi Doron Perez, Hadas Loewenstern, Rabbi Doron Chitiz, and Senai Guedalia. This event is part of the global *Mishnayot* project led by World Mizrachi in partnership with Sulamot, where over 7,000 people have participated, collectively studying more than 45,000 *Mishnayot* in honor of our fallen heroes. You can still register to be a part of this amazing project by going to mizrachi.org/globalmishnayot





The Tune of a Tzaddik

Remembering Rabbi Avi Goldberg, Hy"d

Rabbi Aron White

On October 26th, *Shabbat Bereishit*, Rabbi Avi Goldberg was killed in Lebanon. Rabbi Goldberg spent his life on the front lines for *Am Yisrael* – the front lines of teaching Torah in Israel and the USA, the front lines of *achdut*, building bridges across Israeli society, and the front lines of the IDF, where in this war he served for 250 days as a reservist until he fell. A gifted musician, Rav Avi left an indelible mark in the hearts of thousands around the world – and the tune of his life will continue to resonate in the hearts of *Am Yisrael*.

Israel's military campaign against Hezbollah in Lebanon reached unprecedented intensity during the month of Tishrei. While Israel succeeded in destroying significant portions of Hezbollah's infrastructure, it paid a heavy price with the death of 79 soldiers. One of those killed was Rabbi Avi Goldberg, who left behind his wife Rachel, his eight children, and his students at the Himmelfarb high school in Yerushalayim. He served both as a military rabbi for a battalion and as a regular combat soldier. For Rav Avi, serving on the front lines came naturally to him.

Avi's parents made *Aliyah* from the UK and settled in Yerushalayim. As a young boy growing up in Katamon, Avi showed an aptitude for the clarinet, an instrument that would accompany him throughout his life. After graduating from Himmelfarb high school, he went on to study at a pre-army *Mechina* in Tzfat before joining the *Yeshivat Hesder* there. He joined Golani in 2002 as part of the *Hesder* program, serving as a *Negevist*, a physically demanding role that requires operating a heavy gun.

During his military service, Avi met Rachel, who was from the same neighborhood of Yerushalayim and a talented musician herself. "One *Motzaei Shabbat*, someone hosted a *Melave Malka* in the neighbourhood," said Rabbi Zvi Elon, the head of World Bnei Akiva and a lifelong friend of Rav Avi. "Avi brought his clarinet, and Rachel her violin, and it was just a match made in heaven – it was obvious to everyone there that they should be together!" They started dating, but Avi insisted that they wait until he finished his military service to get married. Getting married earlier would mean he would serve less than his fellow soldiers, and he felt that wasn't right. At age 22, they married, and

Avi continued on to study for *semicha* at Yeshivat Hakotel. He received *semicha* from the Chief Rabbinate of Israel.

From 2008 to 2011, Rav Avi and Rachel served as *shlichim* in Memphis, where they led the Torah MiTzion Kollel. "The word that best describes Avi for me is radiant," wrote Rabbi Aaron Feigenbaum, a colleague of Rabbi Goldberg from that time. "You can see it in pictures of him even if you never met him. The glow in his eyes, the smile that was almost always on his face. He was *m'kabeil et kol adam b'sever panim yafot*, greeting everyone with a warm demeanor. I would add that when I say *kol adam*, "everyone," I purposefully intend a broad swath of people. Living out of town, in a city like Memphis, you interact with Jews from across the religious spectrum, and Avi had a way with everyone. He could talk in learning with Rav Nota Greenblatt z"l and then later have a long conversation with unaffiliated Jews at the JCC. He told me about his experiences doing weddings through Tzohar with unaffiliated Jews. He told me that he met couples before their wedding and that he became their rabbi and primary reference for anything Jewish. I understood



exactly why he was so successful. It was more than a smile, which is why I say he was radiant. He gave off a positive energy – an energy, if you never met him, that is hard to describe.”

After returning to Israel, Rav Avi and Rachel settled in the Makor Chaim neighborhood of Yerushalayim, where Avi became a teacher and then the school rabbi at Himmelfarb high school, his alma mater. He was a beloved teacher who impacted hundreds of students throughout his years at the school. Throughout his *milu'im* service, he would regularly send videos to his students.

In 2022, Avi joined the course to become an army rabbi. At this point, he actually had a double exemption from reserve duty – he was both over the age of 40 and had more than six children – but he waived both of these exemptions to join the course. He was the *mitztayen kors*, the valedictorian, and thus had the right to choose which unit he wanted to serve in as a rabbi. He specifically chose brigade 8207 of the Alon battalion because it was a combat unit. There, he served as the army rabbi and also continued to operate as a regular soldier. In certain contexts, he served as the spiritual leader, but during military

operations, he was a soldier like all the others.

During the year before the October 7th attack, Israel was gripped by unprecedented social tensions. Throughout the year, Rav Avi and Rachel gathered friends and neighbors in their home, which became a de facto meeting place for people with different opinions. At a time when society was becoming worryingly fractured, the Goldbergs did what they could to bring more unity and understanding.

After October 7th, Avi spent hundreds of days away from his family as a reservist. He balanced his role as a combat soldier with providing spiritual guidance and leadership as an army rabbi. A few weeks into the war, he arranged for *Gemaras* to be sent to the unit so he could give a *daf yomi shiur*. When Tu BiShvat arrived, he spent hours ensuring that the unit would be able to perform the traditional *netiot*, planting for Tu BiShvat, to give them a sense of connection and inspiration.

During his time away, Avi's wife Rachel became a powerful voice among the *milu'im* wives. During a pre-Rosh Hashanah concert where she played the violin, she shared her feelings with thousands of women, crying as she expressed her

emotions about the front lines of this war:

“We are living in times of *hester panim*, but we are called upon to wear faces of hope.

This year, hope and joy have not been trivial things; there are many things blocking us from feeling that.

We approach Hashem, empty and poor, in pain, but with confidence that we are being *moser nefesh*. Today, my husband Avi is in Lebanon; I don't know how he is. He has served 230 days of *milu'im*, like so many others. I heard something beautiful today from Rabbi Eyal Vered. He was sitting with a soldier in the north, and they were watching the sunset. The *Gemara* says 'If a husband and wife merit, the *shechina* dwells between them.' Today, the *shechina* is all over Israel, because the husband is up north and his wife is in Be'er Sheva, in Yerushalayim, in Gaza, all over. With this *shechina* we are praying, together with those who dwell on high, those angels who have fallen this





year, *melitsei yosher* for us, to pray together with them. A prayer that is full of hope, a prayer that connects what is lacking to another reality, for a full redemption.”

Rachel emerged as a powerful advocate for universal military service across the Jewish community. The extended reserve duty being served by men like Avi – fathers in their forties – stemmed from a critical shortage of soldiers, one that could be resolved if young *Charedi* men joined the IDF. Weeks before Avi’s death, she addressed this issue in a letter to members of the Knesset:

“I work as a nurse in various clinics of Mac-cabi, and I meet diverse populations, including *Charedim*. I cannot understand how you can support laws that exempt such large amounts of the population from drafting. Where is the morality in that? Where is the helping in the societal burden? Why does it have to fall to my family to sacrifice so much for the state, with such significant danger, for months on end not having our father and husband at home? My husband serves as a teacher and school rabbi in a religious school in Yerushalayim, with *semicha* from the Chief Rabbinate, and he doesn’t consider himself exempt from the obligation to ‘protect Israel from its enemies’ – Rambam’s definition of *milchemet mitzvah*, an obligatory war in which all must fight – for which even a bride and groom are obligated to leave their celebration to join the war effort! The Religious Zionist world that learns Torah, lives Torah and keeps *mitzvot* also serves *Am Yisrael* and the state to ensure that it can continue to exist!”

She offered an analogy to describe the immorality of the status quo: “It’s like on Friday afternoon when everyone is



cleaning for Shabbat. Everyone helps out! It’s not like one kid sits at the table and prays that the house should be clean. Everyone needs to clean! Everyone needs to get up, to take action, to do something. And one who doesn’t – it is not educational to reward them for that. It is not Jewish, and it is not ethical. Hashem, please help to remove the *orlat halev*, the foreskin of the heart. Remove these walls that have been created over the last 30, 50 years.”

At his funeral, thousands accompanied Rav Avi, paying him their final respects. The *shul* that he loved, BeOrcha, has organized many events and is building their new *shul* in Yerushalayim in his memory.

In reflecting on his legacy, Rav Avi represents another link in the chain of our eternal capital city. It is often noted that the Jewish people in Israel are perhaps the only people to speak the same language, in the same land, with the same religion, as they did 3,000 years ago. Rav Avi exemplifies



another dimension of this continuity: if *David HaMelech* himself were to return today and be told about a man from Yerushalayim who teaches Torah, is a musician, and serves on the front lines against our enemies from the north, he would recognize him as one of his own. The memory of Rav Avi will continue to inspire Jews around the world to live according to the tune he played – one of Torah, service to *Am Yisrael*, and *achdut*.



Rabbi Aron White
is the Managing Editor
of HaMizrachi magazine.



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“Arise, Walk Through the Land...” (Bereishit 13:17)

Following the positive response to more than 100 solidarity missions this past year, World Mizrachi has recently launched a new Educational Tourism Department, with the aim of encouraging communities, families and individuals to come to Israel on short, 3-4 day trips and experience an uplifting, post-Oct 7 narrative from a Religious Zionist perspective. Rabbi Dr. Shimon Rapport, a former high school principal, lecturer and educator for over 30 years, has been appointed to head this initiative.



(PHOTO: YACOV SEGAL)

An Interview with Rabbi Dr. Shimon Rapport

Director of Mizrachi's new Educational Tourism Department

Tell us a little about yourself, Rav Shimon.

An *oleh* of 35 years from the UK. I currently live in Efrat in Gush Etzion with my wife Lisa. Thank G-d, we spend a lot of time with our children and grandchildren who are all over Israel. Professionally, I have always worked in education and tourism – education as a profession and tourism as a hobby until I turned that too into a profession!

What does your new position at World Mizrachi entail?

Primarily the opportunity to bring communities, schools and families here from overseas. I know that many of our readers came on the Mizrachi solidarity missions last year – yet there is going to be something very special to see this year. Firstly, in spite of the ongoing war and our continued losses, there is a huge movement of **healing and rebuilding** going on here. My team in the new Educational Tourism Department has put together a new itinerary emphasizing positive messages, meeting inspirational speakers and key people who are focused on rejuvenation. The Mizrachi solidarity missions show that we know how to inspire Jews, by connecting them to the power of the Jewish spirit to bounce back from tragedy and terror.

In Parashat Vayeira, the Torah says, “*VaYashkef al pnei S'dom.*” Avraham did not just look at what was

happening to S'dom. He observed more deeply or ‘overlooked’ the scene, meaning he saw beyond the physical sight of a city going up in flames. Asks the *Midrash*, “What did he see? He saw *David HaMelech.*”

Yes, he saw the destruction of S'dom and felt the pain, but he also saw that ultimately, the *Mashiach* would be a direct result of this event.

Here at Mizrachi, we have a similar view of current events, and that's the kind of faith-based, future-focused, Torah-oriented message we wish to transmit to our participants.

Tell me what participants can expect from one of these new missions.

For example, a day in the North (subject to security regulations at the time) could include meeting a *kitat konenut* (first response security squad) in one of the missile-threatened towns, meeting farmers/volunteering in agriculture, attending a class in a temporary school for evacuees in Tiberias/meeting evacuees, visiting wounded soldiers in Rambam Hospital, becoming familiar with new community initiatives, and more. Thanks to Mizrachi's extensive contact base, if someone asks to do or visit something that's not on our suggested itinerary, we will certainly be happy to try and fulfill their wishes as best as we can.

I will finish by mentioning that we have three tracks through which people can come on a Mizrachi mission:

- 1. Community missions** – very often the rabbi/leadership of the community will reach out to us and we aim to tailor-make the visit based on our eight modular days itinerary.
- 2. Open missions** – meant for individuals and small groups who want to make their Israel trip all the more meaningful. We have six fixed dates when everyone who is planning to come to Israel can pre-register with us for a 3-4 day mission. These dates coincide with the national holidays and can be seen on the website.
- 3. School missions** – our new Department has high school Israel programs for trips up to 3 weeks. Each program has a clear educational thread and includes all the elements one would expect for an inspiring trip to Israel. Our rates are very competitive.

Amazing! How can people contact you?

All the details of each of the three tracks, along with sample programs, can be accessed through our website – mizrachi.org/missions. Each track has a designated contact person – please do make contact. We promise to get back to you!



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FIGHTING ON TWO FRONTS:

AN INTERVIEW WITH RABBI YEHUDAH AND HANNAH AUERBACH

When Rabbi Yehudah and Hannah Auerbach began their role at JLIC at University of Chicago, they could never have imagined the challenges that would come following October 7th. Graduates of the Shalhevet and Musmachim programs of the Religious Zionist Shlichut Center founded by Mizrachi, since October 7th they have been on the front lines in two ways - Yehudah has spent months in Israel fighting as a reservist on multiple fronts, while both have continued to lead their communities through unprecedented challenges on US campuses. Rabbi Aron White spoke with the Auerbachs to hear about their journey.

How did you come to do semicha and shlichut training at the Shlichut Center programs?

Rabbi Yehudah Auerbach: Hannah and I have different paths to how we got to Israel in general, and to *Aliyah* and Mizrachi's Shlichut Center specifically. I grew up in the Five Towns in a non-religious Zionist background, so when I came to Sha'alvim for *yeshiva*, it was a bit of an outlier. I decided to make *Aliyah*, and at that point, it was clear to me if I am living in Israel I should do the army, so I served through the *Hesder* program in Golani. Hannah and I got married at 22, while I was finishing *Hesder* at Sha'alvim, and some friends encouraged us to join Shalhevet. As we learned more about *shlichut*, I came to think of it the following way - I will hopefully have 35, 40 years in the workforce, but when I look back, will I say "I wish I did another three, four, five years in the workforce" or "I wish I did something important for the Jewish people." Going on *shlichut* seemed like a really meaningful way of doing something for *Am Yisrael*.

Hannah Auerbach: I grew up in Bnei Akiva, I worked at Camp Moshava, I spent a lot of summers in Israel, and I knew from high school that *Aliyah* was my plan - I remember on the day that many of my friends at MMY were registering for their college classes in America, that was when I sent my application to Nefesh B'Nefesh. I did *Sherut Leumi* at Chorev school in Yerushalayim, and then Yehudah and I got married and were living at Sha'alvim. Honestly, coming to Shalhevet was also a fun experience socially, as we got to spend time out of *yeshiva* and with a lot of other young couples, and through the program, we started to think about *shlichut* in general, and then specifically about *shlichut* for JLIC.

Can you tell us about the two "regular" years of shlichut you had before October 7th?

Hannah: We had always planned that our *shlichut* would be at least 3 years, as you need a serious amount of time to achieve something. Our first year involved a lot of learning and adapting, trying out different

programs. After two years, we were all ready for our third year, which we thought would be "*b'rina yiktzoru*" - after putting in a lot of work, then the third year you already are much more in your groove. But then, October 7th happened.

Where were you on October 7th?

R' Yehudah: On the morning of Shemini Atzeret, one of the students came in saying there had been an attack in Israel. Throughout the day, we kept hearing more from students, but the number of dead they were reporting was so hard to comprehend, we were sure that it wasn't as bad as they said - which of course we all know turned out to be wrong. As leaders of the community, we had to decide how to run the rest of *Yom Tov*, and to strike the balance - we decided that I would speak about the situation, and we would say *Tehillim* for the situation, but that we wouldn't cancel *hakafot*. As *Yom Tov* continued, privately we started to discuss me going back to Israel for *milu'im*. I serve in a reservist unit that mainly operates up north, and as we learned more, it seemed there was a good chance I would be called

up. When I turned my phone on after *Yom Tov*, I had hundreds of messages in my *milu'im* group, so I knew right then I was being called up. I got added to a group of guys from America looking to get back to Israel and booked a flight to New York. There were so many reservists looking to get back to Israel, with an incredible amount of support. At JFK, there were about 70 reservists there when I got there, and about 700 pies of pizza for us! So on October 9th, I was on a plane to Israel – and I guess I didn't even have time then to reflect that I had only been booked on a one-way ticket, with no return date.

Hannah: I started leading the community myself, because now Yehudah, the rabbi of the community, was gone. It was incredible to see the impact that the rabbi getting up to go fight for Israel had on people. We had students coming to *minyan* the next morning who hadn't been to *shul* for 5-10 years. They heard the *rabbi* was going to fight for Israel, and they felt we needed to get up and do something ourselves. It was really powerful to see.

Hannah, what was that experience like, now continuing to run a JLIC chapter, with your husband fighting in the IDF, while also having to be a parent by yourself?

Hannah: At the time, there was an incredible sense of adrenaline – everyone wanted to be doing something, I was leading the students on rallies, raising awareness about the hostages, etc. But now I look back at it, I think some of that was also masking the fact I was having a really difficult time. I was experiencing loneliness – for any woman whose husband is on *milu'im*, it's incredibly lonely, and especially so being outside of Israel. In Israel, you are part of a community going through this experience together, but here it was incredibly lonely.

How long did you serve in that first round of milu'im?

R' Yehudah: I served for 5 weeks, across different operations both in the south and north of Israel. My unit is a reservist unit of guys who served in the Golani brigade, and so we function like a regular combat reservist unit. After those 5 weeks, based on the requirements of the unit and our personnel, I was able to make the decision to return back to America.



For anyone returning from milu'im to civilian life there is an adjustment. But what is it like when you are returning to a college campus in the US, which is often not a hospitable environment to IDF soldiers?

R' Yehudah: Well, first of all, I was exhausted – sometimes when you finish *milu'im*, the army gives you extra days as part of it to process and acclimate, but that wasn't something that was available to me. So as soon as I got back, I was going straight back to my family and to my role in the community. Also, everyone came to see me as some IDF spokesperson, and I had to tell people, "I'm just a regular soldier, I don't know what the IDF is going to do next month!"

In terms of a sense of mission, one of the things I really wanted to do was be able to translate some of the

experience I had in Israel into something that could be meaningful to these Jewish students in Chicago.

What is something from your experience that you were able to give over to your students to give them meaning?

R' Yehudah: Well, first of all, with the power of the internet today, I was able to connect with the students even while I was serving as a reservist. I was able to find a half an hour here and there and give my students a *shiur* while wearing my uniform, and they could hear some of the sounds of war in the background. That definitely connected them in a real way to what was happening. But I think the second part was giving people a sense that they





are doing something important. Everyone wanted to be doing something, and for them to hear from me that wearing your *kippah* and standing up for Israel on campus is incredibly important was very meaningful for many students.

Hannah: One of the things I have tried to tell our students is that even seemingly small things that they do are very meaningful. Some of the students going home for Thanksgiving knew that they were going to be in an environment that might not be understanding or supportive of Israel. Making the decision to not hide their opinions but to stand up for what they believe is a small but very significant and defining decision for a student to make.

After an extended period back in Chicago, you recently came back to Israel for a second round of milu'im. What was that experience like?

R' Yehudah: Our unit had always been focused on the north of Israel, so once the focus of the war shifted to the north over the summer, I wasn't surprised when I received a *Tzav 8* (emergency call-up), calling me up. It was somewhat surreal that the day I landed back in Israel was October 7th, a year later. On the one hand, so much has happened since then, but so much of the core was still the same - Israel is at war, we need to defeat our enemies, and reservists are needed for the war effort. We were on the border for another 6 weeks, after which I was able to come home. I got back to Chicago a few days ago.



I want to conclude with a question about what you see from your students on campus. There is a term people are using called "October 8th Jews," referring to people for whom October 7th awakened something new in their relationship with their Judaism. Have you seen this?

Hannah: We definitely have seen a lot of that, but it's not so much in huge life changes, like people saying "Now I will become *shomer Shabbat*," but through small gestures that are very important. For students who suddenly saw friends in the [pro-Hamas] encampment this past spring, they experienced important moments that

clarified their identity. They had to ask, "Who am I? How do I want to identify, and with whom?" These are very important internal questions. As I mentioned, *minyán* attendance rose when Yehudah went to Israel, and more people are attending *shiturim*. Last week we hosted Rabbi Leo Dee together with Mizrahi-Religious Zionists of Chicago, and he received a very strong turnout. I think that our role on our *shlichut* is being there for these students, at whatever point on their journeys they are at, to help them on their personal journey during these challenging times. ■

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Rav Goren and the Creation of Jewish Military Ethics

Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Brody



Rabbi Shlomo Goren might be most famous for blowing the *shofar* at the Western Wall during the Six-Day War, captured in the most iconic photograph in Israeli history. Yet the entire victory may not have happened without his intervention a few weeks earlier.

In May 1967, the IDF Chief Rabbi was celebrating Israel's Independence Day in Australia to support the United Jewish Appeal when he received word that Egypt had closed the Straits of Tiran to all Israeli ships. Israeli officials had long warned that such maritime aggression would be seen as a hostile act. Rabbi Goren raced back to Israel.

In the meantime, IDF Chief of Staff Yitzchak Rabin was under massive pressure. He couldn't convince Israel's cabinet that the IDF must preemptively strike the Egyptians. Prime Minister Levi Eshkol was hesitant, particularly because of significant opposition from the National Religious Party, led by Moshe Chaim Shapira. Shapira told Rabin that Israelis must prepare for war and hunker down to defend themselves - but they must not take the first shot. As a man of faith, he declared, we cannot bring danger upon ourselves and initiate warfare, especially without international support. The Bible declares that "Israel will dwell alone" - yet that does not mean that it must fight alone.

Rabin urged the IDF's Chief Rabbi to meet with Shapira and convince him of the urgency to act. After consulting with other military commanders,

including the head of the air force, Rav Goren concluded that Israel must strike immediately. He spent four hours with Shapira, arguing that Israel could prevail only if it attacked first. Every day of delay would cost many more Israeli lives. There was no choice but to act, he insisted, since the Arab nations were openly planning Israel's destruction. Though Shapira remained unconvinced, Rav Goren proceeded with his own preparations for war, which included readying military cemeteries and ordering burial caskets. Around the country, thousands of graves were dug.

Shortly thereafter, the hesitant religious ministers strongly advocated for expanding the government to include opposition figures like Menachem Begin and appointing Moshe Dayan as defense minister. Yet even until the final moment of decision, they remained uncertain. Shapira, citing Ben-Gurion, insisted that the Jewish state should never wage war without international support. Dayan responded that by the time Israel secured such an ally, they would no longer exist. Finally, at the conclusion of this crucial meeting on June 4th, even the religious ministers voted to support military action. The next morning, Israeli fighter jets destroyed the Egyptian air force on the ground. Days later, Rav Goren would participate in the liberation of the Western Wall.

The question of preemptive strikes, a major issue in contemporary military ethics, receives brief attention in the Talmud (*Sotah* 44a). For centuries afterward, rabbinic literature barely addressed this topic, and when it did, only on a theoretical level. Initially, it seemed uncertain whether Jewish thought could meaningfully contribute to such modern military debates. While scholars like Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli and Rabbi Eliezer Waldenburg wrote significant rabbinic treatises on these matters, it was Rabbi Goren who pioneered comprehensive *halachic* literature on military ethics, first in his journal *Machanayim* and later in his multi-volume responsa, *Meshiv Milchamah* ("Response to War"). This essay will highlight several of his central contributions to this topic.

1. Sources and Precedents: Rabbi Goren was acutely aware of the lack of precedents from Jewish history on these topics. As he wrote, "From the time of Bar Kochba... there were no laws of the military, of war, and of national security that had a real connection to the lives of the people. For nearly 2,000 years, these issues appeared as 'laws for the messiah.'" Rabbi Goren saw himself as responsible for renewing these laws. Understanding that he would find limited guidance in the writings of Rambam and especially Rabbi Yosef Karo, he sought precedents elsewhere. Particularly notable was his willingness to consult non-Biblical sources like the Books of the Maccabees and the historical writings of Josephus Flavius to derive historical evidence for *halachic* positions. Other scholars, like Rabbi Moshe Tzvi Neria, opposed using such sources because their accounts sometimes contradicted Talmudic literature. They worried this might suggest that *halacha* underwent historical changes not recorded in authoritative texts. Rabbi Goren, however, believed it essential to establish precedents that would create continuity with historical Jewish practice.

2. Heroism: Rabbi Goren emphasized that Jewish tradition embraces physical heroism. Indeed, Tanach abounds with descriptions of great figures as warriors, including Avraham, Moshe, Yehoshua, and King David. Yet rabbinic literature emphasizes spiritual heroism, as taught in *Pirkei Avot*: "Who is brave? The one who subdues his evil inclination." Similarly, the Sages highlighted the miracle of the oil in the *Beit HaMikdash* to commemorate Chanukah, while barely mentioning the Hasmonean military victory over the Greeks.

Rabbi Goren insisted that both the plain meaning of Biblical narratives and the Chanukah story attest to the importance of military bravery. Judaism, he maintained, promotes physical valor when performed within proper spiritual and moral frameworks. Physical and spiritual heroism must be balanced to develop an authentic Jewish military ethic.



(PHOTO: IDF SPOKESPERSON'S UNIT)

In pursuit of this vision, Rabbi Goren even endorsed the Zionist adoption of the Masada fighters as heroes, despite their mass suicide (as depicted by Josephus) seemingly contradicting Jewish norms. Rabbi Neria criticized their actions, arguing that true Jewish heroism means staying alive to ensure Jewish continuity. Yet despite this debate, both agreed that the image of a religious Jew includes that of a brave warrior – a concept that had largely disappeared for centuries.

3. Halachic Observance in the Army: One of the greatest practical challenges facing Religious Zionists was maintaining *halachic* observance while serving in the IDF. Some leaders in the new state believed this would be impossible and advocated for religious soldiers to serve in separate units with limited responsibilities. Rabbi Goren, alongside David Ben-Gurion, recognized this would be disastrous for the new state's unity. He therefore worked to establish protocols mandating army-wide respect for *kashrut* and Shabbat observance, while guiding religious soldiers on practical matters such as constructing *eruvim* in bases and determining appropriate use of electronic devices on Shabbat. Rabbi Goren's leadership in this realm has enabled the full integration of Religious Zionists into the army – an achievement we now take for granted.

4. Burial and Agunot: Rabbi Goren insisted on retrieving all fallen soldiers from the battlefield for proper burial. After the War of Independence, this included recovering bodies from behind enemy lines, even in minefields. On several occasions, he performed this holy work himself. Beyond fulfilling the commandment of *meit mitzvah*, this approach ensured that a potential widow would not become an *agunah* – a problem that had plagued Jewish communities during modern wars in Europe.

At the behest of Israeli Chief Rabbis Yitzchak Herzog and Ben-Zion Uziel, Rabbi Goren promoted *gitei milchamah*, wartime divorce documents that soldiers could sign before mobilization. These would prevent their wives from becoming *agunot* if the soldiers were declared “missing in action.” In later years, however, Rav Goren concluded that these documents should not be imposed on soldiers, who might resist signing them out of concern for their widow's military benefits or fear of its demoralizing effect.

He also maintained that modern technology made it easier to determine soldiers' fates. In cases where uncertainty remained, Rabbi Goren employed all *halachic* means to establish death. This approach proved crucial after the sinking of the Dakar submarine in January 1968, when 69 soldiers – 16 of them married – went missing. Rabbi Goren authored a comprehensive responsum declaring the soldiers no longer alive, allowing their widows to remarry.

5. Civilian Casualties: Perhaps most importantly, Rabbi Goren developed a moral framework from *halachic* sources that established Jewish law's commitment to ethical restraints during warfare, including protection of non-combatants and minimizing enemy casualties.

This notion of distinct *halachic* limitations on warfare was not universally accepted. Rav Zvi Yehuda Kook reportedly maintained that there were no real *halachic* restrictions in warfare – though unpleasant, one must do whatever necessary to win (Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, *Me-Hayil el Hayil*, Vol 1, 238). Rav Shaul Yisraeli, in an influential 1950s article, argued that *halachic* limitations merely reflected international treaties



Rabbi Goren (left) saluting at the grave of Israeli soldier Uri Ilan, 1955. (PHOTO: ISRAELI GPO PHOTOGRAPHER / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)

and norms: if nations accepted certain restrictions, Jews would follow suit (*Amud Ha-Yemini*, *Siman* 16).

Rav Goren, however, believed that *halacha* offered its own independent guidance on warfare ethics. He pointed to the Torah's account of *Ya'akov Avinu* rebuking his sons Shimon and Levi for killing all the residents of Shechem after their leaders had captured their sister Dinah. Their lack of restraint, *Ya'akov* declared, made them unfit for leadership, even if such behavior was common practice. Indiscriminate killing, even in response to Dinah's violation, could not be justified. As for the command to eliminate the seven Canaanite nations and their families, Rav Goren maintained this was a unique directive, not a model for future generations.

Rav Goren emphasized texts that demonstrated humanitarian principles while contextualizing passages that might suggest indifference to enemy casualties. His guiding principle came from verses like “And he was merciful on all His creatures” (*Tehillim* 145:9). While G-d desires Jewish victory, He takes no pleasure in the death of His creatures. Jewish law values all lives, even as some enemies must regrettably be killed for military success. He even argued that biblical commandments like “Do not stand idly over your neighbor's

blood” (Vayikra 19:16) obligated military commanders to avoid unnecessary harm in enemy territory.

Two incidents illustrated this approach. During Operation Peace for Galilee in July 1982, as the IDF besieged Beirut, Rabbi Goren declared that *halacha* required Israel to provide evacuation corridors for Beirut’s residents – including both civilians and PLO fighters choosing to flee. Citing Ramban, he insisted on showing mercy to minimize bloodshed even during war. The IDF established two evacuation routes, enabling 100,000 people to escape. Rabbi Goren declared this a great *kiddush Hashem*.

The second incident occurred before statehood. When the Lehi underground included random attacks on Arabs in their anti-British tactics, Rabbi Goren opposed this strategy. As he wrote in his autobiography: “I was against the murder of Arabs just because they were Arabs. I objected to the murder of people who had committed no crime against the Jews. We had many ideological arguments. After all, I was a rabbi, and we had our moral standards, the Torah’s moral standards, according to which every person is created in G-d’s image. Therefore, I believed we must be merciful and respect every person’s life, as long as he is not a danger to us and is not fighting us” (*With Might and Strength*, 113).

Rabbi Goren’s moral stance highlights a crucial aspect of the relationship between religion and nationalism. While many fear that combining these powerful social forces might unleash unbridled violence, Rabbi Goren – the military man – demonstrated that religion can restrain nationalism’s excesses. This reminds us not only that ends don’t always justify means, but also that Torah can help channel national liberation and sovereignty toward achieving their lofty – and ethical – goals.



Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Brody

is the executive director of Ematai and the author of *Ethics of our Fighters: A Jewish View on War and Morality*.



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Supporting Orthodox Life in Turbulent Times

An Interview with Rabbi Moshe Hauer

Rabbi Moshe Hauer has served as the Executive Vice President of the Orthodox Union since May 2020. After a tumultuous year for the American Jewish community, Rabbi Aron White spoke with Rabbi Hauer to hear about the changes in American Jewish life, and the role of American Jews in standing up for Israel.



Our magazine's coverage touches on the world post-October 7th, but I'd like to start before that. The Orthodox Union was founded at the beginning of the 20th century to support Orthodox life in the United States. How would you define the role of the OU today in 2024?

We are still centrally focused on Orthodox Jewish life in the United States, and our responsibility to support, uplift and represent that community. At the same time, in 1898, there was no State of Israel. Since the State of Israel has come on the scene, the Orthodox Union has recognized it as ground zero of the Jewish people – not just the direction in which we offer our prayers, but the center stage of the continuation of Jewish history. We have considered it central to our mandate to inspire our community around *Eretz Yisrael*, and to make Israel a dream, and where possible, a plan for the Jews of *chutz la'aretz*. And third, we have made sure that part of our work is done in order to enhance the *yishuv* and enhance Israel itself, directly. So there are three pieces: first is the America-Israel relationship, which has been important since the day of the State's declaration and Harry Truman's support, continuing through the critical role that American administrations have played in supporting Israel. We see that as a *shlichut*, as a mission that we have as part of the Jewish community. We are a Religious Zionist organization that tries to inspire our community around the role of *Medinat Yisrael* and *Eretz Yisrael* as a focus, and again, G-d willing, as a plan for people in their lives. And tangibly, the area which the OU has carved out for itself, most notably, is work with youth and youth-at-risk all across the Land, as well as support of *olim*, trying to provide some level of support for Anglo *olim* to make their dream a little bit fuller.



You began your tenure as Executive Vice President in May 2020, in the midst of COVID. Looking back, how do you think the American Orthodox community has changed through and since COVID?

Not enough. I think the answer is not enough. I think COVID presented an opportunity which did not seem to translate into substantial lasting change. People go to the office a little bit less often. Everybody knows how to Zoom. But has it dramatically changed our family life, our communal life, our relationship to each other, our relationship to community? It's hard to see much of that at all. Not certainly an area of vast improvement. I do believe that people who have to commute less have certain enhancements to quality of life. But we have not seen a dramatic refocus. I think it is



a shared failure of society and of the Jewish community that it wasn't a transformational moment. Since then, we've also had a different major issue for the Jewish community, which was the wake-up that occurred on October 7th. And this we are still in the middle of navigating, and trying to ensure that the changes, the greater sensitivities, sense of connection to Judaism and Jewish life, and for other Jews to Israel, that those have a lasting impact.



October 7th has elevated the love and concern that American Jews feel for Israel, the sense of home that American Jews have around Israel, the sense of admiration that American Jews have for Israel and for its families, and for its soldiers, and for the families of the soldiers, whose level of commitment and dedication to the Jewish people and to the Jewish future is something that we don't begin to approach, and that we admire and that we aspire to.

For Israel, October 7th was a watershed moment, a line in the sand dividing before and after. To what extent have you seen this watershed moment impact the American Jewish community in your work with the OU?

It's obviously not the same 'everything' in the American Jewish community as it is in Israel. It's not 'everything changed', but there is, nonetheless, meaningful change. And I would say further that within the Orthodox community that was quite engaged in Jewish life before October 7th, I don't see a radical new beginning of engagement in Jewish life. For many people for whom their Judaism and Jewish engagement was more tangential, October 7th was indeed a watershed and a transformative moment. In our work, we have the privilege to play a bit of a role in that. The most visible example is in our work with public school students through NCSY, and specifically through our JSUs - our Jewish Student Union clubs - which provide a meeting place for Jewish students who are in public schools. On the eve of October 7th, we had 300 such clubs in public schools across North America, and today we have over 400 such clubs. And today they are in places where we don't even have professional educators, where we've had to be creative and build a cadre of student leaders of such clubs. That is part of the transformative moment of October 7th. Schools are meant to be a home for students. But when home is hostile, when young people don't feel at home at school, they need to find a room in that house where they can feel at home. And that is the role that JSU has begun to play. Instead of a place where kids go to follow an interest in Judaism and to try to nurture that interest in Judaism, which may have been the pre-October 7th reality, today that room is a bit of a haven, a place to go where people understand you, where you can find understanding and meaning in the Judaism which now looms over you as a complicating factor.

October 7th has elevated the love and concern that American Jews feel for Israel, the sense of home that American Jews have around Israel, the sense of admiration that American Jews have for Israel and for its families, and for its soldiers, and for the families of the soldiers, whose level of commitment and dedication to the Jewish people and to the Jewish future is something that we don't begin to approach, and that we admire and that we aspire to.

With this transformative awakening happening outside of the traditional Orthodox community, do you think the Orthodox community as a whole is rising to this moment and creating entry points for people now looking to engage with the Jewish people?

It's a challenge, and it's something which is top of mind for us. If you read the OU's magazine, *Jewish Action*, the past and the forthcoming issue are focused on this issue. There are examples of success in being able to do that. It's important to note that America has many differences from Israel. There's such a thing called Jewish identity, and there's such a thing as connecting to Jewish faith. In the discourse of today, many people speak about 'peoplehood'. The transition from

October 7th to *davening* in an Orthodox *shul* is a very large one. In Israel it seems much more natural for people to be awoken to say *Shema Yisrael*, to have some version of Shabbat. That's one of the blessings of the Jewish state. These things are to some degree, even when not observed, part of the cultural bedrock. It's not as clear in the United States, and so it's not simple to create portals that people can flood through and come and join. That said, whether it's in *shuls*, whether it's in Jewish meeting places on campuses, whether it's simply in the workplace and in the neighborhood, I think Jews are so much more attuned to connecting to each other, to building more serious connections, to working together on matters of common concern in these very fraught times - on issues such as antisemitism and support for the State of Israel. We spoke a moment ago about the opportunity of COVID, which was missed. We dare not miss the opportunity of October 7th.

You recently wrote about a change in the Jewish community and in America, using the phrase "malchut shel chesed" - the idea that America is a "kingdom of kindness." You wrote that now, rather than just being able to take this kindness for granted, we need to protect and ensure that America remains a malchut shel chesed. How have you seen this change manifest?

Things were changing before October 7th, but October 7th knocked it up several notches all at once. There was already an issue of growing antisemitism on university campuses and a certain normalization of some kinds of antisemitic behaviors. Those who look at the statistics, the ADL statistics, the FBI statistics - we were dealing with this issue before October 7th. But October 7th brought it up to a whole new level and emboldened antisemites and normalized certain behaviors. All this has been very disturbing to the Jewish community, and very disturbing to the Americans of goodwill, in government, in society, who are committed to the future of America. The vast majority of Americans are committed to this vision of America as a *malchut shel chesed*, of this being a good and welcoming country that welcomes the stranger - including the Jew - and works to not only make them feel no hostility, but to be able to thrive in this country.

The irony of this whole conflict is that there are core American values which are being used to provide shelter for this completely anti-American movement. Those are the values of freedom and freedom of expression. Under the guise of freedom of expression, people have done things that definitely do not belong under that heading. Freedom of expression does not allow for calls for violence, for the kinds of expression that actually intimidate and lead to violence. And yet, there's a great self-consciousness in this country about experiences in the 1960s, where perhaps



there was an overreaction to previous protest movements. But complexity is not an excuse to sit it out. We all have a responsibility to thread the needle and to make sure that, in the name of liberty, we are not completely destroying the freedom of others. We have a role, as people who believe in the value of free speech, and are not lobbying to shut it down, but who also believe fiercely in the freedom that must be accorded to the person who is on the receiving end.

We, as a community, need to galvanize ourselves and all Americans of good faith to take a step back and say “okay, how are we going to figure this out? What exactly are the steps?” because this is not what America is supposed to look like. Time and again, I have sat with Americans of good faith in government, law enforcement, and other sectors, where taking that step back and looking at the situation has resulted in a deeply emotional response. Americans know this is not America, and they’re deeply upset by it.

With this war having gone on for so long, what role do you see for the American Jewish community in advocating specific positions to the American government?

On an ongoing basis, we are there to support Israel in whichever way we can. To be a constant presence, reminding the American government that what’s happening in Gaza is a war between good and evil, and Israel is good. Pictures of the war may be painful, but these are the tragedies of war. They lie at the doorsteps of Hamas who created and engineered it for this problem. There’s a country at war with a whole bunch of others, with the axis of evil, with the seven fronts of Iran, whatever it is that you want to call it. And that country has an army that has an ethical system, “*tohar haneshek*, the purity of arms” that governs the way they wage war. As many experts have noted – including people like John Spencer from West Point – Israel’s level of care to avoid civilian casualties is unprecedented. Even in this battle of unprecedented difficulty, this existential battle, Israel has done everything possible to stick to its principles and minimize harm. This is the exact inverse of what the other side has done, and we have to reinforce that.

How do you view the importance of people engaging with the upcoming World Zionist Congress elections next year?

The voice of the religious community, the Orthodox community and its values, worldwide, to be able to be heard and impact within Israel’s national institutions, is something which is very valuable. To be able to help shape the agenda and the future for Israel and world Jewry through the role that the national institutions play is important. It’s a place for us to easily step up, add our voice and have an impact.

Special thanks to the Orthodox Union for the photos in this article.



Prayers for Every Night: Swords of Iron War, Chanukah 5785

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

How do we know we will win the war? There are many things through which we can see G-d's guiding hand. Thank G-d, we merited a tremendous miracle of the ingathering of exiles after thousands of years – a miracle that hasn't happened to any other nation. We merited a strong army that constitutes part of our signs of redemption. The Torah also promises that G-d is with us in war: "For Hashem your G-d walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and to give up your enemies before you" (Devarim 23:15). We are witnessing tremendous miracles in our war as well (for example, hundreds of missiles from Iran where we merited the tremendous miracle of over 99% successful interception, the death of Iran's president in flight, the miracle of the beepers and communication devices, the miracle of killing Nasrallah and his team, the miracle of killing Sinwar, and more). Within the crying and pain over the dead, kidnapped, and wounded, we see great miracles. All these give us great faith that with G-d's help, we will win the war.

We can find encouragement in the "Maoz Tzur" poem. Seemingly, "Maoz Tzur" isn't unique to Chanukah, as it speaks about all exiles, from the Egyptian exile until the exile of Edom. Nevertheless, the Jewish people customarily dedicate this poem as a song for Chanukah.

When looking at each miracle individually, one could say that the Jewish people had unique success at that particular time. However, when looking at all of history, we see that for thousands of years the Jewish people survive. Throughout the generations, anyone who harmed us no longer exists. Yet the Jewish people live and endure.

There are miracles where G-d's hand can be seen openly, like the plagues of Egypt. From the Chanukah miracle onward, thousands of years passed where G-d's hand was covered and hidden. Sometimes when looking at a single event it is difficult to sense the providence, but when looking at several events together in historical perspective – Pesach and entering the land, the Purim miracle and the return to Zion – and seeing G-d's hand in all events, we understand that in Chanukah too, it was G-d's hand at work. From here we learn that we must seek G-d everywhere, both in hidden and dark places and in illuminated and joyous places.

The Swords of Iron War joins the chain of generations. If we were to add to "Maoz Tzur" a verse referring to this war (and to all of Israel's wars since the establishment of the state), we could see even more clearly: for thousands of years – G-d has protected us. It's difficult for us – we cry, we're sad and worried about all the enormous challenges, about the widows and orphans, about the bereaved families, about the hostages and their families, about the wounded and the evacuees. However, we sing "Maoz Tzur" with complete faith that we will win the war, and G-d willing, we will continue to rise to a higher stage in our redemption process.

To connect our war to the lighting of the candles, we have added a prayer for each day – each day for a different challenge – that can be said after lighting the candles, so that the special light of Chanukah will quickly illuminate all those who need it.

FIRST NIGHT

To strengthen the soldiers and security forces

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ, מְעוֹז צוֹר יְשׁוּעָתֵנוּ, שֶׁתְּשַׁמֵּר עַל חַיֵּינוּ וְגִבּוֹרֵינוּ וְעַל כּוֹחוֹת הַבְּטָחוֹן, הַעוֹמְדִים עַל מִשְׁמַר עִמָּנוּ וְאֶרְצֵנוּ. תּוֹ בָּהֶם כּוֹחַ וְגִבּוֹרָה כְּבָנֵי חַשְׁמוֹנָי, בְּיָמֵם הָהֵם בְּזִמְנוֹ הַזֶּה. הָאֵר דְּרַכְּכֵם מִפְּנֵי כָּל מְכַשׁוֹל וְתַקְלָה, הָאֵר לְבָבֵם בְּאַמּוּנָה וְשִׁמּוֹר עֲלֵיהֶם מִכָּל צָרָה. הַחַזִּירֵם לְבֵיתֵם לְשִׁלוֹם, עֲטוּרֵי נִצְחוֹן וְתִהְיֶה.

May it be Your will, Hashem our G-d, Rock of our salvation, to protect our brave soldiers and security forces who stand guard over our people and our Land. Give them strength and might like the Chashmona'im, in those days at this time. Light their path before any obstacle and mishap, illuminate their hearts with faith and protect them from all trouble. Return them home in peace, crowned with victory and glory.

SECOND NIGHT

For the swift return of the hostages

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ, שֶׁתְּשַׁלַּח בְּמַהֲרָה פְּדוּת וְיִשׁוּעָה לְאֶחָיו וְאֶחֻיוֹתֵינוּ הַשְּׁבוּיִים, מִיַּד צָר הַמְּנַבֵּחַ. הָאֵר אֶת חֲשָׁכָתָם, חַזֵּק אֶת רוּחָם, כִּי אֶרְכֶּה לָנוּ הַשְּׁעָרָה. הִשִּׁיבֵם בְּמַהֲרָה לְחֵיק מִשְׁפּוּחוֹתֵיהֶם, וְיִזְכּוּ לְחַיִּים טוֹבִים וּמְתוּקִים, מְאִירִים וְשְׁלֵוִים.

May it be Your will, Hashem our G-d, to swiftly send redemption and salvation to our brothers and sisters who are captive, from the hand of the howling enemy. Illuminate their darkness, strengthen their spirit, for the hour has grown long for us. Return them quickly to their families' embrace, and may they merit good and sweet lives, illuminated and peaceful.

THIRD NIGHT

For healing the wounded

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' א-לקינו, שתשלח במהרה רפואה שלמה מן השמים לכל הפצועים. חזק את נפשם ואת גופם, ויזכו לחיים טובים, שמחים ומאירים. תן בהם אורות של תקנה, ושם תודה נזבם בשמחה.

May it be Your will, Hashem our G-d, to swiftly send complete healing from heaven to all the wounded. Strengthen their soul and body, and may they merit good lives, joyous and illuminated. Give them lights of hope, and there we will offer thanksgiving sacrifices with joy.

FOURTH NIGHT

For returning the evacuees to their homes

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' א-לקינו, שתשיב במהרה את אחינו ואת אחיותינו לבתיהם בצפון ובדרום. חזק את רוחם, שפך אור אהבה בין כתלי ביהם, ומפרי בטנם לשאבו שמחת עולם. השיבם למחוז חפצם בבטחה וקרוב קץ הגאולה.

May it be Your will, Hashem our G-d, to swiftly return our brothers and sisters to their homes in the north and south. Strengthen their spirit, pour the light of love between their home's walls, and from their offspring may they draw eternal joy. Return them to their desired haven safely and bring near the end of redemption.

FIFTH NIGHT

For strengthening the bereaved families

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' א-לקינו, שתחזק את משפחות הקדושים שמסרו נפשם על קדוש השם, ונקם נקמת דם עבדיך השפוי. חבש את שברון לבם, מלא את חסרונם באהבתך, האר פניך עליהם, וזכר להם זכות יקיריהם שנפלו על קדשת שמך הגדול.

May it be Your will, Hashem our G-d, to strengthen the families of the holy ones who gave their lives sanctifying Your Name, and avenge the spilled blood of Your servants. Bind their broken hearts, fill their void with Your love, shine Your face upon them, and remember for them the merit of their dear ones who fell sanctifying Your great Name.

SIXTH NIGHT

For strengthening the soldiers' wives and family members

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' א-לקינו, שתחזק את נשות החיל המסורות, העומדות באמץ ובגבורה בימים ובלילות. תן בהן ובבני המשפחה כוחות ותקנה, האר פניך אליהם באהבה. שמר על בני ביתם בשמחה ובאורה, ויגידו הגדולה השב גבורם במהרה.

May it be Your will, Hashem our G-d, to strengthen the dedicated wives of valor, who stand with courage and might day and night. Give them and their family members strength and hope, shine Your face upon them with love. Protect their household members with joy and light, and with Your great hand return their hero quickly.

SEVENTH NIGHT

For strengthening the Jewish people in Israel and the Diaspora

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' א-לקינו, שתברך את עמך בית ישראל, בארצנו הקדושה וברחבי תבל. חשוף זרוע קדשך, נצרנו בצל כנפיך, והאר דרכנו בתורתך. הפך אבלנו לשמחת עולמים, ותגלה מלכותך לעיני כל העמים.

May it be Your will, Hashem our G-d, to bless Your people the house of Israel, in our holy Land and throughout the world. Bare Your holy arm, protect us in the shadow of Your wings, and illuminate our path with Your Torah. Turn our mourning into eternal joy, and may Your kingdom be revealed before all nations.

EIGHTH NIGHT

For Jewish unity and victory in war

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' א-לקינו, שנצפה במהרה לנצחון על אויבינו, ואז נגמר בשיר מזמור חנכת מזבחנו. ברב שועות תקרב קץ הישועה, תו בני כוח אמונה וגבורה כבני חשמונאי מקדשיך בטהרה. לבבות עמך באהבה תאחד, ואור ישועתך עלינו תיחד, האר פניך עלינו באורה, וקץ הגאולה יבוא במהרה.

May it be Your will, Hashem our G-d, that we merit swift victory over our enemies, and then we will complete with song the psalm of our altar's dedication. With abundant salvations bring near the end of redemption, give us strength of faith and might like the Chashmona'im who purified Your sanctuary. Unite the hearts of Your people with love, and unite Your light of salvation upon us, shine Your face upon us with light, and may the end of redemption come swiftly.



READING THE SIGNS OF REDEMPTION

RABBI ELIE MISCHEL

The horror of October 7. The Jewish people's great spiritual awakening in Israel and the Diaspora. The complete destruction of Hezbollah leadership in the span of a few weeks. Ballistic missile attacks from Iran. And last but not least – the glorious pager attacks! Over herring at *kiddush*, my friends and neighbors increasingly ask: “Is it happening? Are we living through the end of redemption, *Mashiach* itself?”

Traditionally, Jewish thinkers warned against speculating about the end of days. *Chazal* warn against going down the rabbit hole of calculating dates for *Mashiach*'s arrival. “Blasted be the bones of those who calculate the end, for they would say, ‘Since the predetermined time has arrived, and yet [*Mashiach*] has not come, he will never come” (*Sanhedrin* 97b). Similarly, Maimonides writes that “Neither the order of the occurrence of these events nor their precise detail are among the fundamental principles of the faith. A person should not occupy himself with the narratives and homiletics concerning these and similar matters, nor should he consider them as essentials, for study of them will neither bring fear or love of G-d” (*Hilchot Melachim* 12:2).

Maimonides was deeply concerned about misguided messianic fervor and the despair people inevitably experience when their predictions do not come to fruition. Still, *Chazal* emphasized that actively yearning for redemption is not merely one commandment among many, but rather a litmus test of faith. “Whoever mourns for Jerusalem will merit to see it in its joy” (*Ta'anit* 30b). The degree of pain a Jew feels over the exile of Israel is a sign of his sensitivity – or lack thereof – to G-d's will. “The harder it is for one to bear the air of exile... this is a sign that one has absorbed more deeply the holiness of the Land of Israel” (Rav Kook, *Orot* 6).

In contrast to Maimonides' concern about excessive speculation, some contemporary thinkers worry that we are not thinking *enough* about redemption. According to Rav Hanan Porat, Maimonides' fear no longer applies in our generation. “Out of a belief that we are living in the era of the ‘beginning of the redemption,’ which comes through our efforts here below – and we are called to be a part of it and work together with G-d to hasten its coming – it is incumbent upon us to deeply understand the times we are living through and to understand which stage of the redemption we are experiencing... Studying and clarifying these matters is the key to making practical decisions, and in light of this study we will mark the way forward” (*Mashiach ben David, Mashiach ben Yosef, and the Secret of their Combination*, 53). It is essential to recognize that we are living through redemption, for doing so is the necessary first step to taking action and speeding its arrival.

Without prophecy, no human being can precisely predict G-d's plan. However, while we must avoid specific predictions, we have an obligation to carefully consider the meaning of current events through the lens of Torah. As Rav Soloveitchik writes, “Just as yesteryear's primitive fighters would put their ears to the ground to listen for the rumbling caused by the enemy's cavalry, so, too, must we incline our ears to the present to perceive the historical convulsions caused by the almighty winds of Providence... The Master of the Universe is strolling through the garden, and we must hear His footsteps” (*Return to Zion*, 115–116). We can – and *must* – apply the words of the prophets to our own time.

What makes our generation uniquely positioned to understand these matters? Daniel himself provides guidance: “But you, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased” (*Daniel* 12:4). Because

Daniel knew that the redemption was in the very distant future, he said that the “matter of redemption” should be sealed until the end of times. But as the end times draw closer, uncertainties about the redemption will be clarified. According to *Chazal*, the redemption must come before the 7th millennium, and so the closer we get to that date, the more our knowledge of the redemption will increase (*Malbim, Daniel* 12:4).

We are currently in the year 5785, only a few hundred years before the 7th millennium. More than any of the generations that came before us, we are blessed to witness G-d's plan for redemption unfold. If our great-grandparents wondered when and how the promises of the prophets would come true, we no longer need to wonder. We have witnessed the miraculous return of the people of Israel to the Land of Israel. We are watching, in real-time, as G-d fulfills one prophecy after another, with front-row seats to the redemption of the world. The Torah speaks to every generation, but it speaks more clearly now than it ever has before.



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Rabbi Elie Mischel

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WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO BUILD A STRONGER ISRAEL THROUGH ALIYAH



This Land is Our Land!

Rabbi Reuven Taragin

“We have not taken a foreign land; we do not hold the property of others. Rather, the land is our ancestral inheritance taken from us lawlessly. When G-d gave us the strength, we reclaimed it” (Maccabees 1:15:33–34). This is how *Shimon HaMaccabee* responded 2,150 years ago to Antiochus’ demand that the Maccabees cede territory in *Eretz Yisrael*. His words are an important expression of our relationship with the Land of Israel.

Hashem’s first words to the first Jew directed him to move to *Eretz Yisrael*. After famine forced Avraham’s descendants to relocate to Egypt, the rest of the Torah describes our quest to return. The *Nevi'im* depict our settlement and development of the Land as well as our eventual seventy-year exile from it. The exile raised a question about our relationship with the Land. Did we have a genuine bond with the Land, or was our presence just a blip on the screen of history?

The Jewish people’s unique return from exile and the Maccabean victory proved our eternal bond with the Land. As the only nation in history to return to its ancestral homeland from exile, our unprecedented return demonstrated our everlasting relationship with the Land.

As a descendant of those who returned, *Shimon HaMaccabee* fully appreciated the eternal nature of our relationship with the holy Land he fought for and died defending. His actions and words ensured that, from then on, the Land would be known as Judea or the Land of Israel.

Though our second exile was far longer, its Jewish identity endured for nearly two thousand years – despite attempts by conquerors to rename the land and erase our connection. Our earlier return from the first exile and fight for independence had cemented a bond that persisted while we lived far from our homeland.

Like Antiochus and others, many continue to deny our relationship with our Land. This denial has intensified since October 7th. We are witnessing virulent hatred towards and categorical delegitimation

and demonization of Israelis, Zionists, and Jews around the world.

This reality requires us to better understand and appreciate our rights. Shimon called the land “*nachalat avoteinu*, our ancestral inheritance.” Though we were exiled and our land was taken from us – first by the Babylonians and then again by the Romans – it remains ours because it is our inheritance.

Hashem described the Land this way to the Jewish people while they were still enslaved in Egypt: “*V'natati otah lachem morasha* – I have given the Land to you as an inheritance” (Shemot 6:8). Before arriving in Israel, the Jewish people already owned it.

Ultimately, what makes the Land ours is Divine destiny. Shimon hints at this by emphasizing that the retaking of the Land was not the result of mere situational strength or political opportunity but, rather, G-d’s Hand.

Rashi emphasizes the importance of Divine destiny in his first comment on the Torah. Though Rashi lived during a period when most Jews lived far from Israel, he foresaw the time when Jews would return to Israel and be accused of thievery. He explains that the Torah begins with the creation narrative to rebuff these attacks. It reminds us that we are here because of an act of G-d; our mandate comes from Him.

Obviously, most of the world does not accept Rashi’s claim. So what value does it have? Did Rashi think his comment would convince the United Nations? Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook explained that Rashi addresses us, not other nations. His intention was not to convince others but to reinforce our conviction. Though we may not be able to convince others of our Divinely destined ancestral home, our recognition should bolster our confidence and embolden us in the face of those who seek to delegitimize us.

David Ben Gurion used to say that the Bible is our true mandate to the Land of Israel. He understood that UN resolutions and international support come and go. Ben Gurion recognized G-d’s Will, as expressed in the eternal book of books, as the basis of our rights and claims.

Baruch Hashem, over the past decades, the State of Israel has achieved more international recognition, including peace deals with Arab neighbors. Feeling part of the international community, a “nation amongst nations,” many Israelis have moved away from the Bible as a basis of our identity and rights to the Land of Israel.

The past year has thus been a particularly rude awakening. The UN, once the body that sanctioned the founding of the Jewish State, is now doing everything it can to undermine it. UN bodies, foreign governments, and liberal movements around the world demonize Israel and sympathize with barbaric terrorists.

Those who relied on international recognition are surprised and frustrated. But we who believe in Torah know to expect these attacks and how to respond to them. Our rights are Divine. Hashem created the world and gave us this Land. He reminded us of His gift by facilitating our miraculous return together with the Land’s rejuvenation after two thousand years of dormancy.

May Chanukah and Shimon’s words renew our strength to fight for our beloved Land.



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Chanukah – The Antidote When Shivat Tzion “Goes Awry”

Rabbanit Shani Taragin

Last year, a few weeks after the seventh of October, I “chanced” upon a *trempest* (hitchhiker) who needed a ride from Yerushalayim to Gush Etzion, where I live. The grateful passenger surveyed my *sefarim*-laden car seats and with his eyes on a Tanach, asked me the following – “If we had *nevi'im* (prophets) today, what message do you think they would broadcast concerning the horrific massacre and ensuing war of October 7?” Without waiting for an answer, he confidently confided his thoughts of a prophet coming to chastise the Jewish nation for judicial corruption, and encouraging them as *Yirmiyahu HaNavi* had preached to surrender to the enemy, and subsequently leave the Land of Israel and begin a third national exile as punishment for losing our way and defiling the Land. Somewhat aghast I instinctively responded, “*Selicha, adoni* (apologies, sir), but you just entered the car of someone who is currently teaching the prophets of Shivat Tzion, and the message for our own generation, nearly eight decades since restoration of sovereignty in our homeland after 2,000 years of exile, could not be more different than your projection!” I then proceeded to share with him the following prophetic messages of Chaggai and Zecharia recorded for our generation as well (*Megillah* 14a).

In the second year of Darius I of Persia (520 BCE), fifteen years after returning to the Land of Israel following the Proclamation of King Cyrus, the prophet Chaggai addressed the 42,360 Jews who had returned to Israel under the political leadership of Zerubavel. Disillusioned after numerous unsuccessful attempts to rebuild the *Beit HaMikdash*, Chaggai voiced the frustration of the people – “The time has not yet come for rebuilding the House of Hashem.” He then proceeded to reprimand them, “Is it a time for you to dwell in your paneled houses, while this House

is lying in ruins?” In addition to chastising them for their personal smugness with the status quo, he enjoined them to look around at the current situation, i.e., they had secure homes and stability. How can they argue that the stages of redemption are not unfolding when they are successfully living in beautiful homes and settling the Land?! The process may be arduous and incomplete without the *Beit HaMikdash*, but the stages have clearly started and will continue in a positive trajectory if the people continue to stay in the Land and build!

We too have returned with hopes and dreams of a redemptive process unfolding before our eyes. Though current events have disappointed our anticipated course and provide us as a nation with opportunity for introspection and repair, we are not meant to interpret our losses as a prelude to exile; on the contrary, looking around as Chaggai encourages, we see the astounding achievements of the military, economy, high-tech, the flourishing of industries and immigration!

Chaggai chooses to continue his encouraging prophetic oration on the 24th of Kislev during the long dark nights of the winter solstice reflecting their somber mood, assuring them that the “spirit” of Hashem is present and the time for Hashem to “destroy the might of the kingdoms of the nations” has arrived. He subsequently encourages Zerubavel to wage war against mighty empires and for Yehoshua the *kohen gadol* to educationally and religiously prepare for the next stages of rebuilding the *Beit HaMikdash*. During the same season, Zecharia the prophet buttresses the words of Chaggai and through a prophetic vision of a *menorah* foretells “Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, says Hashem... Whoever you are, O great mountain in the path of Zerubavel, turn into level ground!”

Albeit these prophecies were not completely fulfilled by Zerubavel, they reverberated in the national-religious consciousness of the *Chashmona'im* 350 years later! During the dark age of Seleucid religious oppression, inspired by Chaggai and Zecharia, the Maccabees triumphantly rose against their enemies, reinaugurated the *mikdash*, and lit the *menorah* on the 25th of Kislev as a sign of fulfillment of Hashem’s “spirit” in their midst!

The prophetic messages which I emphatically shared with my rather hapless passenger, ring true today as well. During these times of darkness, we are not meant to despair, but rather be inspired by the spirit of Hashem overtly manifest. Our celebration of Chanukah should rekindle the encouragement of fulfilled prophecies of the past and reignite our spirit to fulfill them to completion “*bayamim haheim bazman hazeh*, in those days, in this time.”



To learn more about themes of *geula* (redemption), please join the new WhatsApp group through the QR code.



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A PROJECT OF  MIZRACHI

On October 7, 2023, it was Simchat Torah morning in Israel. The Jewish people suffered their most horrific day since the Holocaust. Over 1,200 people were murdered and hundreds more were taken hostage.

Simchat Torah is a day of joy, of celebration, and of dancing – but Simchat Torah 2024 was also the first *yahrzeit* of the 1,200 victims of October 7th as well as the time to remember the hundreds of hostages and soldiers who have died since then. How would we, as the Jewish people, respond? Can we dance? Should we dance? How would we commemorate this poignant and difficult anniversary?

In January 2024, Mizrachi UK's CEO Rabbi Andrew Shaw had an idea for Simchat Torah 2024 to bring the Jewish world together to remember the *kedoshim* and allow us to celebrate Simchat Torah across the globe.

The concept was simple: to produce a beautiful *me'il* (Torah cover) that will proclaim that the Torah cover is dedicated in memory of the 1,200 souls who went to Heaven that fateful day, and the many others who have since died *al kiddush Hashem*. Each Torah *me'il* would also have the name of one of the *kedoshim* embroidered

onto them. And then, communities around the world would dance with these Torah scrolls – thousands of *shuls*, with hundreds of thousands of Jews being connected.

In May 2024, Rabbi Shaw launched the idea in London at Mizrachi UK's Weekend of Inspiration. He presented the first *me'il* to Rabbi Doron Perez, Executive Chairman of World Mizrachi and father of Captain Daniel Perez *hy"d*, with the vision that by Simchat Torah 2024 hundreds of *shuls* would join and remember hundreds and hundreds of *kedoshim*.

The Mizrachi UK team reached out to the Jewish world and, *baruch Hashem*, it happened.

And so, on Simchat Torah 2024, 525 *shuls* in 31 countries and 281 cities participated in the Simchat Torah Project – with over 600 *kedoshim* remembered.

However, Mizrachi will not rest until every single *kadosh*, every single family has a *kehillah* somewhere in the world saying – we will remember.

The response we received from around the world was phenomenal. The sense of unity, the connection and pride. Here are few of the comments:

The whole Perth community joined together on Simchat Torah at Carmel School. Nearly 1,000 people. We had a *yizkor* between Mincha and Ma'ariv, with a transition to *hakafot*. There were three *me'ilim* from the Simchat Torah Project, one from Carmel School, and two from *shuls*. The unity of the community and the power of the dancing was immense.

Perth, Australia

It is hard to put the whole story into writing here, but I made a video for our *shul* about the incredible story that unfolded around the Torah cover. The video ended up going viral and was seen by hundreds of thousands of Jews around the world. It was really incredible how the story of the Torah cover touched so many people.

Quebec, Canada

Walking back when returning the Torah to the *aron kodesh* – when people kissed the Torah with their *siddur* or their *tzitzit*, the looks on their faces was full of *kavana* and curiosity and care. There was nothing routine or rote about it. They really wanted to get close to it. While there were many *sifrei Torah* in use during *hakafot*, this was the one people wanted to use.

New York, USA

The Jewish world has been united in grief before, and through our unity, we have always found strength. Across continents and generations, when one part of our people hurts, we all feel the pain. This moment in our collective history is no different. The grief we experience is a shared burden, and in that shared burden, we find the resilience that has sustained us for thousands of years. The Simchat Torah Project is a wonderful way to come together to mourn this tragedy, but also to show resilience and that the legacy of those who died live on.

Teaneck, USA

The project was very thoughtful and meaningful, and a beautiful way to memorialize those lost either on October 7 or in defending the State. It helped us in dealing with a holiday of both grief and celebration.

Brooklyn, USA

Everyone in the community was really invested and excited that our *shul* was a part of an important initiative. It helped people connect and have an outlet for their emotions from the past year.

Edgware, England



The father of Itai Chen *hy"d* performed the changeover of the *me'il* at a small *tekes* (ceremony) on Simchat Torah and then danced with it for his son during the first *hakafa* which we sang entirely to the song of *Acheinu*... Very moving.

Ramat Poleg, Israel



Before *chag*, I called the Ovadia family to share pictures of the cover with them and to tell them about the Simchat Torah Project. They were incredibly appreciative that a community in New York has chosen to remember and honor their son.

New York, USA

There was so much gratitude for how Mizrachi had transformed communities across the globe. Hard to put in words what this project means to a lot of people around the world. Thank you.

Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel



I announced that we would make the 6th *hakafa* a slow *hakafa* with inspiring, slow singing. We held the Torah in the middle of the circle and surrounded it with all the other Torahs from the *shul*. Everyone was very moved and felt this transformed Simchat Torah into a meaningful experience for everyone.

Los Angeles, USA

Incredible initiative. It completely transformed our complex Shemini Atzeret and helped very much to have something tangible to focus our mixture of emotions on.

Toronto, Canada



The biggest Shmini Atzeret *yizkor* and Simchat Torah in many years with over 80 attending.

Cardiff, Wales

There were so many stories, so many connections to grieving families, so much hope despite the darkness and so much dancing together with so many tears. A beautiful project and we were so delighted to be part of it... kol *hakavod*.

London, England

It was deeply moving to the entire community. I spoke about this beautiful person and his life, and we had a special Torah cover changing ceremony during the fourth *hakafa* which was dedicated to his life. We then danced with his Torah silently. It was a very precious moment.

New York, USA

The project was amazing. As a geographically isolated community we felt very connected to the Jewish world and we also found a strength in the unity amongst us.

Perth, Australia



And the project will continue, as Eylon Levy says: "So if your shul does not have a Simchat Torah Project cover, then order one for next year, because remembering the victims and fallen heroes of October 7th and beyond, is going to be a lifelong project for the Jewish people."

www.thesimchattorahproject.org



Stones Tell the Story

Alan Rosenbaum

Samson Beit Bnei Akiva, World Bnei Akiva's new Jerusalem headquarters, will serve as a home for Zionist leadership programs for the entire world.

On Thursday evening, November 14, World Bnei Akiva (WBA) inaugurated its new headquarters, Samson Beit Bnei Akiva, in Jerusalem's Givat Mordechai neighborhood. Over two hundred guests attended the building's inauguration ceremony, including donors, volunteers, building committee members, and WBA leadership who were in Israel for Bnei Akiva's *Ve'adah*, its quadrennial world conference.

Samson Beit Bnei Akiva will serve as an educational and residential hub for Bnei Akiva members and alumni, featuring a state-of-the-art guest house with 150 hotel-style beds spread across suites that can accommodate up to six people per room. The facility expects to welcome approximately 12,500 guests annually, including participants from gap-year programs, leadership initiatives, school trips, summer camps, and Birthright and Masa groups. The complex will house two large dining and event halls, each capable of seating up to 200 guests, making them perfect for seminars, lectures, ceremonies, functions, and private events. A vibrant community center, operated in partnership with the Jerusalem municipality, will serve the local population of approximately 12,000 people. The building will also include a synagogue, *beit midrash*, conference rooms, and lecture halls. Through these facilities, WBA aims to enhance its programming and expand its influence across multiple levels.

"This building is the culmination of a 20-year dream," said Michael Silver, co-chair of WBA. For the movement's leaders, Samson Beit Bnei Akiva is much more than an impressive structure. "We intend for it to serve as an ideological center that connects Israeli society with Diaspora Jewry," noted Roi Abecassis, former Mazkal of WBA and one of the leaders of the project. "The center will host training programs for *shlichim* to the Diaspora, as well as seminars to deepen the connection between high school students and pre-army *mechinot*."

"The building was built by Bnei Akiva and was funded by Bnei Akiva families from around the world. But the plan and the dream are much more ambitious than that," added Silver. "It will serve

a much broader community in the Diaspora and in Israel, and this intention fits with the Bnei Akiva approach. Taglit-Birthright will use it, as will all sorts of programs coming from overseas. We will offer Birthright some assistance with the educational part of the program. The idea is to make it a place of education, not just for Bnei Akiva. The Bnei Akiva approach is not to stay in our little corner. It's a Zionist and leadership initiative," he explained.

For many years, veteran Bnei Akiva leaders thought that the possibility of building a world headquarters in Jerusalem was a pipe dream, and in fact, the process took many years from conception to reality. In 1997, the Israeli government granted a plot of land in the heart of Jerusalem to Amutat Tirat Yosef, named in memory of Dr. Yosef Burg, the well-known Religious Zionist leader and politician (1909–1999). The land was intended for building a youth and community center. Amutat Tirat Yosef furthered its aims by providing a home for Beit Bnei Akiva from which the neighborhood will benefit. "I'm very happy about this stipulation," said Silver, "as a core principle of Bnei Akiva is to be actively involved in and contributing to the local community."

Construction of Beit Bnei Akiva began in February 2018, with the generous support of some of the leading families in the Religious Zionist world, including the Samson, Koschitzky, Goldman, Feldman, Cher, and Lamm families. The World Bnei Akiva Center, which will be known as Samson Beit Bnei Akiva, is set to open its doors to the public in early January.

For years, explained Silver, WBA could not reach its potential without a physical home. "World Bnei Akiva never had a home," he said. When the organization brought groups from overseas for its gap year *Hachshara* (training) programs, students had to stay in youth hostels that provided less than optimum conditions. "We always had to outsource facilities and services."

Having a strong and central location in Israel's capital will allow WBA to more effectively reach Jewish youth worldwide and leverage all the

organization's current resources. "We have been in the business of hosting groups in Israel from overseas for 70 years, so we've got a good feel for what the needs of these participants are," said Silver. "We've thought about it very carefully."

Silver anticipates that Samson Beit Bnei Akiva will also be available to families to rent for special occasions such as Shabbat *chatan* (bridegroom) celebrations.

Efrat Metzler-Porat, deputy director of WBA, views Samson Beit Bnei Akiva as a home for Bnei Akiva graduates. "My vision as head of the *Bogrim Ba'aretz* (graduate *olim*) Department is that Beit Bnei Akiva will be a home away from home for them, especially for lone soldiers and lone *b'not sherut*. There's something about the fact that we call it the 'House of Bnei Akiva' so that every student who participates in Bnei Akiva and every counselor views it as their home."

Metzler-Porat adds that the location of the Samson Beit Bnei Akiva is also significant. "The fact that it is near the center of Jerusalem and near the soon-to-be-completed light rail makes it very accessible. Many lone soldiers who are part of *Garin Tzabar* have a place in Be'erot Yitzchak or Sde Eliyahu, but it's a bit out of the way for them."

Garin Tzabar, according to its website, is for young Jewish adults (18–24) who make *Aliyah* and want to make Israel their home and serve a meaningful service in the IDF as lone soldiers. "Having this home in the heart of Jerusalem where you can take the light rail and be at the Western Wall in a few minutes is very important," she said.

Both Silver and Metzler-Porat point with pride not only to the large number of WBA graduates serving in the IDF but also to Bnei Akiva *shlichim* (emissaries) serving in cities around the world, who returned to Israel for reserve duties, leaving their wives and children behind in the Diaspora. In fact, the Mazkal (director-general) of WBA, Rabbi Zvi Elon, has been serving in the IDF reserves for much of the past year.

Fulfilling the World Bnei Akiva Dream at Samson Beit Bnei Akiva

Since 1954, WBA has inspired youth with a commitment to the Jewish people, the Torah, Jewish tradition and values, and the State of Israel. The movement is active in 26 countries, 43 cities, and 110 branches globally, and over 100,000 Bnei Akiva alumni have made Aliyah. World Bnei Akiva organizes several Israel programs and a pre-army Mechina academy, providing over 2,500 overseas participants each year with Israel experiences. The flagship programs are the gap-year “Hachshara” (training) programs that have thrived since the pre-state years until today.

Samson Beit Bnei Akiva is located in the heart of Jerusalem, on the outskirts of the Givat Mordechai neighborhood, within walking distance of the Kotel, the Knesset, the Botanical Gardens, and the Israel Museum – and a short walk to the new light rail station.

Funding for the \$15 million facility was provided by some of Religious Zionism’s most prominent families, including the Samson family from South Africa and the US; the Koschitzky, Goldstein, and Gitler families from Canada, Israel, and the US; the Feldman family from Mexico and Israel; the Goldman family from the UK and Israel; and the Cher and Lamm families of Australia. Other major donors include the Hochstein, Pushett, Kronitz, Melnick, Schwartz, Neuman and Meyer families.

Daniel Goldman, former Chairman of WBA, summed up the significance of the new building for the movement. “When I look at the building, it really puts WBA in line with all the major institutions of Israel and Zionism, that it should have its permanent home in Jerusalem alongside all the others, and I think that’s a contribution for decades to come.”

Beyond the completion of Samson Beit Bnei Akiva, the WBA movement has had another reason for celebration in recent weeks. The movement’s secretariat was established in 1954, and this year marks the world movement’s 70th anniversary.

On November 13, WBA opened its quadrennial *Ve’idah*, where 100 leading representatives aged 17–23 from the movement’s branches worldwide, representing between 15 and 20 countries, gathered in Jerusalem to discuss the movement’s pressing issues of the day.

Among the issues discussed at the conference were the rise of antisemitism around the world, the need to attract youth from technology-based activities into group participation within Bnei Akiva, and how to ensure that graduates of the movement remain in their native lands to assume leadership positions, if only for a short time, before making *Aliyah*.

“On behalf of the Koschitzky, Goldstein, and Gitler families, I would like to express our gratitude to all those who labored and contributed to make Beit Bnei Akiva a reality,” said Jonathan Koschitzky. “It was an impossible dream, and we are very happy that this edifice will be a magnet for the next young generations of Jews from all over the world.”

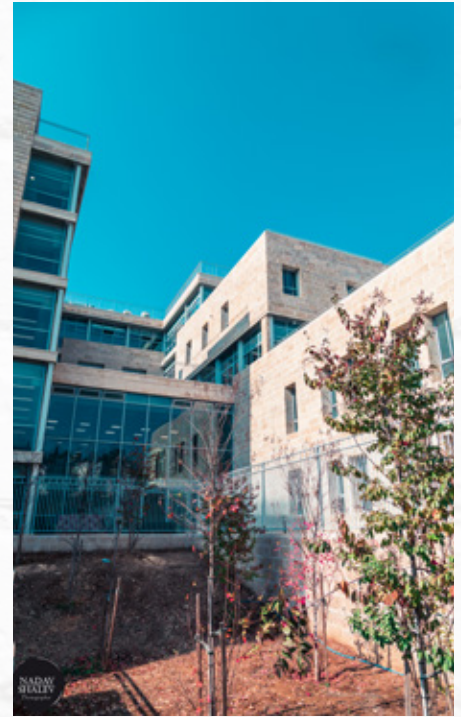
The Samsons’ daughter Dorothy Sank added, “Bnei Akiva plays an important role in our family’s life, and it is our pleasure to assist in building a



Eric z”l and Sheila Samson, major Bnei Akiva supporters for whom the Samson Beit Bnei Akiva is named. (Courtesy)

vibrant educational center in Jerusalem for Bnei Akiva members from around the world.”

WBA co-chair Michael Silver said, “The donors are truly partners in this project. They are the best of the best, and their interests and vision are very much aligned with Bnei Akiva’s vision. As chairman of World Bnei Akiva, it has been my great honor and privilege to oversee the building of Samson Beit Bnei Akiva for the past six years. It is of the utmost importance to thank the incredible generosity of the founding families that transformed the seed of an idea into a reality. The Samson family, the founding partner in this project, together with the Koschitzky, Gitler, Goldstein, Goldman, Feldman, Cher, and Lamm families, have enabled Bnei Akiva to create a home here in Jerusalem, our holiest city. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to the incredible other donor families, without which this project could not have come to fruition. Everyone will benefit from its usage, and Samson Beit Bnei Akiva will become part of the Bnei Akiva story for future generations.”



Samson Beit Bnei Akiva building exterior. (Credit: Nadav Shalev Photography)



Samson Beit Bnei Akiva Inauguration (Credit: Mendi Tuito)



Daniel Goldman, former chairman of WBA, affixes the mezuzah to the entrance of Samson Beit Bnei Akiva. (Credit: Mendi Tuito)



Rabbi Zvi Elon, WBA’s secretary-general, Roi Abecassis, former secretary-general, donors Joseph Gitler, Jonathan Koschitzky, and Sarena Koschitzky, co-chairman Michael Silver, and Tzachi Megnagy, WBA’s CEO. (Credit: Mendi Tuito)

Light and Miracles Require Sacrifice In Those Days and At This Time

Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander

As Chanukah approaches this year amid the ongoing war and difficult times for *Am Yisrael*, we are reminded of the current darkness and our difficult history. The blessing of light that is recited marks the miracle experienced by the Maccabees on the darkest days of the year and our capacity to transform darkness into light.

Chanukah stands out as one of only two *mitzvot* that *halacha* requires us to fulfill even if it means great financial burden or sacrifice. The *Shulchan Aruch* makes it clear (*Orach Chayim* 671:1) that one must kindle Chanukah lights even if it is necessary to borrow money or sell possessions in order to afford to kindle at least one light every night. The *Gemara* (*Pesachim* 99b) states a similar mandate regarding the commandment to drink four cups of wine at the *Pesach Seder*. One must collect charity or sell possessions to fulfill the drinking of the four cups.

These are exceptional statements! We are not asked to make such sacrifices for any other positive commandment, including those that are Biblical. Wearing *tefillin*, purchasing a *lulav/etrog*, acquiring *matzah*, adorning one's home with a *mezuzah* does not require one to borrow, sell possessions or collect charity. Yet remarkably, kindling Chanukah lights and the four cups of *Seder* wine – both rabbinic *mitzvot* – come with a requirement to sacrifice as needed.

The need to sacrifice in order to celebrate Chanukah is due to the fact that the ethos of the holiday has at its essence sacrifice. The Maccabees and the Jewish people made significant sacrifices by serving G-d amid threat of punishment for such service as well as fighting a war against the mighty Greek army; “You delivered the mighty into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few” (*Al HaNissim*). The miracles of Chanukah would never have come to pass without

the initiative of the Jewish people as seen in their sacrifice, bravery and dedication. For that reason, sacrifice is a key component of the Chanukah experience.

The four cups of wine represent the four stages of the redemptive process transforming the enslaved Jewish people into a free nation with a destiny in Egypt. Each phase of the redemption process required initiative and sacrifice by the Jewish people. Despite all the dangers and difficulty, the Jewish people took the action required for the moment. Therefore, inherent in the experience of the four cups is the requirement to sacrifice in celebrating this rabbinic commandment.

The miracles that we have witnessed since October 7th and those that we yearn for, ending the current war, bringing security and delivering all the hostages home from Gaza, has required enormous sacrifice on the battlefield and on the homefront. Thousands have died, many thousands more have been injured, and hundreds of thousands remain displaced from their homes near the borders. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers are serving hundreds of days of reserve duty, their lives at stake, away from their families and jobs, carrying an especially heavy burden.

As we kindle lights this year, we must be proud of and celebrate the selflessness that we have witnessed required to support *Am Yisrael*, sharing the burden of these difficult times. It is only by embracing our responsibility to act by going all in no matter what it requires, that we will experience miracles in our time and truly appreciate the miracles of the past and present.

When we kindle the Chanukah lights, we recite a blessing thanking G-d for the miracles. Most people are familiar with the version that reads “in those days, at this time.” This wording suggests we are simply remembering past miracles

during this season. However, multiple manuscripts of the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah* present a different version of the blessing: “in those days AND at this time.” This small but significant addition of the word “and” (*vav* in Hebrew) transforms the meaning entirely. It tells us that Chanukah isn't just about remembering ancient miracles – it's about recognizing that miracles continue to occur in our own time. While we certainly commemorate the miracle of the oil that burned for eight days during the time of the Maccabees, we are also called to acknowledge the divine interventions happening in our present day. This perspective keeps the holiday vibrant and meaningful, connecting our ancient traditions with our contemporary experiences and reminding us of our ongoing ability to bring light into darkness.



Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander is President and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone, an international network of 30 Religious Zionist institutions committed to illuminating the beauty and relevance of authentic Torah Judaism in the modern world. Prior to making Aliyah, Rabbi Brander was Vice President at Yeshiva University and the senior rabbi of the Boca Raton Synagogue, overseeing its explosive growth from 60 to more than 600 families.



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From Nes Pach Shemen to Nes October 8: Rediscovering Jewish Identity

Rabbi Zvi Engel

Chanukah celebrates *nisim nistarim*, hidden miracles. While the *nes pach shemen*, the miracle of the oil, is the central *mitzvah* of Chanukah, its deeper essence lies in less visible miracles: victories in war, perseverance through challenge, and the reawakening of Jewish identity. These themes resonate powerfully in our times.

Rashi, commenting on the verse “And Ya’akov was left alone” (Bereishit 32:25) explains that *Ya’akov Avinu* returned to retrieve *pachim ketanim*, small vessels he had forgotten while fording the Yabbok River with his family in the dead of night. Though seemingly trivial, Rav Tzadok HaKohen reveals its profound meaning, teaching that these vessels symbolize Jews on a low spiritual level (*Likutei Ma’amarim*, p. 193). *Ya’akov Avinu’s* determination to recover them reflects a mission to elevate those who seem disconnected from holiness, rescuing them from apathy and ignorance.

This concept echoes the story of the *Chashmona’im*, as recounted in the *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 21b). Upon reclaiming the desecrated *Beit HaMikdash*, they found only a single cruse of oil bearing the *kohen gadol’s* seal. This small cruse symbolizes the unassailable purity within every Jew. Though insufficient by natural standards, it miraculously burned for eight days. Just as Ya’akov recovered forgotten vessels, the rediscovery of pure oil underscores how even an estranged Jew can radiate transformative light.

In both instances, recovering these vessels involved struggle. Ya’akov wrestled with a mysterious spiritual adversary, while the *Chashmona’im* waged war against the Seleucid Greeks. The Ramban references battles fought by *Ya’akov Avinu*, though the Torah only hints at them. Reflecting on his life, Ya’akov recalls using his sword and bow to repel surrounding nations, as the *Midrash* elaborates: “All the neighboring nations gathered to attack them,

and Ya’akov girded his weapons to oppose them” (Bereishit 48:22). Ramban explains: “Because it was a hidden miracle, for they were valiant men, and it appeared as though their own strength had saved them” (Bereishit 34:13). Similarly, Chanukah avoids martial pageantry; the victories of the Maccabees are understated in *Al HaNissim* to emphasize Hashem’s role and avoid the arrogance of claiming success as solely human effort.

Each year on Chanukah, we are also called upon to recover and rediscover. Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik *zt”l* elaborates on the Rambam’s description of Chanukah candles as being lit “*leharot u’legalot*, to show and reveal the miracle” (*Hilchot Chanukah* 3:3). He compares this to the Rambam’s directive in *Hilchot Chametz U’Matzah* 7:6, instructing individuals to see themselves as if they personally left Egypt. Just as Pesach involves recounting the miracles of redemption, the flames of the *menorah* invite us to tell Chanukah’s story. The candles, though silent, illuminate Hashem’s hidden presence in extraordinary and everyday moments. As Rabbi Soloveitchik writes: “The fulfillment of the precept of Chanukah consists in the narration of the story of the miracle... Every year, one rediscovers the miracle of Chanukah; every year, one re-experiences and relives it. Telling in the *halacha* is equated with reliving and re-staging... This aspect of re-experiencing and re-staging the dramatic events is borrowed from Pesach” (*Days of Deliverance*, 169).

This obligation of *leharot u’legalot* – to show and reveal – sheds light on the most profound hidden Chanukah-like miracle of today: the reawakening of Jewish souls in the wake of October 7th. The recently coined term “October 8 Jews” refers to those who experienced a profound spiritual renewal. Shaken by the horrific assault on *Am Yisrael*, many rediscovered their connection to their heritage.

The Maharal in *Ner Mitzvah* teaches that the number eight signifies the miraculous – rising above the natural order, represented by seven. Chanukah’s eight days embody this principle, urging us to recognize hidden miracles that elevate the ordinary to the extraordinary. Is it just a coincidence that in Hebrew, the number eight (*shmoneh*) and oil (*shemen*) share a linguistic connection, or that the name *Chashmona’im* can be read as *Chet-Shemona’im*, hinting at “eight eights”? This symbolism underscores Chanukah’s theme of transcending the natural order through the miraculous. Intriguingly, perhaps the date “October 8th” could itself be perceived as a mnemonic connecting to Chanukah’s hidden miracle of spiritual revival, not only due to the day of the month but also because “October” derives from the Latin “octo,” meaning eight?

The small vessels remind us that no Jew is too insignificant to be brought back, while the miracle of the hidden cruse of oil teaches us that even under the ruins of impurity, a pure cruse can be uncovered. As we light the *menorah*, let us remember that the flames do more than commemorate oil that burned for eight days. They illuminate the enduring light of *nisim nistarim* – hidden miracles of Jewish survival and resurgent identity. May the rekindled Jewish souls of Chanukah and October 8 inspire us to reignite our own, to strive to see the *Yad Hashem* in our lives everywhere.



Rabbi Zvi Engel
serves as the Rabbi of Congregation
Or Torah in Skokie, IL, and as President
of the Rabbinical Council of America.

HEROES THAT LIGHT OUR WAY

REBBETZIN DR. ADINA SHMIDMAN

What is a hero? This timeless question has been answered countless times over the past year, as soldiers and citizens alike have stepped forward, rising to meet the challenges of each day, hour, and moment. These individuals join the ranks of our nation's heroes – men and women whose courage and selflessness have shaped *Am Yisrael*. Understanding their sacrifice inspires us to reflect on our capacity for resilience, unity, and action while striving to embody their example.

The *Gemara*, as with many time-bound *mitzvot*, explores whether women are obligated in the *mitzvah* of Chanukah. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi states: "Women are obligated in the candle of Chanukah as they also were part of the miracle" (*Shabbat* 23a). While one opinion explains that women, like men, were subjugated and saved, another asserts that women played a central role in bringing about the miracle itself.

The story of Yehudit exemplifies this heroism.

According to the *Otzer Midrashim*, she could not stand idly by as Jewish women were forced to comply with the Greek governor's morally depraved edicts and her nation faced great peril. At great risk, she exited the gates of Yerushalayim along with her maidservant, praying for a miracle. Disguising her intentions, Yehudit approached the ruler, offering him wine and cheese until he fell asleep. Seizing her moment, she severed his head and brought it back to Yerushalayim. Initially accused of impropriety, she silenced her detractors by displaying the evidence of her act. The community cried out *Shema Yisrael*, and the Greeks, hearing the triumphant cry and seeing their leader's demise, fled in terror. Yehudit's bravery is commemorated in the custom of eating dairy foods during Chanukah and many women refrain from work while the candles burn.

Chana, another Chanukah heroine, demonstrated remarkable spiritual strength. As her seven sons faced torture for refusing to bow to the Greek ruler's idol, Chana encouraged each of them to remain steadfast in their faith. To her youngest son, who was urged to stoop for the ruler's ring as an act of idol worship, she declared, "Tell your ancestor Avraham, 'You bound one son upon an altar, but I bound seven.'" Her profound courage and unwavering faith in Hashem transcended her maternal instinct, inspiring generations with her heroic selfless devotion.

A contemporary perspective offers nuanced insight into heroism. Bill Moyers, a renowned journalist, once interviewed Joseph Campbell, author of *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. In their discussion, Moyers asked why so many cultures and stories are centered around the hero archetype. Campbell explained that heroes are individuals who achieve something extraordinary or dedicate themselves to a cause greater than themselves. He described two types of heroic deeds: the physical deed, where the hero performs an act of courage or saves a life, and the spiritual deed, where the hero transcends

ordinary human experience and returns with a transformative message.

The heroism of Yehudit closely parallels the construct of the physical deed in John Campbell's theory – her strength and courage led her to risk her life to confront and eliminate the Greek ruler. Chana exemplifies the concept of the spiritual deed. Her bravery was internal, rooted in faith and devotion, as she inspired her sons to sacrifice their lives for Torah and Hashem. Campbell's framework resonates deeply with these women's acts of physical and spiritual courage: a hero is someone who has given their life to something greater than themselves.

The phrase, "בְּיָמֵינוּ הַזֶּה, בְּזְמַן הַזֶּה," in those days, in this time," bridges past and present, reminding us that the heroism of Chanukah is not confined to history. Just as Yehudit and Chana rose to extraordinary challenges, today we witness soldiers, families, and communities demonstrating unparalleled bravery in the defense of Israel. These modern-day Maccabees remind us that heroism is found not only in great moments of history but also in everyday acts of courage and unity. As we light the *menorah*, we recognize their sacrifices and are called to reflect on our own roles – to strengthen our communities, support those who stand on the front lines on the battlefield and at home, to ensure that the light of faith burns brightly, בְּזְמַן הַזֶּה, today.



Rebbetzin Dr. Adina Shmidman is the director of the OU Women's Initiative. She and her husband, Rabbi Avraham Shmidman, are Rabbi and Rebbetzin at the Lower Merion Synagogue in Bala Cynwyd, PA.

PRIVATE LIGHT, PUBLIC SIGHT: THE DUAL NATURE OF THE MENORAH

RABBI SHAUL FELDMAN

Chanukah embodies Judaism's resilience through history, reflecting both physical resistance to oppression and spiritual resistance to assimilation. It commemorates not only the Maccabees' military victory over Greek rule, but also the Jewish people's determination to preserve its tradition against the pull of Hellenistic culture. Each year, through the *mitzvah* of the Chanukah candles, we reenact this ancient assertion of identity and faith.

The essence of Chanukah is captured in the Talmud (*Shabbat* 21b) with the phrase "*Mitzvat Chanukah, ner ish u'beito*, the commandment of Chanukah is a light for each household." While this *mitzvah* involves the physical act of lighting candles, it represents more than just a ritual – it forms the foundation of the entire holiday. The lighting of the *menorah* is so central to Chanukah that one must either kindle the flames personally or have someone light on their behalf to fulfill the obligation, while adding additional candles each night enhances the basic *mitzvah*.

In another section of the Talmud (*Shabbat* 21a), the language shifts when discussing the placement of the *menorah*: "*Mitzvah lehanicha al petach beito mibachutz*, it is a *mitzvah* to place the *menorah* at the entrance of the house, on the outside." Here, the focus is on the placement rather than the act of lighting. The distinction between "*Mitzvat Chanukah*" and "*mitzvah*" underscores that while the act of lighting is the essence of the holiday, the placement relates to the public dimension of the *mitzvah*.

The *Rishonim* debate the interpretation of the placement described in the Talmud. Rashi argues that the essence of lighting the candles lies in *pirsumei nisa*, publicizing the miracle, and interprets "*mibachutz*" to mean placing the *menorah* outside the doorway within the courtyard. In Talmudic times, homes often opened into courtyards, which then led to public streets. Rashi specifically notes that the *menorah* is not to be placed directly in a public area.

Tosafot (according to the Maharam) disagree with Rashi, suggesting that the

Talmud addresses homes without courtyards, where the *menorah* should be placed directly outside the door. Tosafot contend that if there is a courtyard, the *menorah* should be positioned at the courtyard's entrance, closer to the public domain (*reshut harabim*).

The Rashba offers a unique interpretation based on a passage in *Bava Kama*. In this passage, Rav Yehuda rules that if a passerby is injured by a Chanukah candle placed in the public domain, the owner is not liable because placing the *menorah* there fulfills the *mitzvah* of Chanukah. From this ruling, the Rashba concludes that the ideal placement for the *menorah* is fully in the public domain – not just outside one's home, but beyond even the courtyard, making it entirely visible to the public.

In summary, Rashi holds that the *menorah* belongs outside the entrance to the home, even when there is a courtyard. Tosafot argues for placement at the boundary of the courtyard, just before the public domain. The Rashba, however, insists that the *menorah* should be positioned entirely in the public domain.

The Talmud in *Bava Batra* provides important historical context that raises a challenge to Rashi's view about *menorah* placement. It explains that shared courtyards in ancient times were designed with gates and doors – structures that each resident was required to help fund – specifically to maintain privacy from public view. This detail creates a logical problem for Rashi's interpretation that the *menorah* should be placed in the courtyard to publicize the miracle: if courtyards were deliberately shielded from public view, how could placing the *menorah* there effectively share the miracle with the public? This supports the argument that placing the *menorah* directly in the public domain would better fulfill the goal of publicizing the miracle.

The Talmud explains that those in apartments should place their *menorah* in a window visible to the public domain. However, during times of danger or persecution, the *menorah* may be placed on a table inside one's home. The Talmud

uses the term "*v'dayo*, and it is sufficient," to make an important point about the *mitzvah's* essence – while public display is ideal, the fundamental obligation is fulfilled through the act of lighting itself, regardless of where the *menorah* is placed. Rav Kook elaborates that *נר הטהור* is also a time that your spiritual views can't be heard, during those times for sure one must light the fire internally and strengthen his surroundings.

Rashi's interpretation carries a profound message. Placing the *menorah* just outside the door symbolizes the inner strength required to make an external impact. To influence a broader society, we must first fortify our internal foundations – our homes, families, and communities. Similarly, modern Israel must cultivate unity among its diverse "tribes" to achieve societal harmony. Former Israeli President Reuven Rivlin emphasized the need for unity among Israel's different communities. Strengthening these internal connections allows for a broader societal impact.

Chanukah teaches us that public influence begins with internal growth and unity. When our values and identity are strong at home, we can effectively project them outward, just as the light of the *menorah* spreads beyond the home to publicize the miracle. Rabbi Akiva famously teaches: "*ואהבת לרעך כמוך*, love your neighbor as yourself." When we value and strengthen ourselves internally, we can truly appreciate and impact others.



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

JEW'S with VIEWS

We asked five accomplished Jews from around the world: What part of tefillah has become more meaningful to you during this war?



Rabbanit Hannah Abrams

Rosh Hashanah 5784, I sat round the table reading the *tefillot* on the *simanim* joking that practically every single one is about destroying enemies. I told over *derashot* that they are really about the *yetzer hara*, because what enemies do we really have? Rosh Hashanah 5785, I prayed fiercely for each and every one, crying out that Hashem should destroy our enemies once and for all.

This war has brought home to me some of the central themes of *tefillah* and perhaps even more so, *Tehillim*. Every other *perek* is about fighting enemies or *davening* for victory and I read them now with a deep *kavanah* that I never had before.

But alongside my newfound *kavanah* is another *tefillah*, asking G-d to please go back to that place of safety and naivete and to be able once more to make jokes about carrots and leeks.

Rabbanit Hannah Abrams is the Director of the Chief Rabbi's Shalem Fellowship and a Mizrahi UK Fellow. Hannah and her husband Rabbi Yoni live in London on shlichut with their three children.



Rabbi Jacob Bernstein

T*efillah* has served as a needed expression of my inner world as I reacted to the fluctuating positive or terrible news flooding our world over the past year and a few months. The lack of news would often give me pause, leaving me holding my breath until the next announcement or siren.

In this era of uncertainty, beginning my day with the constant refrain “*Modeh ani*” has served as a reminder not to take anything for granted and to appreciate each day we have to serve Hashem. Upon waking up each morning, we become quickly aware of being before the Master of the Universe with Whom we have a relationship – לְפָנֶיךָ, before You – even though His Name is not mentioned in the prayer. We begin with thanks rather than ourselves or our needs, remembering to live a life of gratitude to our Creator for giving us another chance to serve Him.

Rav Hutner pointed out (*Kuntras V'Zot Chanukah* 2:2) that the word הוֹדָוָה can both mean confession and appreciation because every act of gratitude includes a level of acknowledgment that we are lacking in our self-sufficiency. This war has made me acutely aware of my limitations and the reliance we have daily on Hashem, our heroic *chayalim*, and so many others doing incredible things here in our Homeland and around the world. Each day I say “thank You” for another chance to serve Him.

Rabbi Jacob Bernstein currently serves as Director of Education and Strategy at NCSY Summer and Mashgiach Ruchani at Yeshivat Har Etzion. Jacob previously served as the Campus Rabbi at Yeshiva University's Beren Campus for Women. He and his wife Penina live with their five children in Alon Shvut.



Karen Hochhauser

This year I had several opportunities to spend Shabbat in *chutz laAretz*, where hearing the prayers for the State of Israel and *Chayalei Tzahal* brought me to tears. Growing up in America, I never really gave much thought to those words – they were just part of the service, one more page to be turned as we inched closer to *kiddush*. Now, however, I find it extraordinary that every *shul* in the Diaspora creates a sanctified moment where the reality of *Medinat Yisrael* as *רֵאשִׁית צְמִיחַת אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל*, the tangible evidence of the redemption blooming before our very eyes, is apparent.

When language, time zones and politics melt away and love, concern and hope for the State of Israel, its soldiers and its future come pouring out. To be a Jew means that you know, somewhere deep inside, that Israel is your home. It is not “their” country, it is *my* country, our country. It is who we are, what we fight for, what we have yet to become.

And while those in New Jersey or Illinois or California might not be living that reality in the present, how incredible it is that they willingly step into those shoes for a moment – by closing their eyes to pray for our beloved *Medinat Yisrael*.

Karen Hochhauser serves as the Co-Director of Nishmat’s Miriam Glaubach Center, which educates and certifies Yoatzot Halacha throughout the Diaspora and supports communities in hiring them. She comes to this role with twenty five years of experience in Jewish education and administration, most recently as the Director of Student Affairs at Tiferet, a seminary in Ramat Beit Shemesh. Karen lives in Beit Shemesh with her husband Dr. Carl Hochhauser and their five children.



Andres Meyer

We are a privileged generation. We are used to reading many stories and *tefillot* as reminders of our “ancestors,” but we are privileged that these *tefillot* don’t always speak concretely to us.

In my case, the simplicity of “סוּמֶךְ נֹפְלִים, וְרוֹפֵא חוֹלִים וּמְתִיר אֲסוּרִים, He supports the fallen, heals the sick, sets captives free” is a verse we no longer have to search for a way to understand.

Every *Amidah* now brings to mind the image of one of our *kedoshim* or the relatives of the hostages.

We are still a privileged generation, but now perhaps we can appreciate this privilege more and use it to grow in our identity.

Andres Meyer leads Mizrahi’s activities in Chile, is a proud husband and father of 3.



Rabbanit Sally Mayer

At the end of every *shemoneh esrei* we say “*modim*,” and two phrases in this *tefillah* have taken on special meaning for me since the war began.

We thank Hashem for “our lives which are in Your hands,” and I think of so many things that we no longer take for granted. My students and I visited Sderot with Mizrahi in May on the day that school reopened, and we fell silent as we listened to the voices of children playing, sounds that had not been heard there in the previous seven months. We thank Hashem for what used to seem routine, and even our very lives are no longer a given.

We also speak of “Your miracles that are with us every day.” How many miracles we have seen this year, through so many stories of miraculous rescues and against-the-odds recoveries. Our downstairs neighbor was severely injured in a battle in Gaza, his life hanging in the balance as his wife and young children and our whole community prayed desperately for his salvation. He is miraculously alive and well, undergoing rehabilitation for his injuries. No less a miracle for which we are thankful is the strength and fortitude of all of the bereaved families, who are a source of inspiration and unity in *Am Yisrael*.

We pray that Hashem will continue to show us miracles and bring us victory and peace, and the ultimate salvation.

Rabbanit Sally Mayer serves as Rosh Midrasha at Ohr Torah Stone’s Midreshet Lindenbaum. She has worked as an editor for the new Koren translation of the Talmud. A Midreshet Lindenbaum alumna, Sally holds a BA from Stern College, an MA in Medieval Jewish History from Yeshiva University, and studied at Drisha Institute in the Scholars Circle Program. She lives in Neve Daniel with her husband and their six children.

A Light Unto the Nations: The Enduring Legacy of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Sivan Rahav-Meir

Four years have passed since the loss of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, and one year since the outbreak of the Swords of Iron War. In these turbulent times, we can only imagine the wisdom he might have shared, the guidance he would have offered. His voice is profoundly missed, especially now when his words could have offered clarity and hope. This longing to “hear” his perspective propelled me on a journey.

To Be a Jew is a booklet that was born from a deep desire to find meaning in the current historic moment. Distributed freely across the globe, with over a quarter of a million copies printed in Hebrew and English – and soon to be available in additional languages – it shares the timeless lessons of Rabbi Sacks with all who seek them. Below is a small selection of his enduring wisdom; for the full booklet, available as a free download, visit sivanrahavmeir.com/to-be-a-Jew.

As we mark his *yahrzeit*, the 20th of Marcheshvan, may these words be an elevation for his soul and a source of strength and faith for us all in these challenging days.

Growth That Arises From Crisis

Every tragedy in Jewish history was followed by a new wave of creativity. The

destruction of the First Temple led to the renewal of the Torah in the life of the nation, exemplified by the work of Ezra and Nechemiah. The destruction of the Second Temple led to the great works of the oral tradition, *Midrash*, *Mishnah* and the two Talmuds. The massacres of Jewish communities in northern Europe during the First Crusade led to the emergence of *Chassidei Ashkenaz*, the German-Jewish pietists.

The medieval encounter with Christianity led to a renewal of Bible commentary. The meeting with Islam inspired a renaissance of Jewish philosophy. The Spanish Expulsion was followed by the mystical revival in Safed in the sixteenth century. The greatest catastrophe of all led to the greatest rebirth: a mere three years after standing eyeball to eyeball with the angel of death at Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen and Treblinka, the Jewish people responded by their greatest collective affirmation of life in two thousand years, with the proclamation of the State of Israel. [...] Jews [do not] give way to defeat or despair. They are the people of hope.

The Chinese ideogram for “crisis” also means “opportunity.” Perhaps that is why Chinese civilization has survived for so long. Hebrew, however, is more hopeful still. The word for crisis, *mashber*, also means a ‘childbirth chair.’ The Jewish

reflex is to see difficult times as birth pangs. Something new is being born.

(Rabbi Sacks, *Future Tense*, p. 54, 55)

We cannot change the past, but by remembering the past we can change the future. And though we cannot bring the dead back to life, we can help ensure that they did not die in vain.

(Ibid. p. 88)

A Spiritual Response to Terrorism

The first Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben Gurion, said, “In Israel, to be a realist you have to believe in miracles.” For Jews, faith is as necessary as life itself. Without it the Jewish people would simply not have survived.

In 2001, after the Oslo peace process had broken down and the suicide bombings had begun, I told the then Israeli ambassador: “In the past, Israel’s enemies have tried to put it in a military crisis and failed. Then they tried to put it in a political crisis and failed. Now they are about to put it in a spiritual crisis, and they may succeed.”

That, ultimately, is what twenty-first-century terror is about, and Israel has been its most consistent target. The suicide bombings brought war from the battlefield to the buses of Haifa, the shops of Tel Aviv and the restaurants of Jerusalem.



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt”l (1948–2020) was a global religious leader, philosopher, award-winning author, and respected moral voice. He was the laureate of the 2016 Templeton Prize in recognition of his “exceptional contributions to affirming life’s spiritual dimension.” Described by HM King Charles III as “a light unto this nation” and by former UK Prime Minister Sir Tony Blair as “an intellectual giant,” Rabbi Sacks was a frequent and sought-after contributor to radio, television, and the press, both in Britain and around the world. He served as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth for 22 years, between 1991 and 2013.

There were times when Jewish parents sent their children on the school bus not knowing whether they would see them alive again. The missiles of Hezbollah and Hamas placed two-thirds of Israel – the north and south – within their range. As I write, there are seven-year-old children in Sderot who have only known safety in a bomb shelter. The delegitimation of Israel among some media, academic and NGO circles has left its people feeling abandoned and alone. The aim is to intimidate and create despair, and it needs immense resources of faith and courage not to be affected. That is the spiritual crisis.

(Ibid. pp. 18-19)

Where is Man?

When I first stood at Auschwitz-Birkenau the question that haunted me was not, “Where was G-d?” G-d was in the command, “You shall not murder.” G-d was in the words, “You shall not oppress the stranger.” G-d was saying to humanity, “Your brother’s blood is crying to Me from the ground.” G-d did not stop the first humans eating forbidden fruit. He did not stop Cain committing murder. He did not stop the Egyptians enslaving the Israelites. G-d does not save us from ourselves. That, according to the Talmud, is why creating man was such a risk that the angels advised against it. The question that haunts me after the Holocaust, as it does today in this new age of chaos, is “Where is man?”

(Rabbi Sacks, *Judaism’s Life-Changing Ideas*, p. 7)

Everything Has a Purpose

Life is meaningful. We are not mere accidents of matter, generated by a universe that came into being for no reason and will one day, for no reason, cease to be. We are here because a loving G-d brought the universe, and life, and us, into existence – a G-d Who knows our fears, hears our prayers, believes in us more than we believe in ourselves, Who forgives us when we fail, lifts us when we fall and gives us the strength to overcome despair. The historian Paul Johnson once wrote: “No



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt”l and Sivan Rahav-Meir.

people has ever insisted more firmly than the Jews that history has a purpose and humanity a destiny.”

(Rabbi Sacks, *Ceremony & Celebration*, p. 22)

Each Person Has a Mission

G-d enters our lives as a call from the future. It is as if we hear Him beckoning to us from the far horizon of time, urging us to take a journey and undertake a task that, in ways we cannot fully understand, we were created for. That is the meaning of the word vocation, literally “a calling”, a mission, a task to which we are summoned.

We are not here by accident. **We are here because G-d wanted us to be, and because there is a task we were meant to fulfill.** Discovering what that is, is not easy, and often takes many years and false starts.

(Rabbi Sacks, *Studies in Spirituality*, p. 24)

Shabbat: A Palace in Time

Shabbat. The day of rest when we give our marriages and families what they

most need and are most starved of in the contemporary world, namely, time. While making a television documentary for the BBC on the state of family life in Britain, I took the person who was then Britain’s leading expert on childcare, Penelope Leach, to a Jewish primary school on a Friday morning.

There she saw the children enacting in advance what they would see that evening around the family table. There were the five-year-old mother and father blessing the five-year-old children with the five-year-old grandparents looking on. She was fascinated by this whole institution, and she asked the children what they most enjoyed about the Sabbath. One five-year-old boy turned to her and said, “It’s the only night of the week when Daddy doesn’t have to rush off.” As we walked away from the school when the filming was over, she turned to me and said, “Chief Rabbi, that Sabbath of yours is saving their parents’ marriages.”

(Rabbi Sacks, *Morality*, p. 73)



Sivan Rahav-Meir is a media personality and lecturer. She lives in Jerusalem with her husband, Yedidya, and their five children, and serves as World Mizrahi’s Scholar-in-Residence. She is a primetime anchor on Channel 2 News, has a column in Israel’s largest newspaper, Yediot Acharonot, and a weekly radio show on Galei Tzahal (Army Radio). She is a member of the Mizrahi Speakers Bureau (www.mizrachi.org/speakers). (HEADSHOT: ARNON BUSANI)

20 TOP THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT BEING A MATCHMAKER

Aleeza Ben Shalom

From *Yenta* to the *Bachelor*, being a matchmaker isn't what you think.

If you think matchmaking is antiquated, it may be time to reboot your relationship barometer. While many people think of *Fiddler on the Roof* when they think of matchmaking, the reality is quite different. A simple Google search reveals a plethora of websites dedicated to finding a match [just like Shagririm Balev], getting certified to make matches, and information on the history of matchmaking.

Setting up friends with other friends is a time-tested way to create and build relationships. You don't have to be a professional to be a matchmaker. You need flexibility, creativity, passion, and insight into other people. This is an awesome job (or hobby) that allows for flexible hours, lasting satisfaction, and the chance to use your people skills in a challenging and novel way. Here are 20 of my top things to know about being a matchmaker.

1. Being single is hard enough, so be nice to people. Seems obvious, but it isn't.
2. People are naturally different, match couples based on similarities. Yes opposites attract, but not recommended. Much better to match based on the concept 'like attracts like'.
3. Look for what someone tells you they want, not for what you think they need.
4. Don't advise ending a relationship too soon. When in doubt suggest they continue going out.

5. Don't say, "I know the perfect person for you." You don't know it's perfect and you lose credibility if the match goes sour.

6. Do say, "I have someone in mind for you, would you like to hear about him/her?"

7. Get curious about the person you want to set up. Ask him/her open ended questions to learn about who he/she is before trying to set someone up.

8. Listen, listen, listen. (Close your mouth. Open your ears.)

9. Constructive criticism is still criticism, so be sensitive.

10. Don't talk with others about the person you are setting up. That's private information.

11. Don't set up dating profiles, set up people. Try to meet someone in person before you set them up (in person is best, but Skype will do).

12. "No, I don't want to be set up!" This means don't set them up. Find someone else for your matchmaking experiment.

13. Think before you act. That really goes for everything. Just sayin'.

14. Your tone of voice matters. Speak nicely (especially when someone declines your awesome date idea).

15. When your first (and second, and third...) couple gets married, celebrate your success. L'chaim!

16. Lead by example. Single or married, make sure you are a shining example and

in a healthy relationship, or healthfully single.

17. You will fail more often than you succeed. Don't let it get you down.

18. Keep trying! But don't quit your day job just yet to be a professional matchmaker.

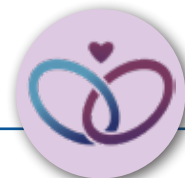
19. Sometimes people will get upset with you for the suggestions you make. Expect this and you won't be disappointed.

20. Don't be a know-it-all (even if you do, in fact, know it all).



Aleeza Ben Shalom

is a soulmate clarity coach, she was on Netflix's "Jewish Matchmaking" and is an in-demand speaker, expert, and author of numerous books.



Shagririm Balev

is a super successful social online matchmaking initiative led by Rav Rimom.



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OLIM IN THEIR OWN WORDS



"Reflecting on my time here is particularly difficult this year.

The ongoing war has a lot to do with it. The pit in my stomach of a year full of reading 'cleared for publication,' a year of praying that our soldiers and hostages be brought back home in body and soul. Of dancing between joy and pain – often at the same exact time. Oh how much praying we've done. Feeling encouraged by the news and immediately discouraged by the next ones. How many acts of kindness and mitzvot for the sake of our people? How many conversations I've had with family and friends outside of Israel to ensure them that even though things are not okay, somehow we are still okay.

At the end of Sukkot, we begin to pray for rain in Israel. Prayer functions in a way that it actually revitalizes our day to day. We are a little more grateful, a little more patient, a little more grounded. Little by little with each word that inspires action, the vessels in our life to receive the blessings of our prayers are formed.

In the same way that rain is a product of the water that evaporates into the clouds that then returns as rain – our prayers are the blessings themselves descending into our lives. And yes, we are always Answered: either 'yes,' 'not yet,' or 'no because I have something better for you.'

A few friends asked me, 'what is my takeaway after 3 years?' and the thought I had was: learning to be patient. Patient in seeing my prayers and dream of living in Israel become real. Patience in the process of finding a community, making friends, finding a job, and in the right time – a wife. Patience in the journey of coming closer to HaShem and myself. Patience in knowing that even with the scary thunderstorm outside, these might be blessings in disguise. That the sun will come out and the clouds will restart their process. That even when HaShem flooded the world with rains, something more refined and elevated was waiting for us on the other side."

Meyer Grunberg

"I made Aliyah in the middle of my seminary year at Harova. My environment that year definitely influenced my Aliyah, but the longer I live here, the more reasons I see to stay!

The combination of learning Torah in the Old City of Yerushalayim and having inspiring teachers who are so passionate about living in Israel helped me make the decision. Essentially, I really feel a true pull to the land, and feel that all Jews have an intrinsic connection to Israel. I completed a year and a half of Sherut Leumi. I wanted to serve Israel while simultaneously growing in my Judaism and connection to God so I felt that Sherut Leumi was the best way for me to do that!

I spent a year doing Sherut Leumi as a Madricha at MTC in Netanya. The following year, I did half a year of Sherut Leumi in an urgent care center in Jerusalem. The second half of that year, I spent becoming a certified Yoga and Pilates instructor. Shortly after, I got married to Yosef Goldstein, a current Lone Soldier, and moved to Tel Aviv! I recently opened a women's-only fitness studio called StudioSoul. StudioSoul is located in Tel Aviv and is an oasis for women to feel comfortable to express themselves through fitness and dance. We offer multiple types of classes ranging from high intensity to low impact. I'm currently the owner and sole instructor, so Baruch Hashem, my plate is very full!

My favorite part about Israel is its innate holiness! Israel isn't just a place that our ancestors once lived in, it's currently a place flowing with the Shechina of Hashem! My advice to gap year students considering staying in Israel is just do it! The plan will come."

Shuli Goldstein



HAMIZRACHI

COMPILED BY: JACQUI AUSTEN
DESIGNED BY: LEAH RUBIN

KIDS CORNER

Chanukah Search & Find

Search among the Chanukah objects and find the 6 objects from the top row. Each object has only one exact match!



FIND THE WORDS!

Using each letter only once, find the words with the amount of letters prompted under the line!

SUFGANIYOT

3 letters

3 letters

4 letters

4 letters

4 letters

5 letters

5 letters

6 letters

6 letters



MEET ELYNOR "JOHNNIE" RUDNICK



April 2, 1923 – May 25, 1996 (16 Nisan 5683 – 7 Sivan 5756)

Born in the United States, by the age of seventeen, Elynor Rudnick had already earned the title of champion equestrian. Elynor – often called “Johnnie” – was a pilot, aviation mechanic, and had a private flying license. By twenty-two, Elynor had founded a flight school. She put the school on the line when she made it available, clandestinely, to pilots from the Land of Israel’s air force who were preparing for the War of Independence. However, the United States had a policy of non-intervention, and would not get involved in the war between the Jews and the Arabs. It was clear, then, that the course must take place under cover. Thirteen candidates were invited to join. Four months into the course, the police arrived and accused Elynor of smuggling airplane parts overseas; she had been helping the Jews’ war effort by dismantling planes to smuggle them to the Land of Israel. She still managed to help them graduate and get their wings and then escape to join the military efforts in Israel. She was doubtless one of the pillars of Israel’s air force, then known as the Haganah’s Air Service. Forty years after the course ended, in 1986, Air Force Commander Amos Lapidot invited Elynor to the Hazor air force base and gave her a medal in recognition of her service.



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



DID YOU KNOW?

- Chanukah actually happened AFTER Purim, historically!
- The world’s largest chanukiah is 32 feet tall and at Fifth Avenue and 59th street in New York City.
- The average Israeli will eat 4 *sufganiyot* over Chanukah coming to over 5.2 million *sufganiyot* eaten over Chanukah!

Test Your Knowledge



What were the names of the famous Maccabim (5)?

What direction are the candles lit on Chanukah?

What modern country was Antiochus IV and many of the Greeks based in during the Chanukah time period?

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

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LATKE RECIPE FOR CHANUKAH

INGREDIENTS

- ⇒ 4 medium potatoes
- ⇒ 1 large onion
- ⇒ 2 eggs
- ⇒ 2 tsp salt
- ⇒ 1 tsp black pepper
- ⇒ 1 tsp baking powder
- ⇒ 3 tbsps flour
- ⇒ Oil for frying

INSTRUCTIONS

1. With help from an adult, use a food processor or a hand grater to grate the potatoes and onions and then put in a cheese cloth or hand towel and squeeze out the extra liquid from them.
2. Once you have gotten rid of most of the liquid, place them into a big bowl and add in the rest of the ingredients (except the oil), then mix it all together well.
3. With the help of an adult, put a pan on medium heat with enough oil to cover the entire bottom of the pan.
4. Once the oil is hot, take scoops of your potato mixture and carefully place it into the oil.
5. Allow for each latke to fry on the first side for 2 minutes and then flip and fry for one more minute on the other side.
6. Once cooked, remove and place on a paper towel or brown paper bag to absorb the extra oil. Once finished, serve with sour cream or apple sauce and enjoy!



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