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*Through your blood
you shall live*



**THE FUNERAL OF CAPTAIN DANIEL PEREZ HY"D
WHO FELL IN BATTLE WHILE DEFENDING HIS PEOPLE**

Dedicated in memory of Daniel Shimon hy"d ben HaRav Doron Eliezer and Shelley Sharon Perez



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The Bitter Path to Redemption

Since October 7, I've struggled to learn Gemara. I find it difficult to stay focused on the details of the *mitzvot*; as essential as they are, every time I learn a *sugya*, my mind wanders. The Gemara itself teaches that "One should always study that part of Torah which is his heart's desire, as it is said, 'But whose desire is in the law of Hashem'" (*Avodah Zara* 19a). Rav Kook compares the many types of Torah to food; though we might love certain foods, there are times when we need something else to satisfy us. With Torah, we must be "sensitive to the moment" and study the part of Torah that "will lift our spirits" (*Ikvei HaTzon*).

Why must we go through this war? Why must so many heroic Jews suffer so terribly? As Jews, we take pride in avoiding the question of *why* (*la-mah*), focusing instead on *what* (*le-mah*) G-d is calling us to do. Until redemption fully arrives, we won't have all the answers. But "*libi omer li*, my heart tells me" that I must try to understand the broad contours of G-d's plan. For that, I must turn to the Torah that explains the bigger picture of *Am Yisrael's* painful journey: Tanach.

"O L-rd! Why have You harmed this people? Why have You sent me? Since I have come to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has harmed this people, and You have not saved Your people" (*Shemot* 5:22-23). Moshe, of course, had a fair point. Hadn't the people suffered enough? Why did G-d send him to Pharaoh, only to make the situation even worse than it already was? And if Moshe could ask this question, can't we?

G-d responds by urging Moshe to step back and see the bigger picture. "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh, for with a mighty hand he will send them out, and with a mighty hand he will drive them out of his land" (*Shemot* 6:1). In other words: "Do not look only at this particular moment in time. Yes, My people are suffering terribly at this moment, but their suffering is necessary to bring a salvation far greater than anything you can imagine."

"For distress shall come like a river; the spirit of Hashem is wondrous in it. And a redeemer shall come to Zion..." (*Yishayahu* 59:19-20). Radak explains: "For distress shall come like a river' refers to the war of Gog and Magog, who will bring distress to the Land of Israel. But then the spirit of G-d will arrive and erase them from the world... and then 'a redeemer shall come to Zion.'" G-d is quite clear, in this verse and many others - redemption will come through suffering. But *why* must Israel endure the excruciating pain of war before she finally enjoys peace?

"It is a general principle: whenever G-d wishes to elevate a person or the world, whenever G-d wishes to bring good to the world, it only occurs through a deep and hidden plan. For this reason pain inevitably occurs before the good. As the Sages themselves say, 'G-d gave three gifts to Israel, and all of them came through suffering. These are: The Torah, the Land of Israel and the world to come'" (*Ramchal, Da'at Tevunot* 146).

Painful as it is, there is a direct correlation between suffering and greatness. Reflecting on the premature death of her parents from illness and the terrible hardships she and her brother were forced to endure throughout her childhood, the author Mary McCarthy (whose mother was Jewish) writes: "If they had both lived, we would have been a united Catholic family, rather middle class and wholesome... I can see myself married to an Irish lawyer and playing golf and bridge, making occasional retreats and subscribing to a Catholic Book Club. I suspect I would be rather stout... The fact is, Kevin and I are the only members of the present generation of our family who have done anything out of the ordinary... Was it a good thing, then, that our parents were 'taken away,' as if by some higher design?" (*Memories of a Catholic Girlhood*, 16-17).

As Rav Reuven Sasson writes in his essays of encouragement for soldiers, true growth requires resistance. When good is not progressing and fails to actualize its

potential, forces of evil oppose the good and force it to awaken, move forward and develop in ways it never imagined it could.

This is the answer to Moshe's question. "But as much as they would afflict them, so did they multiply and so did they gain strength" (*Shemot* 1:12). The more the Egyptians persecuted us, the more children we had and the stronger we became. Painful as it was, the affliction was necessary to become the nation we are meant to be.

G-d has chosen our generation for greatness. The path may be bitter, but great days await.

Elie Mischel



Rabbi Elie Mischel
is the Editor of HaMizrachi magazine.

In Your Blood You Shall Live

Rabbi Doron Perez

Adapted from Rav Doron's hesped delivered at the funeral of Daniel hy"d.

Daniel – how is it possible for us to get through this funeral after 163 days of suffering?

We decided that it is possible, just as we were somehow able to have your injured brother Yonatan's wedding to Galya, although you had been missing for 10 days.

How did we do it? We did it by focusing on what we have as opposed to what is sorely missing. We had Yonatan who was saved on that day and we decided to focus on him.

Today, Mom and I decided to focus on what we have.

We don't yet have your body, which is unfortunately still held by the barbaric terrorists of Hamas. We will do all we can to bring it back for a dignified Jewish burial, but there is still a long journey to bring you home.

But we do have your blood.

The blood-stained shirt of your army uniform with your rank, and blood found in and around your tank that we were able to bury. We want to honor you, our son, a hero of Israel, and not focus today at all on the darkness and the loss. We have the rest of our lives to process that.

And so, our dear son, we decided to salute you, to bow our heads to you, to appreciate your self-sacrifice and courage. We came to honor you, all the members of your team, who ran with you like lions to

protect others with incredible courage: Tomer Leibovich, Itay Chen, may Hashem avenge their death, and to differentiate between the deceased and the living, Matan Angrest, who is also held hostage in Gaza – we are praying for you Matan, Matan Shachar ben Anat. Stay strong and healthy, we are doing all we can for you to come home speedily, safe and sound, and in complete health.

Daniel, you saved so many lives with unwavering dedication to your mission. Former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett came to see us just before we left for your funeral. He said that he believed your two-hour battle was amongst the most heroic he had ever heard of. You saved people in the Nachal Oz army base and you saved people in Kibbutz Nachal Oz. You know what, Daniel? It's possible that you saved not only generations of people you don't know, but perhaps you even saved the life of your brother, Yonatan. After all, Yonatan also fought later that day in Nachal Oz and was injured 100 yards from where you were taken. Had you not done what you did, who knows how many more terrorists may have ambushed Yonatan in the base that day. We don't fully understand the ways of Heaven.

From within all the pain, *Ribono Shel Olam*, we thank You for saving Yonatan on that day. I don't know why Daniel was chosen for this mission, and why it ended the way it did, but we are grateful for the great kindness You showed to Yonatan.

Blood. Blood is what we buried. The Torah teaches us that "blood is the life of a person" (Devarim 12:23). The vibrance, energy and liquid of life. And so it is absolutely forbidden to consume it.

And it is most certainly forbidden to spill it. Daniel, your blood was spilled, and we have buried it. But it was others who murdered you and spilled your blood. You and your friends fought until your last drops of blood to prevent the spilling of more blood.

Blood, דָּם, is the very essence of man. The Hebrew word for man, "אָדָם," *Adam*, is rooted in the word "דָּם," *dam*, in blood. In Hebrew, a person is termed "בֶּשֶׂר וְדָם," flesh and blood." Blood is life. They shed the pure and holy blood of you and your crew and in the process destroyed their own humanity. As Hashem told Noach, "He who spills the blood of man, his blood will be spilled, for man was made in G-d's image" (Bereishit 9:6). Those who spill blood destroy G-d's image – and they themselves will be destroyed.

You formed and are part of a "בְּרִית דָּמִים," a covenant of blood." Of brothers in arms, of mutual responsibility. It is the shared covenant of the Jewish nation, of fate and destiny written in blood.

The *brit milah*, the covenant of blood, is bound up with the covenant of the Land. "And I will give you and your seed after you the land of your sojournings, the entire land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, and I will be to them for a G-d" (Bereishit 17:8). At Mount Sinai, too,

there was “דָּם הַבְּרִית, a covenant of blood”: “Behold the blood of the covenant, which Hashem has formed with you” (Shemot 24:8).

The bloody experience described by the prophet refers to our experience of the Exodus from Egypt: “When I passed by you and saw you wallowing in your blood, I said to you: ‘In your blood you shall live.’ Yes, I said to you: ‘In your blood you shall live’” (Yechezkel 16:6).

This verse, appearing in the *Haggadah*, makes a dual reference to blood. It refers, according to our Sages, to the blood of the Pesach sacrifice and of circumcision – dual blood covenants of Jewish fate and destiny.

We as Jews have an unshakable blood bond of common fate. And so I appeal to the government and parliament of Israel: there is a blood covenant between you and all our citizens. We trust that you will return all the fallen, amongst them the bodies of our son Daniel and Itay. We are relying on you to return Matan and all the soldiers, all the citizens, elderly and children. There is a covenant of blood between us.

To our leaders, and all our beloved people: The fresh blood of our son is the blood of our shared covenant. It reminds us of the blood of the *brit milah* and the beginning of our collective journey which binds us all together. We must never go back to what happened before October 7, before Simchat Torah, when Hamas painfully reminded us who we are. There are still 134 hostages trapped in Gaza, and to an extent, *all* of us are trapped there, for we are one nation. We are not “a fragile cobweb” as Nasrallah often says. We are not a weak society, but one built with bonds of love, mutual responsibility, swords of iron – the bonds of a blood covenant. This is not weakness, this is strength. “In your blood you shall live.”

I want to end with one final note about blood. I only noticed this year how similar blood is to wine and how interrelated they are in Judaism. The thing that is most similar in appearance to blood is wine. They are both thick blood-red liquid substances. Red wine is always the *halachic* preference for wine at all salient Jewish occasions. During the *brit milah*, when the blood of the baby is present, we drink red wine.

On Purim, when so much Jewish blood was almost spilled, there was also much wine present at all the many banquets in the *Megillah*. At the last moment we were saved from the spilling of blood and we drink lots of wine on Purim. Blood was transformed into wine of celebration.

At the *Seder*, we spill drops of wine, symbolizing blood which was spilled. We drink four cups of wine which punctuate the entire evening.

We completed our *shiva* on Purim. From within the darkness and pain we rose up and drank wine at our *Seudat Purim*. That is who we are as a nation – we are a people who know how to turn blood into wine. The difficulties and suffering, the *maror* and the *matzah*, the bitterness and bread of affliction, are eaten together with the delicious taste of the *Korban Pesach*, the celebration, and the wine. Bitterness ought never to define us. The challenge, pain and blood are all part of the story, but they are not the story itself. The story is one of resilience and redemption, of freedom and destiny.

We pray to Hashem: “Our Father, our King, do for the sake of the spilled blood of Your servants.”

As Your servant Moshe concluded in the *Ha'azinu* song: “The nations should acclaim G-d's people, for He will avenge the blood of His servants, wreak vengeance on His foes, and cleanse His people's Land” (Devarim 32:43).



We know that the power of life which we so deeply believe in will ultimately triumph over those who celebrate death. And the blood of the covenant that runs so deep, the blood of our son that we buried, this blood will overpower the spilling of blood. We know with certainty that those who believe we are all created in G-d's image will defeat those who have lost any semblance of that image.

Daniel – in your blood, you shall live.



Rabbi Doron Perez
is the Executive Chairman
of World Mizrahi.

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The World Mizrachi Movement

The leadership, professional staff, and its representatives in the National Institutions deeply mourn together with Executive Chairman **Rabbi Doron and Shelley Perez** on the falling of their son

Captain **Daniel Perez** hy" d

who fought with bravery and strength in defense of our people and our land on Simchat Torah morning.

May Hashem comfort the family amongst the mourners of Zion and Yerushalayim.

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Excerpts from the Hespeditim for Daniel Perez *hy”d*

After 163 agonizing days, the Perez family were informed by the IDF that Daniel had been killed on October 7th, Simchat Torah. The burial took place the next day, attended by thousands of people.

Here are translated excerpts from some of the hespedim delivered at the funeral.

Thanks to David Schlacht for the photos of the funeral.

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

We are in a difficult, challenging time. For those who were killed, taken captive and injured – we cry and are sad. But within that crying we must always remember that throughout our entire history they have tried to kill us, to murder us, but not once since the *churban* have we been able to defend ourselves.

Never was there a pogrom in which *Am Yisrael* got up and defended itself with glory and strength. We cry, but we are not weak. We're not pitiful, we're strong, we're *zoche* to live in the generation of redemption. Daniel, may Hashem avenge his blood, did not fall in Auschwitz or in Bergen Belsen. Daniel fell as a hero in the Israel Defense Forces. Daniel fell dressed in *bigdei kehunah*, the priestly garments and robes of royalty of the uniform of an IDF soldier.

In the beginning, they didn't know what happened and supposed that maybe he hid when they shot at him. Rav Doron, his father, told me: "I don't know what happened, but Daniel did not hide." And it turns out not only did he not hide, as terrorists were on the border fence he went out under fire in order to save the residents of the Otef (Gaza Envelope). Daniel fell as a hero.



Yonatan Perez

Daniel, my dear brother...

We stood on the roll call plaza of "*Bahad Echad*" (the IDF Officer School in Mitzpe Ramon) a year apart from each other. On the roll call plaza of *Bahad Echad* hangs, in large letters, the components of the Israeli officer. The first is responsibility for the mission – the fate of the campaign is in his hands. The second is being worthy of those he commands, responsibility to people. The third is a thorough professional who studies and teaches. The fourth is a daring and brave man of the field, and the fifth is one who possesses fresh, critical, and innovative thinking.

Daniel – on that Simchat Torah, the seventh of October, you understood the responsibility for the mission. You went out with your crew – Tomer, Itai and Matan – without clear orders. You fought at the border as well as in the fields between Gaza and Nachal Oz. You well understood that the success of the campaign was in your hands. You were worthy of those you commanded, and this was clearly and powerfully expressed that morning. You were a thorough professional who nurtured your professionalism, studying even during the weekends when you came home. That morning, we realized how daring and how brave you were. You hit the terrorists at long range and stormed forward into the fields and fought at short range to protect the *kibbutzim*. During the battle, you thought things through in a levelheaded way. You gave orders over the radio with confidence and professionalism.



Chief Rabbi David Lau

We have a wonderful generation – a generation of soldiers, a committed generation, a generation of people who will get up and do anything to protect the nation, to protect the Torah, and to protect the Land.

There is no contradiction between these three things – they all flow from the same Source: The people of Israel, the Torah of Israel and the Land of Israel.

You immigrated here as a child and stood up to fight for the nation from within Torah, on the day of Simchat Torah. On that day you went out to protect the nation, the land, and to uphold the honor of the State they came to attack, murder in, and wipe out.

But you and your friends went out with such dedication – together, willingly, to protect the State and to protect our home.



Shira Perez

Daniel. For five months we've waited to hear what happened to you. We were worried that you were suffering, that you were cold, not eating enough and experiencing unimaginable trauma.

But when the army came and told us the terrible news, a weight lifted from my heart because I knew that in the last 163 days you were alongside us throughout everything and looking after us. You saw from above the wedding of Galya and Yonatan. You were with me in every talk I gave about you, and you were with us at all times.

Daniel wrote in his diary that after his trip to Poland, he understood why it was so important to serve in the army and protect our homeland. Later on in the same entry, he wrote: "*Im lo ani, az mi?*" "If not me, then who?" These 5 words will accompany me for the rest of my life, as they accompanied you through the wonderful 22 years that you lived.

Daniel. You entered the heart of everyone who met you. You were an amazing brother, an exemplary friend, commander, soldier and person. You are an inspirational figure for all of the nation of Israel. I love you. We'll never stop crying, but I promise to keep your memory alive forever. Thank you for the merit of being the sister of a Hero of Israel.



Adina Perez

When I heard yesterday that Daniel had been murdered on the 7th, my mother held me in her arms and the first thing she said to me is that he didn't suffer. And in that moment, despite all the tears, I felt relief and all my worries vanished.

Daniel, your bravery and courage made you the person you were. Your selflessness and dedication to our country was evident from your actions, and as a result you saved countless Jewish lives. I'm honored to have known such an incredible person. You always strengthened others when they felt weak and always cared for those around you.

Daniel, you were loved by everyone you encountered and left an everlasting impression upon their lives. I am proud to have you as a brother who never surrendered, served your nation and protected it with all your might. You sacrificed your life to protect us – you were a true soldier and a true hero. I am so, so honored to be your sister. Your time on earth may have ended but you will continue to live in the minds of thousands. You will never truly be gone because a part of you lives on in every one of us. We will celebrate your life because you continue to live within our hearts. Not many have a chance to meet their heroes. I was blessed to have known mine. And I will be forever grateful. I only hope to do the best I can to make you proud. I love you my Dan – watch over us from above.



Shelley Perez

Shelley's words were quoted by Rabbi Doron Perez in his hesped.

So many people did so much for our precious son Daniel over the last five-and-a-half months. We want to sincerely thank you all for the messages of love, care and support, the prayers, *Tehillim*, communal prayers and *hafrashot challah* – these incredible *mitzvot* and so many more literally held us up.

Our unbelievable Yad Binyamin community, you made sure all our physical needs were met. We received and are still continuing to receive meals, care packages, shopping and so much more amidst all the *davening* and *mitzvot*. We deeply appreciate you all lining the streets of Yad Binyamin today, honoring Daniel as we left the *yishuv*. Our heartfelt appreciation to our families, our parents, our siblings, cousins and extended family – you have enveloped us with so much love and done everything possible in the merit of Daniel. To my exceptional group of close friends, the angels who never leave me alone for a minute and see to my every need – I am forever grateful to you all.



Behind A Newly-Published Book on The Mi Sheberach for IDF Soldiers

by Menachem Butler

On the Shabbat of October 7th, seated in a synagogue in Massachusetts, the tranquility of the day was shattered by the devastating news of attacks in Israel and hostages taken to Gaza. Amidst our tears during the prayers, the congregation united in song as we recited the *Mi Sheberach* for the IDF Soldiers, a text rooted in the early days of the State of Israel to provide spiritual support for its military members. Amidst the overwhelming emotions and communal confusion during the weeks that followed, Professor Aviad Hacohen and I decided to delve into the text of the *Mi Sheberach* prayer to help structure our thoughts and feelings. Our goal was to embark on a project that would explore its historical depth, theological meaning, and emotional resonance within the Jewish community, particularly for those who recognize the religious significance of the State of Israel. In December, we released, "Praying for the Defenders of Our Destiny: The *Mi Sheberach* for IDF Soldiers."

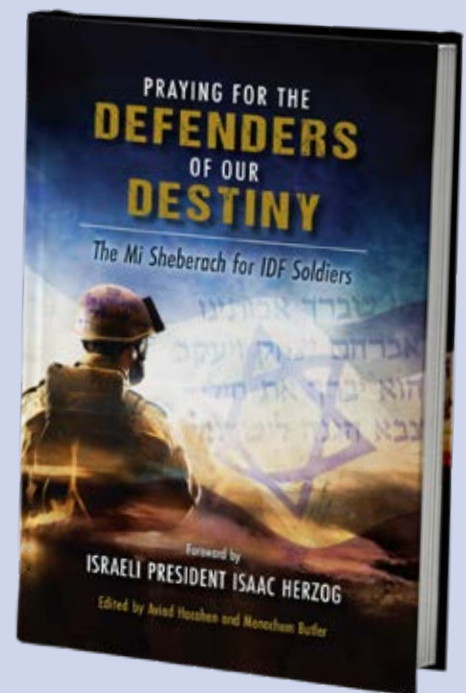
The nearly 80 articles in the volume examine the historical origins and liturgical significance of this *Mi Sheberach* prayer, analyzing its development within Jewish tradition. It features essays that provide personal narratives and reflections from individuals deeply affected, offering insights into the experiences of soldiers and their families. Additionally, the book delves into the theological foundations and ethical considerations surrounding prayers for soldiers, illustrating how the *Mi Sheberach* for IDF Soldiers mirrors communal values and perspectives on conflict, peace, and solidarity. Several essays discuss the musical composition and artistic interpretation of the *Mi Sheberach*, highlighting its cultural and emotional resonance within the Jewish community. The volume emphasizes the prayer's role as a communal expression of support during national distress and reflecting broader themes such as faith, vigilance, and unity and provides a multifaceted perspective on the prayer's relevance to contemporary Jewish identity and the collective consciousness of the Jewish people amid ongoing security challenges.

This anthology presents a range of perspectives on the IDF and Jewish tradition that highlights our community's complexity. The contributors offer independent, distinct views and insights, enhancing the volume's objectivity and underlining the sense of unity we aim to project. The diversity of ideas transformed this project from being an investigation of curious minds to a collection of experiences, scholarly reflections, and personal stories, which together illustrate the significant role the *Mi Sheberach* plays in Jewish life and the sustenance it provides to those who seek comfort and strength in its words.

The recent rise of anti-Israel and anti-Zionist sentiment on university campuses worldwide instilled a profound sense of responsibility in members of the global

Religious Zionist community as we've all observed the unfolding situations. Deeply involved in developing curriculum on Jewish legal topics and organizing events about Jewish and Israeli Law in my professional capacity at Harvard Law School, I felt these events acutely, both geographically and emotionally. While deep in the stacks of Widener Library on campus, doing research for this book, spending my days reading about past Israeli heroes and reading insights from Israeli scholars and Jewish thinkers, while protests were simultaneously unfolding outside the building and contentious debates taking place amongst students and faculty with polarized views, this project served as a personal anchor amid the increasing dissent and confusion that is ripping through campus and the American Jewish community at large.

The process of engaging with each contribution and delving into the nuanced history and theology behind the *Mi Sheberach* prayer provided a significant counterpoint to anti-Zionist narratives, both within and beyond the Jewish community. After its publication, copies became available for purchase through amazon.com and select bookstores in the US and Israel. Complimentary copies were distributed to interested students on American campuses and to Jewish day school educators across North America, members of the Israeli government, and IDF. "Praying for the Defenders of Our Destiny" is more than a book of academic interest, but reflects an ideological volume of Religious Zionist *hashkafa* and gives expression to a communal declaration of solidarity and support. May all IDF soldiers be protected, may all hostages return home safely, and may G-d continue to watch over all the Defenders of Our Destiny.



Menachem Butler, the Program Fellow for Jewish Legal Studies in the Julius-Rabinowitz Program on Jewish and Israeli Law at Harvard Law School, is the co-editor, with Aviad Hacohen, of "Praying for the Defenders of Our Destiny: The *Mi Sheberach* for IDF Soldiers" (Cambridge, MA: The Institute for Jewish Research and Publications, 2023).

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The Story of a Hostage

Nili Margalit



PHOTO: UMDA/KESHET 12

On Thursday, November 30th, 2023, on the final day of the first ceasefire, 8 hostages were returned to Israel. One of them, Nili Margalit, is a 41-year-old nurse who had been kidnapped from her home in Nir Oz and held for 54 days in captivity. While captive in the Hamas tunnels under Gaza, she used her medical experience as a nurse to treat her fellow hostages. On January 4th, 2024, she was interviewed on “Uvda,” Israel’s equivalent of 60 Minutes.

The following is an abridged translation of the interview by Rabbi Aron White.

Interviewer and producer of the televised interview: Ben Shani. TV Credits: Keshet 12.

How did you wake up on October 7th?

My dog Netchi walked into my room – whenever he wakes up early, it’s not a good sign. A few seconds later, there was the first siren.

Who kidnapped you?

Civilians. After Hamas broke into Nir Oz and started murdering and kidnapping, many Gazan civilians followed after them, plundering the *kibbutz*. They broke down the door to my house, and I saw a 17-year-old taking three whipped creams from my fridge. It was almost humorous at that point; that’s what you are taking?! Then he took my bag and demanded “*masari, masari*” (“money, money”). He was then joined by another older man, this one with a tactical vest, holding a large knife. I froze, and it was simply terrifying. I just

did what they said – they covered me in the sheet they took from my bed – I was still in my pajamas and barefoot – and they took me outside. I quickly pushed Netchi so he could run away. I also grabbed my glasses and held them under the sheet, to make sure they didn’t take them from me. As I got outside, there were people with guns coming towards me, and then they brought the *kibbutz*’s golf cart and pushed me inside. They drove us out of the *kibbutz* and towards Gaza. There was a stream of Gazans, thousands of people, all coming out of their villages and into Israel – men, women, children. I even saw two kids – one 15 years old and one just a small child who was 4 or 5 years old – driving my dad’s ATV, meaning they had already taken it from Nir Oz, driven it one way to Khan Younis, and were coming back to Nir Oz again.

So you traveled through the fields, and then they took you through the fence into Gaza.

Yes. Then they transferred me from the golf cart to a car that had bloodstains in it, and we started driving in Khan Younis. Suddenly they put someone else in the car – Tami Metzger from Nir Oz. She had bruises on her face and legs, and it took me a second to recognize her. I said, “Tami, it’s Nili!” and we hugged. Then we were silent – we were both in shock. I wasn’t processing what was happening, I didn’t know what was going to happen. I was just physically there.

Then we got to the entrance to a tunnel. It was in a storeroom; there was a hole in the ground – a tunnel entrance. I saw that there was a negotiation going on,

between the people who had taken me, and the Hamas people who they were now handing me to, or really selling me to. They sold me – us, also Tami – to them, and that was the last I saw of the people who had kidnapped me.

For years we had heard about the tunnels Hamas built under Gaza. You are one of the first to have been there and to return to tell the story of what is there.

We went down into the tunnel, and they told us “*yalla, yalla, go, go.*” There was very little air, it was very dark, and I was walking barefoot on earth. Tami was holding me for support as we walked through the tunnel, and then Adina (Moshe) joined us. I said: “Adinush, where is (your husband) Sa’id?” “He’s dead,” she said.

We kept walking onwards, and headed further down. Obviously I don’t know how deep, but at one point during my captivity I said to my captor that I can’t breathe, and he said: “What do you expect? We are 40 meters underground!” so that is the only estimate I have. The tunnel was maybe two meters wide, and not very tall. Luckily, I am short, but someone tall would have to crouch down to be able to fit. They were leading us through, and they knew their way around – we took a right, then a left – it’s a city down there. They refer to it as “Lower Gaza.” It is organized, and they knew their way around the whole system there. They had been planning and waiting for this day.

After about half an hour to an hour of walking, we arrived at a gathering point, where tens of captives already were. There were young people, old people, soldiers – a whole group.

Was everyone that you saw there alive?

Yes. Most were injured. I was maybe the only one who nothing had happened to. Many people were bruised from their trip into Gaza – many had been brought in on motorbikes and had fallen off. People had black eyes.

At this point, our captors asked us to make a list of which medicines were needed. I volunteered to do that. “*Ana mumarada, I am a nurse,*” I said, and I asked them for a pen and paper so I could make a list.

You speak Arabic?

I speak basic Arabic, as I am a ER nurse in Soroka Hospital in Be’er Sheva, and we have many Arab patients we serve there. “*Ana mumarada fil Mushtusfaa Soroka, I am a*

nurse from Soroka Hospital.” My Arabic is very basic and I need to improve it.

As you are describing this now, you are speaking with a lot of resilience. Did you have that in the moment, or was there a moment that broke you?

No, at that point I was operating with mental strength. It’s like being in the emergency room, and an injured or sick child comes in – you have to act, not to think. We are trained to act, and so I took the pen and paper and went around each person, writing down in English what medications they need.

I was worried about some of the elderly people. I didn’t record the full list of what each of them were taking – there wasn’t time to focus on things like Vitamin B that are not essential. What is important is the heart, blood pressure, and the kidneys. I started working, to figure out the essential things each of these people needed, especially the ones in their 70s and 80s.

At this point, we were divided into smaller groups, and taken to different rooms where we would be held during captivity. I was with many people who I knew since my childhood. Alex Dancyg, a Holocaust educator who guided me on my Poland trip. Chaim Peri, who is a film director who made a video clip for my *bat mitzvah*. Yoram Metzger, a good friend of my father. And my neighbor, Yarden Bibas, the husband of Shiri, and the father of Kfir and Ariel, the two *gingi* (redhead) children the whole world now knows. In total, there were 12 of us being held in this small room. Adina was also there – she had been our nanny from first to sixth grade, so we were very close. She told the captors she was my mother, and we stayed together throughout our captivity.

Many of these elderly people didn’t have their glasses or hearing aids, so it was hard for them to hear and see. When I communicated with them, I had to shout in their ear.

Did you know what happened to your own family, who also live in Nir Oz?

I had no idea what happened to my mother and brother, but I had a feeling then that my father was no longer alive. My father (who was known as “Churchill”) is a legendary horse farmer in the *kibbutz*, and the type of personality who would never let himself be captured, and would fight back to his last strength. From the stories I heard from others I believed that if he had fought back they would have killed him.

You make a certain disconnect in your head, because you just can’t think about it. I told myself, “A tragedy has happened, now I am a survivor and my job is to survive.” You just switch off from thinking about certain things, as they are too much.

Did you receive medicines?

Not at the beginning. They gave us a blood pressure machine for some reason, and I took everyone’s blood pressure each morning and evening and wrote it down. At the beginning, some people had measurements like 218/120, the type of things we see in emergency rooms that would require immediate medical attention, and I used these to show our captors that medicines were urgently needed. After 3, 4 or 5 days we received a black bag with medications in it, and I then had to do a triage, to see who needed what the most, and how to divide up the limited medicines we had. I had one strip of ten antibiotic pills, and decided that Tami was the one who needed it – she had many bruises and wounds from when she fell off a motorbike being brought into Gaza, and the wounds were becoming infected. Some of the people I gave medications to weren’t helped by the medications. But I just had to do what I could with what I had. There was some honey for eating, but I knew that there is a type of treatment where you put honey on as a bandage, and it creates chemical reactions that can reduce infections and help wounds heal. Obviously, this is usually done with medical honey, but I had to use what I had, so I made that bandage for Tami – and it worked like a charm. I would also tell our captors that we needed more medication, that we were about to run out. I kept pushing and pushing to make sure we got the medications.

I also had added Clonex, a relaxation and sleeping pill, to the list of medicines that I asked for. I knew that we needed it, and until it arrived none of us could sleep. At night we would be alone with our thoughts and our fears: What was going to happen? What had happened until now? What happened to our families? When will this nightmare end? Until we received these pills, it was almost impossible to relax enough to fall asleep.

Were other people coming into the tunnel?

All the time there were other Hamas people coming through, including very senior members. I didn’t know who they were, but since my release I was shown pictures and I now know who I saw. I would often say to them we don’t have enough medicine, and the people holding



(PHOTO: UVA/KESHET12)

us would get annoyed at that. They would take away our fans or other things to punish us for going above them and asking the more senior Hamas members – when they took away the fans, it was hot and hard to breathe.

A few weeks in, they told me to come with them, and they took me to another area, where the hostages (Amiram) Cooper, (Avraham) Munder and Margalit Moses were and required medical treatment. I measured their blood pressure, and Avraham's was very low, and so I gave him an IV of fluids and helped stabilize them. There were people with diabetes, but I knew their treatments were less important – when you don't have pills, you can stabilize glucose by not eating, and we were eating so little down there I was less worried about glucose levels.

One of the people I was with was Yarden Bibas, the father of Kfir and Ariel and the husband of Shiri. He had been taken by Hamas, leaving his family behind, and he was worried about them; he had no idea they had been taken – who could imagine a baby being kidnapped! He spent a lot of time wondering what happened – at one point the Hamas captors told him that they had been seen on a video in Tel Aviv, when of course the video that everyone saw of them is very different (being taken captive from Nir Oz by Hamas).

About 40 days in, I saw some TV for the first time, and saw the protests going on calling for our release. It made me happy to know that the Israelis had not forgotten about us.

What happened when the hostages started to be released?

On the first day, Adina was released. When she was taken from the room, it was very difficult for me, as she was my support. I had a moment when I broke down, but then I took a deep breath, then another one, and regained my composure. It was very scary as a woman to remain by myself – I was now alone in my room within the complex where we were.

I didn't know if I would be released, but I said to Yarden Bibas, "If I get released, the others are going to need you," and I trained him in which person needs which medicine, how many they need, and how to advocate for them with our captors.

One afternoon, they told me that I was going home, and I was very happy. My happiness was destroyed in a few minutes, as they set up a camera, and recorded themselves telling Yarden Bibas that Shiri and the boys had been killed – something Israel says is not confirmed. They told Yoram and I that we should be the ones to tell him, but I said, "If you want to tell

him something this awful, you tell him yourself." It was just awful – I was crying on the side, and a minute after they filmed him, they took me out.

When I was released, the first doctor who met me told me that Netchi, my dog, was still alive. When I got to the Chatzerim IDF base and had the first phone call with my family, my brother said, "Dad is no longer alive, but the rest of the family survived." Gradually I heard more and more about the tragedy of what happened.

How do you see your future?

I will return to work as a nurse, at some point. I am choosing to live, not only to survive but to live life.

I still don't want to see pictures of Nir Oz and how it looks now. I have been told that there is nothing left of my house, that it has been totally burned. Somehow, to see pictures of it makes this whole nightmare even more real. In my head, Nir Oz is still as it was the day before, on the Friday before. For now, I want it to remain that way.

I think Nir Oz is the most beautiful place in the world. The sunset in January and February, looking towards Khan Younis, is the most beautiful in the world. It was the most beautiful place in the world. ■

Holy Moments

Sivan Rahav-Meir

On Shabbat March 9th, 29 Adar I, a *brit milah* was held for the son of Yedidya Eliyahu who fell in Gaza four months ago. No words can describe the atmosphere in the event hall: a mix of joy and sorrow, a new life and one that was missing, heaven and earth, this world and the next.



The grandfather, Rabbi Yoram Eliyahu, served as *sandak*, the one who holds the baby during the *brit*. In the father's absence, he recited the *beracha*: "Who sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to enter him into the Covenant of Avraham our father." Meitar, the mother, blessed "*Shehechyanu*" and "*HaGomel*" over the *brit* and the safe delivery. The *mohel* asked those assembled to pray. "These are holy moments," he remarked. When there are no words to express what we feel, our prayers pierce the heavens - prayers for the baby, for his mother, for the soldiers and the wounded and the hostages, prayers for everyone and everything.

And his name in Israel shall be called: Porat Avia.

I previously wrote that in reply to the question, "How are you?" Yedidya Eliyahu would reply: "Living the dream." As I was leaving, Ziva Eliyahu, his mother, told me with eyes full of tears, but with a smile: "We will continue to live the dream, only differently."

● Translated by Yehoshua Siskin.



Sivan Rahav-Meir

is a media personality and lecturer. She lives in Jerusalem with her husband, Yedidya, and their five children, and serves as World Mizrahi's Scholar-in-Residence. She is a primetime anchor on Channel 2 News, has a column in Israel's largest newspaper, Yediot Acharonot, and a weekly radio show on Galei Tzahal (Army Radio).



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ensuring that young minds have access to quality learning opportunities right at their doorstep. From preschools to high schools, parents can rest assured that their children are receiving the best education possible without the hassle of long commutes.

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Behind the vision of Neve Amim is The Amim Group, a group of developers and experienced real estate professionals with decades of collective experience in the field. Specializing in planning and developing new real estate projects and large-scale urban renewal construction, The Amim Group is known for its attention to detail, luxury specifications, and high-quality construction.

Moreover, in the development of Neve Amim, The Amim Group is collaborating with Yigal Realty, a leading local marketing company. Yigal Realty prides itself on delivering a seamless and stress-free home buying experience for American families seeking to make Israel their new home. With expert guidance and personalized assistance at every stage, Yigal Realty simplifies the process of purchasing property in Israel, making it both easy and enjoyable.



Neve Amim is not just a place to live; it's a community tailored for Anglo families seeking to raise their children in a Torah-involved environment. With its family-friendly atmosphere and exceptional facilities, Neve Amim offers a lifestyle that epitomizes the finest aspects of Israeli living while providing the ideal setting for families looking to instill Torah values in their children.

In summary, Neve Amim stands as a beacon of contemporary family living in Neve Shamir, Israel. With its unparalleled amenities, diverse housing options, and the combined expertise of The Amim Group and Yigal Realty, it's no surprise that families are choosing to call this thriving community home. Whether enticed by its family-friendly environment, Torah-centered values, or exceptional facilities, Neve Amim is the perfect destination for Anglo families seeking to build their future in Israel.

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The Ideology of Hesder

Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein zt”l

(PHOTO: YESHIVAT HAR ETZION)

In the 1950s, Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh began to send yeshiva students to IDF training. This would become the start of the hesder movement – a movement of post high school yeshivot that combine both intensive Torah study and IDF service.

Today, there are over 80 such yeshivot, with over 10,000 talmidim. In the current war, thousands of hesder students have fought for the IDF – and tragically, tens of them have given their lives for the Land, people and Torah of Israel.

In 1981, Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Har Etzion, published a seminal essay in Tradition explaining the Torah hashkafa behind the hesder program. His article provides theological grounding for the program, explaining why hesder is not a compromise but rather the ideal form of avodat Hashem.

In advance of Rav Lichtenstein's 9th yahrzeit on Rosh Chodesh Iyar, we publish here excerpts from this landmark essay.

TRADITION
A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought

This essay is excerpted from "The Ideology of Hesder" which appeared originally in TRADITION (Fall 1981) and appears here with permission. Visit TraditionOnline.org to access the full essay.

The typical graduate of an Israeli *yeshiva* high school is confronted by one of three options. He can, like most of his peers, enter the army for a three-year stint. Alternatively, he can excuse himself from military service on the grounds that “*torato umanuto*, Torah is his vocation,” while he attends a *yeshiva* whose students receive the Israeli equivalent of a 4-D exemption. Finally, he can enroll in a *yeshivat hesder*, in which case, over roughly the next five years, he will pursue a combined program of traditional Torah study with service in the Israeli army. While at the *yeshiva*, he will learn full-time, but there will be two protracted absences from it, one of nine months and the other of six months, for training and duty...

Hesder provides [a young man] a convenient framework for discharging two different – and to some extent conflicting – obligations... But they are not what

hesder, ideally considered, is all about. Properly understood, *hesder* poses more of a challenge than an opportunity; and in order to perceive it at its best we need to focus upon difficulty and even tension rather than upon convenience. Optimally, *hesder* does not merely provide a religious cocoon for young men fearful of being contaminated by the potentially secularizing influences of general army life – although it incidentally serves this need as well. *Hesder* at its finest seeks to attract and develop *bnei Torah* who are profoundly motivated by the desire to become serious Torah scholars but who concurrently feel morally and religiously bound to help defend their people and their country; who, given the historical exigencies of their time and place, regard this dual commitment as both a privilege and a duty; who, in comparison with their non-*hesder* confreres love not (to paraphrase Byron's Childe Harold) Torah

less but Israel more. It provides a context within which students can focus upon enhancing their personal spiritual and intellectual growth while yet heeding the call to public service, and it thus enables them to maintain an integrated Jewish existence.

To be sure, the two aspects of *hesder*, the spiritual and the military, are hardly on a par... No less than every Jew, the typical *hesdernik* yearns for peace, longs for the day on which he can divest himself of uniform and Uzi and devote his energies to Torah. In the interim, however, he harbors no illusions and he keeps his powder dry and his musket ready.

In one sense, therefore, insofar as army service is alien to the ideal Jewish vision, *hesder* is grounded in necessity rather than choice. It is, if you will, *b'diavad*, a post facto response to a political reality imposed upon us by our enemies. In

another sense, however, it is very much *l'chatchila*, a freely willed option grounded in moral and *halachic* decisions. We – at Yeshivat Har Etzion, at any rate – do not advocate *hesder* as a second-best alternative for those unable or unwilling to accept the rigors of single-minded Torah study. We advocate it because we are convinced that, given our circumstances – would that they were better – military service is a *mitzvah*, and a most important one at that. Without impugning the patriotism or ethical posture of those who think otherwise, we feel that for the overwhelming majority of *bnei Torah* defense is a moral imperative.

Hence, to the extent that the term *hesder*, “arrangement,” connotes an accommodation arrived at between conflicting sides, it is somewhat of a misnomer. *Hesder* is not the result of a compromise between the respective positions of *roshei yeshiva* and the Ministry of Defense. It is rather a compromise with reality. We do occasionally argue with the generals over details and they do not always sufficiently appreciate the preeminence of the spiritual factor. The basic concern with security, however, is ours no less than theirs...

Although stateless centuries have tended to obscure this fact, *hesder* has been the traditional Jewish way. This is not the place for the exhaustive analysis of proof-texts. But what were the milieux of *Moshe Rabbeinu*, of Yehoshua, of David, of Rabbi Akiva, as *Chazal* conceived and described them, but *yeshivot hesder*? Indeed, in the Ramban’s view, the institution can be traced back to our very fountainhead. In explaining why Avimelech was so anxious to conclude a treaty with Yitzchak, he conjectures that it may have been due to the fact “that Avraham was very great and mighty, as he had in his house three hundred sword-wielding men and many allies. And he himself was a lion-hearted soldier and he pursued and vanquished four very powerful kings. And when his success became evident as being divinely ordained, the Philistine king feared him, lest he conquer his kingdom... And the sons emulated the fathers, as Yitzchak was great like his father and the king feared lest he fight him should he banish him from his land” (Ramban to Bereishit 26:29). This account of lion-hearted *avot* and their sword-wielding disciples may fall strangely upon some ears. Although we don’t like to admit it, our Torah world, too, has its vagues, and, in some circles, much of the Ramban on Bereishit – the real Ramban, honestly read and unflinchingly understood – is currently *passe*. The fact, however, remains: the primary tradition is *hesder*.



Military service is often the fullest manifestation of a far broader value: *gemilut chasadim*, the empathetic concern for others and action on their behalf.

The reason is not hard to find. The *halachic* rationale for *hesder* does not, as some mistakenly assume, rest solely upon the *mitzvah* of waging defensive war. If that were the case, one might conceivably argue that, *halachically*, sixteen months of army service was too high a price to pay for the performance of this single commandment. The rationale rather rests upon a) the simple need for physical survival and b) the fact that military service is often the fullest manifestation of a far broader value: *gemilut chasadim*, the empathetic concern for others and action on their behalf. This element defined by *Chazal* as one of the three cardinal foundations of the world, is the basis of Jewish social ethics, and its realization, even at some cost to single-minded development of Torah scholarship, virtually imperative. The Gemara in *Avodah Zara* is pungently clear on this point: “Our Rabbis taught: When Rabbi Elazar ben Prata and Rabbi Chanina ben Teradion were arrested [by the Romans], Rabbi Elazar ben Prata said to Rabbi Chanina ben Teradion, ‘Fortunate are you that you have been arrested over one matter, woe is to me who have been arrested over five matters.’ Rabbi Hanina responded, ‘Fortunate are you that you have been arrested over five matters but are to be saved, woe is to me who have been arrested over one matter but will not be saved. For you concerned yourself with both Torah and *gemilut chasadim* whereas I concerned myself solely with Torah.’ As Rav Huna stated; for Rav Huna said, ‘Whoever concerns himself solely with Torah is as one who has no G-d. As it is written, “And many days [passed] for Israel without a true G-d” (Divrei Hayamim II 15:3). What is [the meaning of] “without a true G-d”? That one who concerns himself solely with Torah, is as one who has no G-d” (*Avodah Zara* 17b). The *midrash* (*Kohelet Rabbah* 7:4) equates the renunciation of *gemilut chasadim* with blasphemy; and the Gemara in *Rosh Hashanah* states that Abaye outlived Rabbah because he engaged in both Torah and *gemilut chasadim* whereas Rabbah had largely confined himself to the former. When, as in contemporary Israel, the greatest single *chesed* one can perform is helping to defend his fellows’

very lives, the implications for *yeshiva* education should be obvious.

What is equally obvious is the fact that not everyone draws them – and this for one of several reasons. Some (not many, I hope) simply have little if any concern for the State of Israel, even entertain the naive notion that, as one *rosh yeshiva* put it, their business could continue as usual with Palestinian flags fluttering from the rooftops. Others feel that the spiritual price, personal and communal, is simply too high and that first-rate Torah leadership in particular can only be developed within the monochromatic contexts of “pure” *yeshivot*. Still others contend that, from the perspective of genuine faith and trust in G-d, it is the *yeshivot* which are the true guardians of the polity so that any compromise of their integrity is a blow at national security. These contentions clearly raise a number of basic moral, *halachic*, and theological issues with respect to which I obviously entertain certain views. However, I do not wish, at this juncture, to polemicize. These are matters on which honest men of Torah can differ seriously out of mutual respect and I certainly have no desire to denigrate those who do not subscribe to my own positions. What I do wish to stress minimally, however, is the point that, for the aspiring Torah scholar, *hesder* is at least as legitimate a path as any other. It is, to my mind, a good deal more; but surely not less.

While most of the relevant texts are *aggadic*, one locus classicus is purely *halachic*, and it may best be treated first. The Gemara in *Bava Batra* states that *talmidei chachamim* are exempt from sharing the cost of municipal fortifications inasmuch as they “do not require protection.” Analogously, it is contended that they should be exempt from military service. One may state, in reply, that this claim raises a very serious moral issue. Can anyone whose life is not otherwise patterned after this degree of trust and *bitachon* argue for exemption on this ground? Is it possible to worry about one’s economic future, in evident disregard of Rabbi Eliezer’s statement that “whoever has bread in his basket and says ‘What shall I eat tomorrow?’ is but of little faith,” and still not enter the army because one is presumably safe without it? I recall, some years back, admiring the candor of a *maggid shiur* who confided to me that he had moved from a neighborhood in which most young men served in the IDF to one in which they did not because, while he might be convinced intellectually that he ought not to serve in the army, he knew full well that he did not possess the depth of faith upon which such an exemption could only be granted.



Yakir Hexter and David Schwartz hy"ד, fallen soldiers who were in the hesder program at Yeshivat Har Etzion. (ARTWORK: ILAN BLOCK)

Hence, he felt too ashamed, especially as his sons were coming of military age, to remain in his old bailiwick...

A second oft-cited source is the coda of *Sefer Zera'im* in the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*. The Rambam first postulates the spiritual character of the tribe of Levi as explaining its being barred from a share in *Eretz Yisrael* and its spoils, and then goes on to expand upon this theme:

“And why did not Levi partake of the patrimony of *Eretz Yisrael* and its spoils with his brethren? Because he was set apart to serve G-d, to worship Him and to teach His just ways and righteous ordinances to the masses. As it is stated, ‘They shall teach Jacob Your ordinances, and Israel Your law’ (Devarim 33:10). Therefore, they have been set apart from the ways of the world: they do not wage war like the rest of Israel, nor do they inherit or acquire unto themselves by physical force. They are, rather, the L-rd’s corps, as it is stated, ‘I am your portion and your inheritance’ (Bamidbar 18:20). And not the tribe of Levi alone but each and every person throughout the world whose spirit has uplifted him and whose intelligence has given him the understanding to stand before G-d, to serve Him, to worship Him, to know G-d; and he walks aright as he has cast off from his neck the many considerations which men have sought – such a one has been sanctified as the holy of holies, and the L-rd shall be his portion and his inheritance forever and ever, and shall grant him his sufficiency in this world as he has granted to the *kohanim* and the *levi'im*. As David, peace be upon him, says, ‘O L-rd, the portion of my inheritance and of my cup, You maintain my lot’ (Tehillim 16:5).”

At first glance, these lines seem to sanction, in principle, a *ben Torah*'s total divorce from military service. In truth, however, they are of little, if any, relevance to our subject. On one level, there arises the obvious difficulty of squaring this statement both with the Rambam's personal history and with his repeated vehement critiques of those who exploit the study of Torah to worldly advantage by abstaining from all gainful activity in the expectation that they will be supported by the public treasury. Even if we confine ourselves to this text, however, we shall find that its presumed sanction is weak, at best.

First, the initial postulate – that every Levite enjoys a dispensation from army duty, has no source in *Chazal*. On the contrary, it contravenes the evident purport of the Mishnah in *Sotah*: “But in [case of] wars of *mitzvah*, all go out, even a groom from his [wedding] room and a bride from her wedding chamber.” As has often been noted, if the Rambam's formulation is understood as a total bar on army service by *shevet Levi*, it seems to be clearly contradicted by a Gemara in *Kiddushin*. Would or should *bonei Torah* readily lean upon such a thin reed in order to exempt themselves from, say, the *mitzvot* of *lulav* or *shofar*?

Second, it seems most unlikely that this statement is indeed all it is presumed to be. If the Rambam had truly intended to postulate a categorical dispensation for *bonei Levi* or *bonei Torah*, would he have presented and formulated it in this manner and context? Given his sharply honed discipline and sense of order, would he not have cited it in *Hilchot Melachim u'Milchamoteihem* together with all the laws of warfare rather than as a peroration to *Sefer Zera'im*? The implication is clear.

What we have here is a hortatory coda, analogous to the conclusions of many of the books of the *Mishneh Torah*... but is not to be confused with a clear *halachic* mandate. It provides a vivid evaluation of an inspiring personality but does not dictate how it or others should act.

Even if this contention is rejected, however, Rambam's statement remains largely irrelevant to the contemporary problem of *hesder*. For it should be noted, third, that the spirituality of the Levite does not preclude military service entirely. It only absolves him from waging war “like the rest of Israel.” At most, he can be exempt from the gamut of wars included within the *mitzvah* of *milchamah* per se. This exemption has no bearing, however, upon his duty to help fight or prevent a defensive war that threatens the survival of his community and his peers. Is a spiritual order excused from saving human lives? To the extent that this obligation is rooted in the overall norm of *gemilut chasadim*, it encompasses everyone. The world of the *ben Torah*, too, rests upon three pillars. Of course, no one would suggest that all *bonei yeshiva* stop learning and turn to cardiology. There is, however, a clear difference between abstaining from specializing in humanitarian endeavors and forgoing a universal effort. And above all, the issue is not one of suspending *talmud Torah*, G-d forbid, but of balancing and complementing it.

Finally, even if we grant that the Rambam's statement does imply a categorical dispensation in purely *halachic* terms, it remains of little practical significance. We have yet to examine just to whom it applies. A Levi is defined genealogically. Those who are equated with him, however, literally

or symbolically, are defined by spiritual qualities; and for these the Rambam sets a very high standard, indeed. He presents an idealized portrait of a selfless, atemporal, almost ethereal person – one whose spirit and intelligence have led him to divest himself of all worldly concerns and who has devoted himself “to stand before G-d, to serve Him, to worship Him, to know G-d; and he walks aright as the L-d has made him and he has cast off from his neck the yoke of the many considerations that men have sought.”

To how large a segment of the Torah community, or of any community, does this lofty typology apply? Two percent? Five percent? Can anyone who has negotiated the terms of a salary... look into a mirror and tell himself that he need not go to the army because he is *kodesh kodashim*, sanctum sanctorum, in the Rambam's terms? Can anyone with even a touch of vanity or a concern for *kavod* contend this? Lest I be misunderstood, let me state clearly that I have no quarrel with economic aspirations or with normal human foibles. Again, least of all do I wish to single out *bnei yeshivot* for undeserved moral censure. I do feel, however, that those who would single themselves out for exemption from normal duties on the grounds of saintliness should



What would the Ramban have given to head a *yeshivat hesder*?

examine their credentials by the proper standard...

In making any assessment, it is important that we approach the subject with full awareness of the military ramifications – a point not always sufficiently heeded. The story is reliably told of a leading *rosh yeshiva* who, at the height of the controversy over the drafting of women, back in the Fifties, attended a wedding near the Israeli-Arab border in Jerusalem. At one point, gunfire was suddenly heard and he scurried under a table, exclaiming passionately, “*Ribbono shel olam*, I want to live! There is much Torah which I yet wish to learn and create!” Whereupon a rather insensitive observer approached him and asked, “Nu, rebbe, *was sagt ihr itzer wegen giyus banot?*” (Well, rabbi, what do you say now about *giyus banot*?) And he kept quiet. I cite the story not because I favor the induction of women – under present circumstances, I very much oppose it – nor to impugn the memory of a truly great person, but in order to point out that, at a

certain distance, one can lose sight of the simple truth that a Jewish soul can only exist within a Jewish body.

That nagging truth persists, however, and its appreciation is central to the understanding of an institution designed to reconcile the conflicting claims of spirituality and security, of *talmud Torah* and *gemilut chasadim*, of personal growth and public service. The present dilemma posed by these claims is not of our choosing. The response, however, is; and, in this respect, *yeshivot hesder* are a conspectus of our collective anomaly: a nation with outstretched palm and mailed fist, striving for peace and yet training for war. For the foreseeable future, this is our situation... Hence, within the context of our “station and its duties,” *hesder* is, for *bnei Torah*, the imperative of the moment. May G-d grant us a better station. In the meantime, however, if it is to become no worse, we must keep both our spirits and our guard up. Animated by vision and yet chary of danger, we, of *yeshivot hesder*, pray that He may grant us the wisdom and the courage to cope with the challenges of time... Standing in tears atop *Har HaZeitim*, the bleak sight of *kol hamekudash mechavero charev yoter mechavero* stretching before him, what would the Ramban have given to head a *yeshivat hesder*? ■

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Carmay-HaNadiv A New Anglo Community

Carmay-HaNadiv is establishing itself as an exciting new opportunity for people looking for their dream community in Israel. With a great location, reasonable prices and a warm community, Carmay-HaNadiv is continuing to grow, and this year over 200 more families will receive the keys to their apartments. Shalom Wasserteil, CEO of Tzifha and Rothstein, the developers of the neighborhood, shared some updates about the project and the exciting developments in store.

When the war broke out on Simchat Torah, one of the areas that was most affected was construction and real estate. Have there been any delays with the construction in the Carmay-HaNadiv project?

With Hashem's help, all the apartments in Carmay-HaNadiv that were due to be ready this year will be completed in time for the date in the contract. Even before this war, our workforce were mainly foreign workers, many from China, rather than Palestinians from Judea and Samaria. Because of the war, in the first month we were working at 50% capacity, in the second month at 75%, and following that at full capacity, and working overtime to ensure that all the apartments and shops being built will be ready on time!

How did the community of Carmay-HaNadiv react to the war, and contribute to the war effort?

Many of the people from our wonderful community were called up to the IDF to fight in this war, including Immanuel, the Deputy CEO of our company and Chen our Chief Engineer, who were called up to fight already on Simchat Torah. The families back in the community also all stepped up, providing meals to the families of those serving, and sending care packages and notes to the soldiers on the front lines. Our company also lent equipment to some units that required them, as well as providing many MP3 players with *shuirim* and music to soldiers who didn't have their phones and couldn't even turn lights on at night time. Many of those who were called up have returned home, but have been told they will return to the front lines after Pesach.





This war reminded me a lot of what happened on Yom Kippur 50 years ago, when I fought as a soldier through the *hesder* program at Yeshivat Sha'alvim. Both these wars were preceded by societal arguments, and there were intelligence warnings that were misread and the conclusions were not drawn. In both of them we were surprised, and we received a painful blow, but in both of them we united, gathered our strength and fought back. Just as we won the Yom Kippur War, we will *b'ezrat Hashem* have a complete victory in this war.

What can you tell us about the developments this summer, with new apartments and shops being completed?

This year, we are due to complete and hand over four buildings, with over 200 apartments, including to many Americans and *olim* in Israel. We are also excited that we will be opening the first part of the central Rothschild Boulevard, that will be the central shopping street of the neighborhood. This summer, 1,700 square meters of commercial space will be inaugurated, in addition to the 1,000 square meters that we already opened a year ago for the benefit of the residents. These shops will be fitted to the needs of the community, providing a convenient central shopping street.

What can you say about the next stage of buildings that will begin to be marketed?

We will soon be receiving the permits for four more buildings, with hundreds of apartments all at the high standards of our buildings. The previous round of sales, as well as being marketed to Israelis were marketed in America, especially in Boca Raton, FL, and this next round of sales will also be marketed in Canada, as well as other communities.

What does the community plan to do to welcome olim?

The Carmay-HaNadiv community is very excited for the incoming influx of those moving in this summer. Each family will have the option of connecting with an existing family in the community to help support them. The community, led by Rabbi Yisrael Elitzur, are making sure that things are arranged for the best possible support from an educational, social and professional perspective.

We believe that by all accounts, Carmay-Hanadiv is an ideal location for *olim chadashim!* It is one of a kind in all of Israel. We are aware that American *olim* offer growth potential to the Israeli workforce as many other special qualities. We are aware that it is important they be received in a warm and loving community. We will offer support and assistance to the best of our ability and ensure a most positive *Aliyah* experience!

With G-d's help, we will do and succeed!

בעזרת ה' נעשה ונצליח!

Come and join us!

For more details:

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Central Rothschild Boulevard (For illustrative purposes)



Joining the War Effort Through the Charedi Draft

Rabbi Aron White

(PHOTO: IDF MINHELET CHAREDIM)

If you would have told me half a year ago that I would be training for the IDF together with *Gerrer Chassidim* and graduates of Mir Yeshiva, I would have probably laughed. But October 7th changed many things, and indeed this improbable scenario became my reality in January.

In the initial days of the war, I experienced a lot of guilt as I saw tens of my friends serving in the army on reserve duty. A few months into the war, I started to hear of friends joining the army through the *Charedi* draft, completing a short training, after which you can become an IDF reservist. While the program is officially geared towards *Charedim*, many Religious Zionist *olim* join as well (for *olim*, the IDF is flexible about who qualifies as “*Charedi*”). Thanks to a supportive wife and workplace, I decided to sign up.

The program is called *Shlav Bet* and involves two weeks of basic training, and upon graduating soldiers can serve in non-combat roles in the IDF. The vast majority of the army are not combat soldiers, with units like Logistics Corps, Intelligence Corps and countless more requiring many soldiers. Our level of training (technically called *rovai 02*) is the same level of training that all non-combat IDF soldiers receive, after which we are eligible to be assigned to a reservist unit. Since the start of the war, close to 1,000 people have joined the IDF through *Shlav Bet*, and graduates of *Shlav Bet* are today serving in a remarkable range of roles – from fixing tanks and missile launchers, to driving trucks and heavy machinery, sometimes even in Gaza itself. Some graduates are serving in military intelligence, and others are at the bases where captured terrorists are being held. A number of graduates are also serving in the military Rabbinate, and a new program is now training graduates to be members of *kitot konenut*, civilian security teams, particularly for *Charedi* cities.

One preconceived notion I had was that the recruits in the army's *Charedi* programs aren't all that *Charedi*, but it only took a few minutes to see that I was wrong. *Litvaks*, *Chassidim* and *Shas-nikim* formed the majority of our group of 60. The most represented city in the group was Bnei Brak, and some recruits did not join our WhatsApp group because they didn't have smartphones. My roommates represented the full gamut of people in the program. Eliasaf is a graduate of Chevron Yeshiva who now works as a lawyer. Yehuda W is a *Gerrer Chassid* from Bnei Brak with six children, whose brother-in-law and father also participated in this program. Avi grew up as a *Lelover Chassid*; though he no longer has *Chassidish peyos*, he sends his daughter to Beis Ya'akov. Yehuda H is originally from Manchester, studied at Gateshead and Mir Yeshiva and now lives in Yerushalayim. Mendy is a Chabad *Chassid* from Tzfat who got married last year.

The program itself involved gun training, Krav Maga, classes about the units and ranks of the army, first aid and more. A major part of *Shlav Bet* is getting used to the army regimen – wake up was at 5:30am, and from that moment until you went to bed, every minute of the day was planned by the *mefakdim* (commanders). It is quite an experience for a group of middle-aged men – to have orders shouted at you by a 21-year-old, and to have to do 10 push ups if you are late for roll call! Impressively, the commanders laid down the line on discipline, but also respected the life experience of the recruits. During the first aid training, our *mefaked* asked if any of the 7 trained medics and first responders in the room had anything to add. It was actually a powerful moment – the commanders created the discipline any army requires to function while acknowledging we have much to offer.

The two-week training was one of the most meaningful things I have ever done, and the closest analogy I can give is that of a language immersion course. Similar to someone traveling to South America to immerse themselves in Spanish, this two-week experience was an immersion into the language and culture of the IDF, and just like a language immersion course, on the other side one has a different perspective on the world.

Firstly, my appreciation for what combat soldiers undergo both in their training and in war has increased exponentially. After hours of gun training, jumping up and down with our M-16, our commander Yedidya would sometimes give us a break and teach us about the IDF. As our muscles ached, and he told us about his own training for the Givati infantry brigade, where he had to crawl 300 meters holding a 15-pound *Negev*, our understanding of what combat training involves deepened immensely. He would break down videos of the combat in Gaza, pointing out the techniques and maneuvers that soldiers were utilizing. From the molehill of my two-week training, I feel I have a slightly better vantage point from which to appreciate the mountain of full IDF training and service.

Secondly, even the news looks different now – the lists of army units, roles and ranks have gone from an opaque list of words to a meaningful description that tells in detail the actual story of how this war is progressing. Our commanders talked us through some aspects of the operation that freed two hostages from Rafah. Taking the reports one line at a time, understanding the role each unit played, from the *Yamam* (National Counter-Terrorism Unit) to the helicopter rescue team and more, one starts to understand the war in higher resolution.



The author (standing, second from right) together with his squad (kita). Second from the left is Yehuda W. pictured below after the training, as part of the kitat konenut of the Gur Chassidut.

Thirdly, the divide between Israeli and Western culture also became clearer to me. Most Israelis have served for years in the military, and the military suffuses Israeli culture, whereas Western society is largely a post-military culture (in this post-military vacuum, stories like this war are also portrayed through the lens of issues more popular in Western culture, such as race and human rights). The basics of military protocol and strategy, which are totally intuitive to Israelis and form the way Israelis approach this war, are totally missing for a Western media, whose journalists are often totally illiterate in this field. Reading much of Western media, one gets an image of the IDF operation in Gaza as a haphazard, random set of violent acts, all of which harm civilians and some might have some military benefit. This is childishly simple – the amount of strategy, coordination and thought that goes into fighting is remarkable, but requires an understanding of the language of the army. It is remarkable that when it comes to sports, Western countries will have the most experienced former players act as pundits, but when it comes to war, many journalists with no knowledge of the local language, and who probably couldn't describe even the basic structure of the IDF, are broadcasting their views to millions of people around the world.

Finally, there were moments that were deeply religiously moving. At our *tekes hashba'a*, the ceremony when we were sworn into the IDF, our platoon commander read from the first *perek* of Yehoshua. “Be strong and brave, for you will lead the people to inherit the land that I have promised your fathers. Be very strong and brave, to observe the whole Torah that I have given to Moshe my servant, do not turn right or left from it, in order that you shall have insight in all that you turn to.” That chapter is just one of many within Tanach that take on more meaning when you read them while wearing the IDF uniform.

A new chapter for Charedi society?

A major topic of discussion among our group was whether the program represented a change within the broader *Charedi* society. Currently, only 10% of the *Charedi* community serve in the IDF, a major point of contention in Israeli society for decades. The



war has only exacerbated the tensions. With the IDF in need of manpower, the Knesset is considering increasing the length of army service for soldiers and reservists. Understandably, there is significant political pressure to change the equation of *Charedim* and the army. Can *Shlav Bet* be part of a solution?

Brigadier General Ari Singer, an American-born general in the IDF, gave our group a fascinating talk about the history of *Charedim* in the army, and one of my takeaways from that discussion was that we have to frame this issue in a much wider lens. The *Charedi* community is a conservative community that many historians say formed its identity as a response to the past 3 centuries of social change. Jews had existed as religious communities for over a millenia, before a series of social and religious changes affected Jewish communities: political emancipation, the enlightenment, and the creation of new Jewish streams such as the Reform movement. The dominant credo of what we would now refer to as the *Charedi* community was the aphorism of the Chatam Sofer, adapted from a Talmudic line – “*chadash assur min haTorah*, that which is new is forbidden by the Torah,” thus a strict insistence on maintaining every aspect of Judaism as it had been traditionally observed, without innovation.

As committed Religious Zionists, we sometimes forget just how revolutionary Zionism was 100 years ago. Jews had existed as

communities for 2,000 years, and Zionism sought to move the Jewish people from a collection of communities to recreating a Jewish state. This move requires a huge intellectual upheaval, and many early Zionists were explicit in their rejection of Diasporic, communal life, seeking to neatly bridge from the Jewish commonwealth of the Tanach to the new Jewish state (“*me’ha-Tanach laPalmach*”), while skipping over the intervening 2,000 years. It is not that surprising that there was a conservative reaction to a revolutionary movement that was often explicitly anti-traditional. And it isn’t surprising that the touchstone of this identity battle is around the army, the largest and most significant institution that expresses our new-found statehood.

Once one frames the issue of *Charedim* joining the army as an issue of identity, and one with roots that are literally centuries old, it is clear that the solution will be a process. It is not reasonable or tenable for tens of thousands of *Charedim* to avoid army service, as hundreds of soldiers from other communities give their lives to protect us all. But it is also untenable to force thousands of 18-year-olds a year into military service that they are not intellectually or ideologically prepared for. A soldier who doesn’t want to be there is not of much help to his comrades.

To my mind, the *Shlav Bet* is definitely not the full solution, but is a significant part of the solution. Having hundreds of *Charedi* men join the army, willingly and voluntarily, each of these individuals is breaking down the dichotomy others talk about between their religious identity and protecting the State of Israel. At our final *tekes hashba’a*, a representative of the soldiers, Moshe Maleyef from Kiryat Malachi, spoke – here are some of his remarks:

When the war started, we knew that we had to get up and defend our country. We are proud of who we are.

*We are Charedim, and we are committed to defending Israel.
We are Charedim, and we are part of Israeli society.
We are Charedim, we are Israeli, we are brothers.*

Our message is clear – we call on others to join the IDF to defend our country together.

These messages are incredibly important, and if hundreds more *Charedim* feel they can publicly say this, then it is a significant step forward for Israel.

● *If you are interested in joining the Shlav Bet program and have any questions, the author can be contacted at aronwhite@mizrachi.org*



Rabbi Aron White
is the Managing Editor of HaMizrachi magazine.



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ALIJAH
FACILITATION

Eli Steier

“We always loved Israel, but *Aliyah* was not in the plans. Sure, maybe when we retire, but now? I had a job I loved, a warm community, and everything was familiar. Not to mention we would have 3 children under 4 by our *Aliyah* date. So, how did a family from Queens decide to make *Aliyah* in December 2023?

As we thought about putting down roots, no matter which community in America we considered, a deep part of us just shook its head no – buying a home in the US just did not feel right. After a lot of heartfelt prayer, it became clear we were being called to Israel.

What has it been like to come home? After becoming newly-minted Israeli citizens, the bus driver dropped our 20–30 boxes/pieces of heavy luggage on the side of a busy street since he could not fit down our narrow block. How would we get them to our new home two blocks away? We were greeted by Rebbetzin Glaser and her daughter who started helping. I then saw a gentleman in a cafe with a *kippah* who volunteered, no problem. Before I knew it, some high school students were helping (and they would not accept payment)! A worker loaned a dolly. A gentleman on a motorcycle, who kept his helmet on the entire time, jumped in. Others lent their hands, including someone who just happened to have a hand truck. All together, with the help of my amazing in-laws, everything was taken care of. It was, *mamash*, a miracle out of a movie.

I am so grateful for all of the holy souls that have helped us get here, and that is only the beginning of the many kindnesses Hashem has blessed us with every step of our journey so far. Being here is being home. Baruch Hashem!”

Akiva Lieber

“My name is Akiva Lieber, I live in the vibrant city of Tel Aviv and I officially made *Aliyah* in January within Israel. I’m currently enrolled in the Torah Tech *yeshiva* gap year program where I spend half my time learning and half working in a high-tech company. I’m also hoping next year to draft into the IDF.

I’ve wanted to make *Aliyah* since the first time I came here in January of 2017, and I’m happy to say I did so exactly 7 years later. For me the biggest reason I wanted to make *Aliyah* was the people and overall environment. I’d say a perfect example of this is one day while I was walking to the gym I saw a dog break off his leash and 3 people including a guy who jumped off his moving bike, ran to grab the dog, to return to his owner. I’ve found that the people here, while they might act aggressive sometimes (especially if you cut them off while driving), really do want to help you.

Being here since October 7th has definitely been a unique and unfortunate experience, however seeing how the country came together to help each other out in every way only reinforced my decision to make *Aliyah*. I thankfully have had the opportunity to volunteer to help make food and get gear to soldiers.

Coming here knowing barely any Hebrew was definitely a challenge although I’m happy to say I can now carry a solid conversation. Another challenge I expected coming in, was definitely the paperwork, but with the help of Nefesh B’Nefesh, and just taking it one step at a time it ended up being quite easy.

Since living here, I definitely find myself feeling happier and healthier. I think a big part of this is I naturally walk more and eat healthier food. To me, nothing says “Israel” like a good 20 *shekel* falafel from a place whose name you will never remember. I also find that my favorite thing to do here is go to the beach, where the sunset is like nowhere else I’ve ever been. I also enjoy hiking, and other forms of exploring Israel, which I have been able to do a lot since I got here and I can’t wait to see where I’ll go next.”



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Sharing the Burden, Taking Responsibility

Roi Abecassis

Why did G-d give us the *mitzvah* of *kiddush haChodesh*, sanctifying the new moon, just before the Exodus? What is so special about this *mitzvah* that it had to be given at this critical juncture in our history? There are plenty of other *mitzvot* He could have commanded us! Perhaps it's because the timing is moments before the birth of the Jewish people. Hashem gave His young people this *mitzvah* precisely because He wanted us, as a nation, to become partners in His creation.

Until this moment, it was G-d Who created the world, guided our forefathers, orchestrated the slavery and Exodus and changed the course of nature through the ten plagues. Then, moments before *Am Yisrael* left Egypt, G-d told His people: "It is time for you to step up and be involved." The divine message is clear. It's up to us, *Am Yisrael*, to take responsibility.

This lesson is particularly relevant today, as the *Charedi* community's refusal to serve in the military and the government's continued allocation of funds to their *yeshivot* are once again hot button issues. In the current war, the IDF has been forced to fight simultaneously on multiple fronts, raising the question of whether the army needs a larger fighting force. Should tens of thousands of *yeshiva* students be exempt from service at this hour of need, when Israel needs every young Jew to stand up and be counted?

Rabbi Yitzchak Yosef recently threatened that if *Charedim* are forced to enlist, they will leave the country. This statement was particularly painful because it was not only said by a Torah scholar, but by the "*Rishon LeZion*," the Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel and the most senior spiritual representative of the Sephardi community – a community known for its moderation, acceptance and warmth. How could he say such a thing and show so little responsibility for *Am Yisrael*?

Rav Yosef made this statement as dozens of Religious Zionist soldiers pay the ultimate price for our people. The *hesder yeshivot* and *mechinot* have lost their finest. Young heroes who shouldered responsibility,

with a rifle in one hand and a Gemara in the other. Heroes who understood "it is a time of trouble for Ya'akov" as they left the study halls and went to war.

As a father of a combat soldier still in Gaza, I have many sleepless nights of worry and anxiety. I cannot shake a persistent thought. How can our *Charedi* brothers still be living in another world? "Will your brothers go to war and you stay here?" (Bamidbar 32:6). Where is the responsibility that Hashem expects from us?

A few weeks ago, the World Zionist Organization's (WZO) *Va'ad HaPoel*, composed of representatives from both Israel and Diaspora Jewry, met in Jerusalem. Like the State of Israel, the WZO is made up of diverse political factions with frequent disagreements on fundamental issues. One of the proposals for discussion was to add the clause of "encouraging military and national service as a strengthening force for the Jewish people in Israel" as part of the Jerusalem Program, a document collating the WZO's core values. The joint World Herut and World Mizrachi delegation managed to mobilize a huge majority from all the factions (ultra-Orthodox, Orthodox, Reform, Conservative and the secular movements) to insert IDF and National Service as pivotal values in the WZO constitution.

Something has shifted within World Jewry and its relationship towards Israel. Sectors with opposing views can today meet each other and discuss – and even agree upon – issues that were previously a source of deep division.

Pro-Zionist sentiments are growing in many liberal and progressive communities. Organizations previously angry at Israel over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are fully backing the State of Israel in this war. In addition, a portion of the *Charedi* community in the Diaspora – who are generally more open and involved in secular life than their peers in Israel – are including the Prayer for the State of Israel in their *shuls* and leading fundraising campaigns for IDF soldiers and reservists. Yes, it's easier to encourage others to serve than actually enlist yourself. Still, we may



Roi Abecassis, Yaakov Aharoni, Director General of the WZO, and Gael Grunewald at the Va'ad HaPoel meeting.

be seeing the beginning of a broad consensus on the significance of military service.

Mizrachi's success in attaining such a broad consensus is no accident. Since its inception, Mizrachi has endeavored to be the bridge that links opposing ideologies. The shifts that have appeared in the wake of the war have allowed us to create a broad consensus around the military service issue and the need for mutual responsibility between Israel and Diaspora Jewry.

The WZO can inspire us in Israel, in the Knesset and beyond, to find points of consensus around which we can conduct authentic, respectful discussion. Let us identify the issues upon which we can broadly agree to enable our continued existence in our precious Land. We have no other choice. In these troubled times, *all of Am Yisrael* must accept responsibility.



Roi Abecassis

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A BLESSING OVER BITTERNESS

RABBI YOSEF ZVI RIMON

By eating *maror*, we are reminded that G-d's supervision of the world drives everything – both the good and the bad. Even the bitter was known to Him in advance, and bitterness also has a role to play. We eat *maror* and internalize the great thanks we owe to G-d for His great rescue. We eat *maror* and pray in our hearts for *Am Yisrael*, who have already gone through so much bitterness – in Egypt, in the exile to Babylon, in the Inquisition, in the Crusades, in the expulsion from Spain, in the Holocaust, and today. As we eat the *maror*, we pray that the future will bring not bitterness, but sweetness, light and redemption.

The *mitzvah* of *maror* was a Torah-mandated *mitzvah* at the time that the Pesach sacrifice was brought. Today it is only a rabbinic *mitzvah*. The best *maror* is lettuce, and one must ensure that it is insect-free. One must take a *kezayit* of *maror*. It is best to take 27 cc. (0.91 fluid ounces), which is about the size of an average lettuce leaf, but by the technical requirements of the law 19 cc. (0.64 fluid ounces) are enough. When reciting the blessing on *maror*, one must keep in mind that the blessing should also include the *maror* that will be used in *korech*. Then, dip the *maror* in the *charoset*, shake off some of the *charoset*, and eat it without leaning, eating at a normal pace, but without stopping.

Rambam (8:8) writes that one should dip *matzah* into *charoset*: “and he dips *matzah* into *charoset* and eats.” Ra'avad disagrees, and Maggid Mishneh cites other opinions that disagree and states

that one eats *matzah* by itself, without *charoset*.

Sefer HaManhig (Hilchot Pesach 79) is surprised by Rambam's opinion: “I was amazed that he wrote to dip *matzah* in *charoset* and I have never seen or heard this custom anywhere. One can even ask how such a combination is logical. If *matzah* requires leaning because it is a remembrance of freedom, and *charoset* is a remembrance of the clay of slavery, how can the contradictory values of freedom and slavery be combined? It is possible that Rambam is teaching us that very point – on this night it is important to combine servitude and redemption. Although it is not our custom to dip *matzah* into *charoset*, we do express this connection in other ways. When we eat *maror* directly after *matzah*, as well as by eating *korech*, we demonstrate that slavery and redemption are intertwined.”

When we eat *maror* we think about the bitterness of slavery in order to instill in ourselves a greater appreciation of the miracles of the Exodus from Egypt. Simply put, in the wake of our thoughts about the difficulty and the suffering during slavery, we better appreciate the greatness of our salvation. Beyond this, eating *maror* teaches us that everything was planned by G-d – both the slavery and redemption. Slavery also has a role to play in the process of redemption, and without it we would not have been redeemed.

Sadly, on occasion, history has proven that bitterness and antisemitism have even prevented assimilation.

On the *Seder* night we do not ignore the bitterness and distress, nor do we repress the difficulties of the past. On the contrary, we eat *maror* and recite a blessing on it. By doing so we acknowledge that the bitterness we endured was also part of “He has sanctified us with His *mitzvot*.” The *mitzvah* of eating *maror* teaches us to look directly at the difficulties of life, without fear and without evasion. We acknowledge that with every difficulty one grows, and every struggle reveals the powers within ourselves to continue focusing with joy and abundant good.



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

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





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VEHI SHE'AMDA

RABBI REUVEN TARAGIN

In 2016, Natan Sharansky celebrated the 30th anniversary of his release from the Gulag after nine years in prison. At his annual dinner of gratitude, which he celebrates every year on *Rosh Chodesh Adar*, the date of his release, he told the following story. Over a decade earlier, Sharansky was invited by President George W. Bush to the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington. The speakers that morning, including politicians and celebrities, were asked to relate the event in their lives where they most felt G-d's presence. Christians call it "bearing witness."

The stories were inspirational, but they all followed the same basic pattern. Some shared a low moment when they felt G-d's presence had lifted them up, and others spoke about a dramatic moment when they felt divine intervention had saved their lives. A fighter pilot related that a malfunction caused his engines to fail. As he was plunging to earth he felt a heavenly force intervene, restarting his engines without any explicable reason, as if a superior force had intervened.

When it came time for Sharansky to speak, he explained that Jews view these kinds of experiences differently. We look for G-d's presence not in the life of the individual but in the life of the nation – what G-d does for us as a people. Sharansky knew well that not everyone present that morning was a lover of Israel. He said: "You are Bible-believing Christians, and you know all about the Jews enslaved in Egypt, how Pharaoh refused to free them, and how, through G-d's mighty hand and outstretched arm, through the plagues and the miracles at the Red Sea He redeemed us from Egypt and founded our nation. But not long ago – just a few years ago – there was a mighty, evil empire that intimidated the entire world. And everyone was afraid to challenge them. Nations sought accommodation, détente, an arrangement whereby the world would keep the peace and no one would interfere in the domestic affairs of this evil empire.

"But there was one small group of Jews who arose, reasserted their Jewish identity and reclaimed their membership in the Jewish nation. It was a small group at first – dozens, then hundreds, then thousands – but small compared to the gargantuan size of their enemy of whom everyone else was afraid. And then Jews across the world heard of them and rallied for them, and pressured governments, and then blow after blow rained on the Soviet Union until it collapsed from within and the Iron Curtain fell and the Jews were liberated, again."

Everyone burst into applause, and he continued. "For Jews, that is how G-d manifests His presence – in the life of our nation. He reveals Himself through what happens to the Jewish people." He then told his audience that night that this demonstration of G-d's presence in the life of the Jewish people was greater than anything any one of them had ever experienced in their lives as individuals.¹

"And this is what kept our fathers and what keeps us surviving. For, not only one arose and tried to destroy us, rather in every generation they try to destroy us, and Hashem saves us from their hands."

But is it true that Hashem always saves us? We know that the nations of the world have succeeded in killing millions of our people – during the Holocaust and on October 7.

"*Amad aleinu l'chaloteinu*, They tried to annihilate us." The emphasis here is on the word "*l'chaloteinu*" – many have attempted to annihilate us. Our enemies, from Hitler to Sinwar, may have succeeded at killing some of us. But, miraculously, *Am Yisrael* continues to exist.

In the words of Tolstoy: "The Jew is the emblem of eternity. He whom neither slaughter, nor torture of thousands of years could destroy, he whom neither fire, nor sword, nor inquisition was able to wipe off the face of the earth... Such a nation cannot be destroyed. The Jew is as everlasting as eternity itself."

The Christian thinker Blaise Pascal was also awed by the eternity of our people: "These people are not eminent solely by their antiquity, but are also singular by their duration, which has always continued from their origin till now. For, whereas the nations of Greece and of Italy, of Lacedaemon, of Athens and of Rome, and others who came long after, have long since perished, these ever remain, and in spite of the endeavors of many powerful kings who have a hundred times tried to destroy them, as their historians testify, and as it is easy to conjecture from the natural order of things during so long a space of years, they have nevertheless been preserved."

On *Seder* night, even as we feel the bitterness of our losses, let us take strength in knowing that Hashem will always save us from their hands.

1. As related to me by Rabbi Steven Pruzansky.



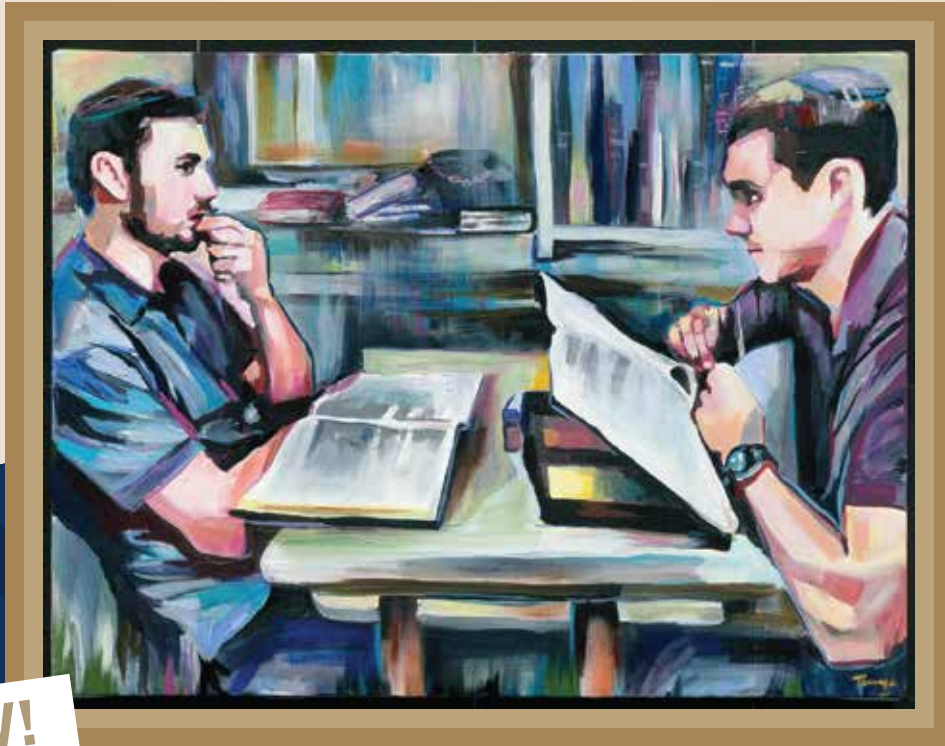
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Peh-Sach and Milah: From Silence to Song

Rabbanit Shani Taragin

Since October 7th, I have frequently found myself at a loss for words when responding to the hackneyed, “How are you?” or attempting to explain the inexplicable. Psychologists often attribute speech deficiency to an experience of trauma which decreases activity in Broca’s area, located in the left hemisphere of the brain and associated with speech production and articulation.

Aphasia – the term used to describe an acquired loss of language that damages the capacity to speak, listen, read and write – may be caused by psychological or neurological injury to Broca’s area. Words may be uttered very slowly and poorly articulated, while speech may be labored and consist primarily of nouns, verbs or important adjectives, resembling a telegraphic character.

A close friend of our family, Eitan Ashman, suffered a massive ischemic stroke in August 2017, leaving him with right-sided hemiparesis, memory loss, neuro-fatigue, chronic pain and aphasia, affecting his speech communication, but not his comprehension. With the perseverance of Eitan’s *eshet chayil*, Leora, and with the guidance of Rabbi Johnny Solomon, Eitan’s insights on the *Haggadah* were revised and condensed in the recently published *Koach Eitan Haggadah – Empowering Seder Conversations*, to enable all those struggling with speech to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *sippur yetziat Mitzrayim*, recounting our national story and collective memory through words.

As I reflected upon Eitan’s struggles and search to find his words this Pesach, I realized that his personal journey is reminiscent of our national journey as explained by the Ariz”l, from “*Mitzrayim*” – a narrow (*tzar*) place of struggles – through *Peh-Sach*, the opening of our mouth in conversation (*siach*) and prayer (*Sha’ar HaKavanot*).

Rav Soloveitchik *zt”l* delineated the Torah’s three-stage process of redemption from silence to the emergence of speech.

Shemot begins with *Am Yisrael*’s bondage and the absence of their words and sounds. Immediately before Moshe’s consecration as prophet and redeemer, sighs and cries are heard, but words are still absent. Only when Moshe came were protests voiced, climaxing with shouts of prayer by the *Yam Suf*, followed by melodious song. “Redemption,” stated Rav Soloveitchik, “is identical with communing... When a people leaves a mute world and enters a world of sound, speech and song, it becomes a redeemed people – a free people. In other words, a mute life is identical with bondage; a speech endowed life is a free life” (*Redemption, Prayer, Talmud Torah*).

“I have never been a man of words, either in times past or now that You have spoken to Your servant; I am slow of speech and slow of tongue” (*Shemot* 4:10). Ironically, it is through Moshe – the man who initially felt inadequate to speak – that *Am Yisrael* learns how to emancipate speech. His desert journey to initiate redemption is fraught with danger for not properly appreciating the importance of *brit milah* – the covenant of circumcision and of the word. Yet Moshe teaches the nation how to sing and pray and ultimately becomes a prophet of many words (see *Sefer Devarim*) – a microcosm of the national metamorphosis from “uncircumcised lips” to storytellers.

Every year as Pesach approaches, we have an opportunity to redeem speech from its narrow, silent spaces of exile. After leaving Egypt and before crossing the *Yam Suf*, Hashem commanded Moshe to tell Bnei Yisrael to encamp by “*Pi-HaCherot*,” the “mouth” (*peh*) of “freedom” (*cherut*) (Rav Tzadok HaKohen, *Pri Tzaddik*).

This year, inspired by the tenacity and *koach* of Eitan, I will try to find the words to articulate what we have experienced as a nation since the war began. I will remember and retell our story and message with meaningful sound. I will revisit the *milah*



Eitan Ashman, author of the new *Koach Eitan Haggadah*

and *sicha* of the mouth of freedom on *Seder* night, re-experiencing redemption. And I will pray through *Maggid* and its concluding blessing, that we shall sing a new song of redemption and salvation – “Blessed be Hashem, Redeemer of Israel.”



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How Antisemitism Comes and Goes

Rabbi Moshe Hauer

Antisemitism has never been just about physical attacks on Jews. It is the great conspiracy theory, a narrative portraying the Jewish people as all-powerful and utterly disloyal, a lethal combination that generates hatred and resentment. It is within that climate of demonization that physical attacks are perpetrated against us. It is true now and it was true then.

The original story of antisemitism is described in the story of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*. *Am Yisrael* were originally welcomed to Egypt as heroes, the family of the viceroy who had saved the country from ruin. But all the good and the benefits they brought to Egypt and its rulers was quickly forgotten; “a new king arose over Egypt who did not know Yosef,” and began to portray *Am Yisrael* as all-powerful and utterly disloyal: “Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more numerous and stronger than we are. Let us deal shrewdly with them lest they increase and when a war befalls us, they will join our enemies and wage war against us and depart from the land” (Shemot 1:8-10)

The demonization of our people was a critical stage in the process of our Egyptian experience. Before a taskmaster cracked his whip or threw a Jewish baby in the Nile, a narrative was constructed to recast us as the Egyptians’ oppressors.

This is why the Pesach Haggadah cites the above verse to illustrate that which is written in the book of Devarim (26:6), “*vayarei’u otanu haMitzrim vaya’anunu vayitnu aleinu avoda kasha*, the Egyptians made us bad and afflicted us, and they burdened us with hard work.” The first phrase does not say that they did bad to us, “*vayarei’u lanu*,” but that they made us out to be bad. The verse does not describe the Egyptians doing bad to us but rather their creating a caricature of how we were not friend but foe, scheming against them and awaiting

the opportunity to actively turn on them (see commentaries of *Orchos Chaim*, *Rashbatz*, Rav Kook, and Rav Soloveitchik on the Haggadah).

We can readily imagine how disorienting this must have been for our ancestors. One of their own had saved Egypt and transformed its economy in Pharaoh’s favor, making him the owner and master of the people, the land, and the treasure of Egypt, and now they were suddenly recast as the enemy. Their contributions to Egyptian society were forgotten or ignored and they were quickly transformed from savior to oppressor.

Their first reaction must have been to blame it on Pharaoh, the person then sitting in the seat of leadership. “Once we are rid of him, things will certainly be better.” As Ramban wrote (2:23), “the custom of all subjects of a wicked tyrant is to hope for and look forward to the day of his death.” Heads will roll, we will sack the coach or the university president and all will be good again. But when they saw that the king died and nothing improved, they realized that conspiracy theories stubbornly survive and do not disappear from society with a change of leadership.

As we consider the familiarity of this story and its reflection in current events, we must ask if there is anything that can come next that could potentially bode well for us? Is the only path forward one of doom, Heaven forbid? Is the painful history of Jewish exile necessarily repeating itself?

The Torah provides three better pathways forward. In Moshe’s Egypt, relief for the Jews came with the tragic collapse of Egypt. In Yosef’s case, he benefited from Pharaoh’s fear that Egypt might collapse. And in the story of Purim, Achashverosh simply awoke one night to reopen the history books and read the true story of

the Jewish contribution to society, thus resetting the narrative about the Jews.

Our Sages taught us to appeal to G-d for the well-being of our country and its government. Those of us living in the United States sincerely pray that the American kingdom of kindness will survive its current challenges and recognize and be responsive to the genuine threats to its future, awakening itself to reread the true story of America and of the Jewish people and fundamentally resetting the narrative to “place in the hearts of all Americans to deal kindly with us and all Israel. In their days and in ours may the Jews be saved and Israel dwell in safety, and may the Redeemer come to Zion. *Kein yehi ratzon*.”

“Now it came to pass in those many days that the king of Egypt died, and the children of Israel sighed from the labor, and they cried out, and their cry ascended to G-d from the labor. G-d heard their cry, and G-d remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob” (Shemot 2:23).



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The Hidden Simcha of Pesach

Rabbanit Rachelle Fraenkel

The Torah doesn't explicitly command us to be *beSimcha* on Pesach. There are three mentions of *simcha* on Sukkot, one for Shavuot, but Pesach? Nothing.

Rabbeinu Bechaye suggests an explanation. As opposed to Sukkot, when the storehouses are overflowing with the year's crops, and to Shavuot, following the harvest, Pesach is a tense time. The Mishnah lists it as Judgment Day for the crops. It's a time of year when the fields are full but the storehouses are still empty. A point in the agricultural year when it is difficult to fill the holiday tables with food, and it is even more difficult to share the sparse food with guests from outside – those without whom there is no holiday: the Levite, the convert, the orphan and the widow. The Torah understands that people may not invite these guests, and since these guests will not be present, the abundance of blessing which only appears due to the *simcha* of these guests will not appear at that home, and thus there is no *simcha* since there is no blessing. Therefore, the Torah does not mention *simcha* on Pesach.

But this is a description of reality, not the ideal. Practically, there is an obligation of *simcha* on Pesach as well.

Jewish *simcha* does not have only one form. The joy of Purim is not like the joy of Yom Tov, the joy of *bikkurim* is not like that of *ma'aser sheini*, but all of them are enveloped in the call to serve G-d *beSimcha*.

When Rav Soloveitchik compares the *simcha* of Purim to the *simcha* of Pesach, he notes that on Pesach, like on the other holidays, there was real, unalterable change. We were freed, we became a nation, we

received the Torah. The sense of *simcha* is one of deep and true elation. On Purim, there was a temporary salvation, the kind that only emphasized our vulnerability in the face of the ruler's whimsical and capricious nature. It is an external *simcha*, not an expression of inner content.

Armed with Rav Soloveitchik's description, on the one hand we feel the greatness of the holiday upon us, the deep and dramatic change – the kind that influences the entire history of mankind, and the radical transformation worthy of celebrating with the *simcha* of Yom Tov. On the other hand, we also desire to redeem the honor of the partial redemptions, the joy of the day-to-day, even if it is incomplete and temporal and sometimes very vulnerable and fragile. Perhaps the message of Purim is specifically on the flip side of the life-changing *shalosh regalim* – to know how to be happy in the "small" days, in the moments and gifts of the mundane.

And as happens to many of us when we are at a loss for words, I found these wondrous words of Rabbi Sacks *zt"l*:

"Happiness is something you can feel alone, but joy, in Tanach, is something you share with others. Happiness is about a lifetime, but joy lives in the moment. Happiness tends to be a cool emotion, but joy makes you want to dance and sing. It's hard to feel happy in the midst of uncertainty. But you can still feel joy..."

Every day we begin our morning prayers with a litany of thanks, that we are here, with a world to live in, family and friends to love and be loved by, about to start a day full of possibilities, in which, by acts of loving kindness, we allow G-d's presence to flow through us into the lives of others.

Joy helps heal some of the wounds of our injured, troubled world."

I write these words between Purim and Pesach, and they lead me to think of the intriguing possibility of grasping both types of joy:

1. To strive for deep and lasting meaning and happiness, the type we merited on a national scale on Pesach, and from which we draw inspiration to create freedom and meaning in our personal lives.

2. To recognize and appreciate the joy within us this moment, even before the great problems of life are solved. The happiness of Yom Tov tells us there are summits worth climbing towards, and the joy of Purim tells us that the path is paved with gratitude and goodness. We can still be joyful even if we are not yet happy.



Rabbanit Rachelle Fraenkel
teaches Torah at midrashot in Israel.



AN UNBREAKABLE PROMISE

RABBI DANIEL FRIDMAN

The pogrom of Simchat Torah, followed by the explosion of vicious hatred we have endured in these last six months, bring renewed and intense focus to a celebrated, if somewhat enigmatic, element of *Maggid*.

Immediately after recounting the Divine promise to Avraham issued in the *Brit Bein HaBetarim*, and just prior to commencing the core section of *sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim*, *Arami oved avi*, the Haggadah introduces the passage of *Vehi She'amda*.

The common practice of covering the *matzot* during this paragraph is replete with *halachic* significance. The *mitzvah* of *sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim* must be conducted while the *matzah* and *maror* are placed before us. As such, this passage constitutes a break from the *mitzvah* of *sippur yetziat Mitzrayim*, necessarily raising the question of its inclusion in the Haggadah altogether. Moreover, a slight variation in the proper text of this passage, whether or not it opens with the conjunctive *vav*, which is absent in the text of Rambam and Abudraham, but present in that of Kol Bo and Tashbetz, further highlights the extent to which this section is meant to be integrated into the recitation of *Maggid*.

Ritva argues that the opening element of the passage, *Vehi She'amda*, is a reference to the Divine promise itself. Drawing upon earlier insights of Ramban, Ritva argues that the terrifying experience which Avraham had during the *Brit Bein HaBetarim*, as he was enveloped in a deep and profound darkness, foretold the future suffering of the Jewish people in subsequent generations.

And yet, much as Avraham viscerally experienced the future suffering of his children, he was assured that Hashem would never abandon his descendents. In a parallel formulation of the Kol Bo, "For we find with our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov, that they suffered many kinds of sufferings and were saved, and so too our forefathers in

Egypt and they were also saved, and so do we experience the same today." Our present travails place us in a long arc of Jewish history.

This, I believe, must be the primary focus of our *Seder* experience this year. The horrors that the Jewish people have experienced, unseen since the Holocaust, certainly evoke feelings of deep vulnerability. We have witnessed, in the words of *Vehi She'amda* itself, those who rise against us with the unapologetic intent of total annihilation. And yet, this very experience compels us to revisit our history and recognize both the remarkable resilience of our people as well as the unbreakable nature of Hashem's promise to us.

In this respect, the inclusion of *Vehi She'amda* in *Maggid* becomes self-explanatory. If the essential aspect of the *mitzvah* of *sippur yetziat Mitzrayim* is to conceptualize oneself as if one had literally left Egypt - "In every generation one is obligated to view himself as though he came out of Egypt" - the full measure of that awareness is actualized only when we recognize that our salvation from Egypt is a paradigm for all future generations in their moments of peril.

This understanding is reinforced by the specific inclusion of *Vehi She'amda* immediately prior to the recitation of *Arami oved avi*. Just before we revisit the historical trajectory of our people, the moments of great triumph but also profound tribulation, we explicitly and unequivocally declare that Jewish history speaks directly to us, reminding us of our unbreakable bond with our Redeemer. While the momentary departure from the immediate theme of Egyptian slavery necessitates that we cover the *matzot*, there can be little doubt that the recitation is certainly worthy of inclusion, as it extrapolates the particular suffering we endured in Egypt to every subsequent national crisis.

Indeed, this precise sentiment is conveyed by *Chazal* in a remarkable

aggadah concerning an early conversation between Moshe and Hashem, before Moshe had commenced his historic mission:

"I Am that I Am.' The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moshe: Go and say to Israel: I was with you in this servitude, and I shall be with you in the servitude of the other kingdoms. He said to Him: L-rd of the Universe, sufficient is the evil in the time thereof! Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: Go and tell them: 'I Am' has sent me unto you" (*Berachot* 9b).

In this stunning scene, Hashem tells Moshe to convey to the Jewish people that their salvation in Egypt is paradigmatic for all future crises. While Moshe, wisely, notes that the Jewish people, in their present desperation, could not bear to hear of future suffering, the message for us is unmistakable. Our renewed encounter with the worst forms of antisemitism, however painful, carries along with it a clear message of ultimate deliverance: "I shall be with you in the servitude of the other kingdoms." As He always was, Hashem remains with His People, and full redemption beckons us all.



Rabbi Daniel Fridman

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Yair Ettinger is a Religious Zionist journalist primarily focusing on religious affairs, the religious and Haredi communities and their politics. Previously, he covered issues relating to Palestinian citizens of Israel. Ettinger studied Islam and Middle Eastern affairs at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

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TURNING CURSES INTO BLESSINGS

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS י"צ

Genesis ends on an almost serene note. Jacob has found his long lost son. The family has been reunited. Joseph has forgiven his brothers. Under his protection and influence the family has settled in Goshen, one of the most prosperous regions of Egypt. They now have homes, property, food, the protection of Joseph and the favor of Pharaoh. It must have seemed one of the golden moments of Abraham's family's history.

Then, as has happened so often since, "There arose a new Pharaoh who did not know Joseph." There was a political climate change. The family fell out of favor. Pharaoh told his advisers: "Look, the Israelite people are becoming too numerous and strong for us" (Shemot 1:9)¹ – the first time the word "people" is used in the Torah with reference to the children of Israel. "Let us deal shrewdly with them, so that they may not increase." And so the whole mechanism of oppression moves into operation: forced labor that turns into slavery that becomes attempted genocide.

The story is engraved in our memory. We tell it every year, and in summary-form in our prayers, every day. It is part of what it is to be a Jew. Yet there is one phrase that shines out from the narrative: "But the more they were oppressed, the more they increased and the more they spread." That, no less than oppression itself, is part of what it means to be a Jew.

The worse things get, the stronger we become. Jews are the people who not only survive but thrive in adversity.

Jewish history is not merely a story of Jews enduring catastrophes that might have spelled the end to less tenacious groups. It is that after every disaster, Jews renewed themselves. They discovered some hitherto hidden reservoir of spirit that fuelled new forms of collective self-expression as the carriers of G-d's message to the world.

Every tragedy begat new creativity. After the division of the kingdom following the death of Solomon came the great literary prophets, Amos and Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah. Out of the destruction of the First Temple and the Babylonian exile came the renewal of Torah in the

life of the nation, beginning with Ezekiel and culminating in the vast educational programme brought back to Israel by Ezra and Nehemiah. From the destruction of the Second Temple came the immense literature of rabbinic Judaism, until then preserved mostly in the form of an oral tradition: Mishnah, Midrash and Gemara.

From the Crusades came the *Chassidei Ashkenaz*, the North European school of piety and spirituality. Following the Spanish expulsion came the mystic circle of Tzfat: Lurianic Kabbalah and all it inspired by way of poetry and prayer. From East European persecution and poverty came the *Chassidic* movement and its revival of grass-roots Judaism through a seemingly endless flow of story and song. And from the worst tragedy of all in human terms, the Holocaust, came the rebirth of the State of Israel, the greatest collective Jewish affirmation of life in more than two thousand years.

It is well known that the Chinese ideogram for "crisis" also means "opportunity". Any civilization that can see the blessing within the curse, the fragment of light within the heart of darkness, has within it the capacity to endure. Hebrew goes one better. The word for crisis, *mashber*, also means "a child-birth chair." Written into the semantics of Jewish consciousness is the idea that the pain of hard times is a collective form of the contractions of a woman giving birth. Something new is being born. That is the mindset of a people of whom it can be said that "the more they were oppressed, the more they increased and the more they spread."

Where did it come from, this Jewish ability to turn weakness into strength, adversity into advantage, darkness into light? It goes back to the moment in which our people received its name, Israel. It was then, as Jacob wrestled alone at night with an angel, that as dawn broke his adversary begged him to let him go. "I will not let you go until you bless me," said Jacob (Bereishit 32:27). That is the source of our peculiar, distinctive obstinacy. We may have fought all night. We may be tired and on the brink of exhaustion. We may find ourselves limping, as did

Jacob. Yet we will not let our adversary go until we have extracted a blessing from the encounter. This turned out to be not a minor and temporary concession. It became the basis of his new name and our identity. Israel, the people who “wrestled with G-d and man and prevailed,” is the nation that grows stronger with each conflict and catastrophe.

I was reminded of this unusual national characteristic by an article that appeared in the British press in October 2015. Israel at the time was suffering from a wave of terrorist attacks that saw Palestinians murdering innocent civilians in streets and bus stations throughout the country. It began with these words: “Israel is an astonishing country, buzzing with energy and confidence, a magnet for talent and investment – a cauldron of innovation.” It spoke of its world-class excellence in aerospace, clean-tech, irrigation systems, software, cyber-security, pharmaceuticals and defense systems.²

“All this,” the writer went on to say, “derives from brain-power, for Israel has no natural resources and is surrounded by hostile neighbors.” The country is living proof of “the power of technical education, immigration and the benefits of the right sort of military service.” Yet this cannot be all, since Jews have consistently overachieved, wherever they were and whenever they were given the chance. He goes through the various suggested explanations: the strength of Jewish families, their passion for education, a desire for self-employment, risk-taking as a way of life, and even ancient history. The Levant was home to the world’s first agricultural societies and earliest traders. Perhaps, then, the disposition to enterprise was written, thousands of years ago, into Jewish DNA. Ultimately, though, he concludes that it has to do with “culture and communities.”

A key element of that culture has to do with the Jewish response to crisis. To every adverse circumstance, those who have inherited Jacob’s sensibilities insist: “I will not let you go until you bless me” (Bereishit 32:27). That is how Jews, encountering the Negev, found ways of making the desert bloom. Seeing a barren, neglected landscape elsewhere, they planted trees and forests. Faced with hostile armies on all their borders, they developed military technologies they then turned to peaceful use. War and terror forced them to develop medical expertise and world-leading skills in dealing with the aftermath of trauma. They found ways of turning every curse into a blessing.

The historian Paul Johnson, as always, put it eloquently: “Over 4,000 years the Jews proved themselves not only great survivors but extraordinarily skilful in adapting to the societies among which fate had thrust them, and in gathering whatever human comforts they had to offer. No people has been more fertile in enriching poverty or humanizing wealth, or in turning misfortune to creative account.”³

There is something profoundly spiritual as well as robustly practical about this ability to transform the bad moments of life into a spur to creativity. It is as if, deep within us

were a voice saying, “You are in this situation, bad though it is, because there is a task to perform, a skill to acquire, a strength to develop, a lesson to learn, an evil to redeem, a shard of light to be rescued, a blessing to be uncovered, for I have chosen you to give testimony to humankind that out of suffering can come great blessings if you wrestle with it for long enough and with unshakeable faith.”

In an age in which people of violence are committing acts of brutality in the name of the G-d of compassion, the people of Israel are proving daily that this is not the way of the G-d of Abraham, the G-d of life and the sanctity of life. And whenever we who are a part of that people lose heart, and wonder when it will ever end, we should recall the words: “The more they were oppressed, the more they increased and the more they spread.” A people of whom that can be said can be injured, but can never be defeated. G-d’s way is the way of life.

1. This is the first intimation in history of what in modern times took the form of the Russian forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. In the Diaspora, Jews – powerless – were often seen as all-powerful. What this usually means, when translated, is: How is it that Jews manage to evade the pariah status we have assigned to them?
2. Luke Johnson, ‘Animal Spirits: Israel and its tribe of risk-taking entrepreneurs,’ *Sunday Times*, 4 October 2015.
3. Paul Johnson, *The History of the Jews*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987, p. 58.



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JEWES with VIEWS

We asked five accomplished Jews from around the world: What is the most meaningful Seder night you have ever experienced?



Rebbetzin Channah Hambling

In 2020, three weeks before we set to fly to the UK for Pesach, our flight was canceled and Israel went into full lockdown. Like a lot of people, we had to make Pesach for the first time. But when my husband and I sat down to begin our *Seder* – just the two of us – there was a profound sense of calm. From all around our *yishuv*, we heard songs being sung and words of the *Haggadah* being said.

As we neared the end of our *Seder*, my five-month-old baby girl woke up just in time for *Hallel* and *Nirtzah*. Holding my baby and singing to Hashem, thanking Him for everything He does for us, was a special moment. Pesach is a festival for continuing our nation's history. That year, when we made our own *Seder* for the first time, we added our own link to the chain of the Jewish history.

Rebbetzin Channah Hambling grew up in London. She studied at Midreshet Yeud and participated in World Mizrahi and Matan's Lapidot program. She is currently the Community Rebbetzin at Birmingham Central United Synagogue.



Rabbi Daniel Kaplan

Rav Soloveitchik once said that the two most exalted nights in his life were the Pesach *Seder* and *Kol Nidrei* on Yom Kippur. I resonate so much with that sentiment, because the Pesach *Seder* has always been one of the highlights of my year, as both a child and as an adult.

When I was a child, we usually would go out to different families for the Pesach *Seder*. But when I was a teenager, my parents decided to have a *Seder* at home with our entire extended family. Seeing my father conduct that *Seder* was very moving and meaningful, and I have tried to inculcate his customs into my own *Sedarim*.

My most memorable *Seder* was during Covid in 2020, when South Africa was in complete lockdown, and we could only be with our immediate family. Everything we prepared was for our children, because there were just the 5 of us at the table – our 3 children, my wife and myself. The amount of preparation we put into that *Seder*, to make it the most exciting and unforgettable night, will stay with me forever, because it really highlighted the true essence of a *Seder* – teaching it to your children and making it an experience they will never forget. In that intimate setting, I felt connected to our national story and the privilege of passing it onto the next generation. For me, this is the most exciting part of Pesach – not the big, glamorous *Sedarim* that many strive for, but the intimate time with our families and the duty and privilege of passing the story on to our children. By giving them positive, proud, Jewish experiences we can continue to build *Am Yisrael* and the Jewish people. *Am Yisrael Chai!*

Rabbi Daniel Kaplan is the Executive Director of Mizrahi South Africa and also rabbi of Bnei Akiva South Africa.



Rabbanit Dr. Tamara Spitz

Over the years, I have spent many *Seder* nights in various places. In my childhood, *Seder* was with my grandparents in Washington Heights, and I spent my teenage years at my parents' table in Queens. But my most memorable *Seder* night experience was the year my husband and I, with our two young children, moved to Alon Shvut. We had recently made *Aliyah* and it was our first *Pesach* alone, without any other family present. Growing up, *Seder* night always meant family time. But this was the first time we needed to navigate it ourselves. A wonderful family in the neighborhood invited us over for the *Seder*. We realized something was different as soon as we entered the house. The living room floor was covered in mattresses and carpets. After making *kiddush* at the table, everyone was asked to find a place in the living room. *Maggid* was read and discussed on couches and pillows. Our children had the best time! We had always celebrated *Pesach* night around a table, in a formal way that lasted many hours and could sometimes be a challenge for young children. That year, in Alon Shvut, we experienced a new and exciting way to celebrate *Seder* night. Since that year, we have adopted that custom as our own to the great enjoyment of all participants.

Rabbanit Dr. Tamara Spitz is the Rosh Beit Midrash and a Mashgicha Ruchanit of Midreshet Torah v'Avodah. She lectures on various topics in Gemara, including Daf Yomi, Halacha, and Tefilah. Dr. Spitz is part of the World Mizrahi Speakers Bureau, lectures at Web Yeshiva and served as the Jewish Studies Principal of Instituto Yavne, one of the main Jewish day schools of Montevideo, Uruguay. She also runs a chiropractic practice specializing in Women's Health in Gush Etzion and is a Hip-Hop dance teacher.



Shivi Himmelstein

Upon reflection, I experienced my most meaningful *Seder* with just my close family during the Covid pandemic. My grandpa had just passed away in England, and we were stuck watching the funeral on Zoom. Because of the lockdowns, my mum sat *shiva* alone just before *Pesach* began. Covid reminded me of the Jews' first *Seder*: "And none of you shall go out of the door of his house" (Shemot 12:22). Incredibly, my wife's grandparents made *Pesach* themselves that year for the first time – after 60 years of marriage!

It was a bittersweet year, as people usually cross the country for huge family gatherings and to refresh long friendships over the *Seder* night. "Take lambs for your families" (Shemot 12:21). It was just our small family on the most important family night of the year.

The essence of *Seder* Night is "וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ, and you shall tell your child" – continuing Jewish history by teaching the next generation. It all begins with the immediate family, and that's where it counts the most. Being together, a family, as one.

Maybe that's what made it so meaningful. It was simple, genuine, real, and uplifting to focus on the parent-child relationship, to see siblings discuss the Exodus and to strengthen that family bond which makes the Jewish people who we are. It was the silver lining of the Covid pandemic – and one I hope we can capture again.

Shivi Himmelstein and his wife Shira are the World Bnei Akiva and Mizrahi shlichim in Perth, Australia. They are graduates of World Mizrahi's Shalhevet program.



Shoshana Judelman

Until I was 7, my Zeide led all of our *Sedarim*. He was an old world Polish Jew, and he led the *Seder* exactly that way – quickly reading through the *Haggadah* with little room for audience participation. In many ways it was beautiful... but it left little room for me to connect.

The first year my father stepped into the role of leader, he asked us kids to help him prepare. I remember sitting with him and my siblings going through the *Haggadah*, writing notes indicating where he should stop, because one of us had a song to add or a small *dvar Torah* to share.

That year, I felt included and empowered. I believe every *Seder* that I have experienced since is, in some way, an offshoot of that first year – the year I tasted what it meant to contribute to the *Seder* and begin building my own personal connection to Judaism. I still remember the feeling when it was my turn to share. It was a moment of pride, joy, hope and growth. May Hashem bless us with the patience to open that door of opportunity for ourselves and our children, and with the strength to believe we can all walk through it.

Shoshana Judelman teaches Chassidut for the Shirat David Community in Efrat and for Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya in Jerusalem. She is a guide in Poland with JRoots and co-leads inspirational trips to Ukraine and around Eretz Yisrael. Shoshana has served as a guide at Yad Vashem since 2014.

Plagues from Within

Rabbi Eliezer Kashtiel

Aside from damaging the Egyptians' fields, the *arbeh*, the locust, had two additional targets: their land and their homes. The Torah relates that the *arbeh* "covered the surface of the entire land, and the land was darkened" (Shemot 10:15). In addition, the locusts invaded the Egyptians' homes.

The phenomenon of darkness caused by an infestation of locusts also appears in *Sefer Yoel*. The *navi* describes an invasion of locusts as "a day of darkness and gloom." Yoel also describes an extensive process of *teshuva* that would lead Hashem to remove the locusts: "וְאַתָּה הַצְפוּנִי אֲרַחֵיק מֵעֲלֵיכֶם, I will remove the *tzeponi* from you" (Yoel 2:20).

The *navi* refers to the locusts as the *tzeponi* – literally "the one from the north" – because the swarms of locusts would be blown into the land by the northern wind. However, the Gemara interprets this prophecy metaphorically, suggesting that the term *tzeponi* alludes to the *yetzer hara*, the evil inclination, which is *tzafun* (hidden) within a person's heart (*Sukkah* 52a). Locusts are symbolic of the *yetzer hara* because their entire existence revolves around self-absorbed exploitation. This trait creates a state of spiritual darkness that obscures the universal perspective, with every individual being concerned only about his own interests and ignoring the needs of others.

The Midrash states that the locusts descended upon the faces of the Egyptians

and gouged out their eyes (*Midrash HaGadol*, Shemot 10:14). This is a poetic description of how a person who is preoccupied with selfish acquisition becomes myopic, losing sight of the needs or suffering of others. In fact, the verse states that the *arbeh* covered the *ayin* (eye) of the land. The materialistic perspective that focuses exclusively on one's own personal interests shrouds a society in darkness and brings death to the world.

The moral darkness brought by the *arbeh* developed further and solidified in the following plague, *choshech*, darkness. There, the Torah relates: "Hashem said to Moshe, 'Stretch out your hand over the heavens, and let there be darkness over the land of Egypt, and let the darkness become solid...' No man saw his brother... for three days, but for all of *Bnei Yisrael* there was light in their dwellings" (Shemot 10:21-23).

The Sages infer from these verses that the darkness in Egypt was a solid, tangible substance. The Midrash adds that it had the thickness of a golden *dinar* coin (*Shemot Rabbah* 14:1). There is a message in this comparison: A life that revolves around acquisition of the *dinar* creates palpable darkness. When money is the focus of a person's life, he will be incapable of recognizing the needs of anyone else, just as the Egyptians could not see one another during this plague.

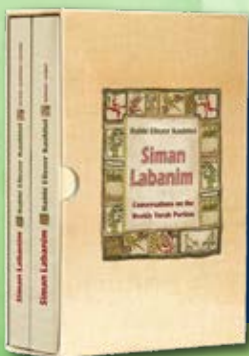
The plagues of *arbeh* and *choshech* both struck the homes of the Egyptians, where they closeted themselves and shut out the

rest of the world, reflecting their self-absorption. Those homes would again be the focal point of the final plague, *makkat bechorot*. During that plague, there was a stark contrast between the homes of the Egyptians and those of the Jews. The Torah states that "He struck Egypt but He spared our homes" (Shemot 12:27).

On that fateful night, the Jewish homes were identified by the blood of the *korban Pesach* that had been placed on the doorposts, in a symbolic act that showed that the gateway to the Jewish home is self-sacrifice for Divine values. Also, *Bnei Yisrael* were instructed that if a household did not have enough members for its own *korban*, the family should bring a joint *korban* along with "his neighbor who is close to his house" (Shemot 12:4). The Torah teaches us how to create a home that accommodates and unifies people, that leads us to see beyond ourselves. This idea is symbolized by the *korban Pesach*, which must be consumed in groups rather than by individuals. This is the type of home that has the power to drive away the *yetzer hara* and to eradicate the arrogance and selfishness that it cultivates.

● Translation: R. Dovid Sussman

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



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From Redemption to Redemption

Rabbi Eli Taragin

Redemption. It is the bond that binds the biblical festivals of Pesach and Shavuot with Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim.

Between Pesach and Shavuot lies a significant journey, marking a continuum rather than two distinct holidays. Pesach initiates a process that unfolds and evolves, culminating on Shavuot. This period forms a unified progression, a continuous journey. While various explanations exist for this process, all agree that it constitutes a single unfolding narrative.

Rambam views *Sefirat HaOmer* as anticipation for *Matan Torah*, an anticipation that begins immediately after the first day of Pesach, the time of the Exodus. This teaches us that the entire purpose of the Exodus is to reach *Matan Torah*. Pesach marks the start of a process that culminates on Shavuot.

Ramban goes a step further, describing the period from Pesach to Shavuot as one protracted holiday. Just as Sukkot is considered a continuous celebration from the first day through *Chol HaMoed* until the eighth and final day, Ramban equates Pesach to the first day of Sukkot and Shavuot to the final “eighth” day. Ramban offers two explanations to support this comparison of Shavuot to the “eighth day” of Sukkot. Firstly, Shavuot is referred to as “*Atzeret*,” mirroring the term used for “*Shemini Atzeret*.” Secondly, it occurs following a count of seven weeks, akin to the seven days of Sukkot. In line with this perspective, Ramban dubs the transition period from Pesach to Shavuot, *Sefirat HaOmer*, as “*Chol HaMoed*,” stating, “And the days counted in the interim are likened to *Chol HaMoed*, from the first to the eighth day of the holiday.”

This prompts the question: What commonalities exist between Pesach and Shavuot? Ramban characterizes the book of Shemot as the narrative of “Exile and Redemption.” Though the Exodus marked a physical redemption, a deeper dimension of spirituality and holiness still had to be attained. As Ramban elucidates, it was only upon reaching Mount Sinai and erecting the *Mishkan*, with the Divine presence

dwelling among them, that they could truly be considered redeemed. Considering this perspective, we can comprehend how Pesach and Shavuot constitute a singular, extended holiday of “Redemption” encompassing both physical and spiritual dimensions.

Rav Kook compares the transition from the physical redemption of Pesach to the spiritual redemption of Shavuot, linking them to the types of sacrifices offered on each holiday. In Egypt, the foundation of our nation was established, representing the fundamental life force – the “bestial soul.” This primal level is epitomized by the offering of the *omer* sacrifice on Pesach, composed of barley, a staple feed for animals. Conversely, on Shavuot, coinciding with *Matan Torah*, *Am Yisrael* ascended to a higher spiritual plane, symbolized by the offering of a sacrifice made from wheat. Wheat embodies knowledge and spirituality, reflecting the elevation of *Am Yisrael*'s consciousness and connection to the Divine.

The emergence of new holidays of redemption

In hindsight, we realize that these events were not merely historical occurrences of the distant past. Rather, they were predetermined moments meant to foreshadow the future redemption of *Am Yisrael*. Rabbi Yehoshua declares, “they were redeemed in Nissan and they will be redeemed in the future in Nissan.” This assertion draws from the Torah’s reference to “*Leil Shimurim*” – a night reserved for the future, a concept originating from the six days of creation.

Rabbi Yehoshua’s statement yields two significant insights. Firstly, it suggests that the future redemption will also occur in Nissan. Secondly, it implies that these specific days were ordained for redemption since the dawn of creation.

Redemption unfolds: Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim

Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim stand out as remarkable “holidays of

redemption,” occurring during the period between Pesach and Shavuot.

Even more striking is that these events unfolded in two stages. On Yom HaAtzmaut in 1948, the Declaration of Independence marked the establishment of the State of Israel, representing the physical stage of our nation’s resurgence. Subsequently, Yom Yerushalayim in 1967 witnessed the liberation of Jerusalem. This pivotal moment allowed us to return to the *Kotel*, symbolizing the spiritual elevation of *Am Yisrael*.

In those days; in our times

We find ourselves in an era fraught with formidable challenges, as external adversaries threaten the very existence of our nation. This is not merely a physical conflict. Our enemies, in the name of Islam, seek to dismantle our spirit and erase our Torah heritage.

In these trying times, it is incumbent upon us to unite, not only in defense of our physical safety but also in the reconstruction of our collective bonds and the advancement of the spiritual essence of *Am Yisrael*. Let us join hands to build the next level of our spiritual journey in a manner that is both profound and impactful. With the help of Hashem, may we swiftly merit the ultimate redemption in our lifetime.



Rabbi Eli Taragin

is the CEO of Sulamot and
Rabbi of Congregation Maayan Rivka.

Pesach – Even When It’s Difficult

Isaac Barchichat

During the Six-Day War in 1967, President Charles de Gaulle famously said of the Jewish people that they were an “elite people, self-confident and dominant.” Yes, we are the chosen people who fear Hashem and who have complete confidence in Him in all circumstances. In these difficult times for the Jewish people, we must remember that we have been chosen and, regardless of our level of religion and our political views, we must remain united. Indeed, this must be our mission on Pesach – to free ourselves from that which divides us to focus on our people’s unique relationship with Hashem.

Since October 7, I have had the honor of accompanying more than 200 French Jews of all backgrounds on missions to Israel, to gather, understand, support and help our brothers and sisters. Despite the great pain, I felt such love and unity that it seemed as if the Jewish people were preparing to leave Egypt, to be freed once again!

Explaining the Zohar, the *Ari HaKadosh* writes that the Egyptian exile leads us back to the creation of the world and the time of Adam and Eve. After they sinned and were expelled from the Garden of Eden, they were separated for 130 years. During these 130 years, Adam lost his spiritual greatness. Only when they reunited could they bring their children – Kayin, Hevel

and Shet – into the world. The Zohar explains that, like Adam and Chava, the people of Israel were forced to leave their Land and go down to Egypt. They were divided, just like Adam and Chava were separated from one another, and their spiritual level declined. Only by uniting were they delivered. This year, we too pray for deliverance on Pesach – and we will merit that deliverance through unity.

Like the *mitzvah* of *brit milah* and the holiday of Yom Kippur, most Jews observe Pesach in some way. Why are these particular *mitzvot* kept by Jews of all backgrounds?

Pesach is one of the most difficult holidays, because you have to clean your entire home, change your kitchen, and follow a completely different diet. Why does Hashem require this of us? Because He wants to give merit to His people. Merit depends on difficulty. *Mitzvot* are generally difficult, but when you put in the effort, you deserve the reward.

The same is true of raising children. When you invest your whole self and suffer in raising a child, the resulting relationship is far deeper than anything else we experience in this life. The more something costs, the more invested we are in it. The more difficult the *mitzvah*, the closer to G-d we become, and the more attached we become to the *mitzvah*.



A Mizrachi France mission helping farmers affected by October 7th.



Pesach is tiring, fasting on Yom Kippur is not easy, and *brit milah* is painful. It is no accident that *Am Yisrael* is most attached to the difficult *mitzvot* that require investment. We live in a generation of ease, and we are yearning to invest ourselves in something eternal. The more effort a *mitzvah* requires, the more connected we become.

Though there are many theories for why Jews have maintained their Jewish identity, there is a straightforward explanation: adherence to Jewish law. Unlike mere philosophies or cultures, which can easily fade away, a law that binds those who practice it is inherently more enduring and easily transmitted.

If being Jewish were merely a philosophy or cultural identity, it would likely have ceased to be relevant long ago. Yet, Jewish identity encompasses more than just philosophy or culture; it is rooted in *mitzvot*, which require us to find joy and unity in our family and traditions. Despite the challenges that Pesach may present, I encourage you to fully immerse yourself in this celebration. Our active participation and engagement are key to making Pesach a meaningful and successful experience.

This message resonates strongly with our present reality. Just as the Jews were freed from Egypt, our hostages must also come home. We appeal to Hashem for mercy and compassion, praying for the safe return of our hostages in time for *Seder* night.

The significance of *Seder* night, known as "*leil shimurim*," extends beyond mere tradition; it symbolizes divine protection over Israel throughout history. As we celebrate this holiday, let's reflect on the collective journey of the Jewish people. Despite our individual challenges, there's always someone facing greater hardships, reminding us of the importance of generosity and empathy. By fostering a culture of giving, we create a ripple effect of kindness within our community. Let's not only provide material support but also offer love and warmth to those in need.

As we begin Pesach, let's pray for the release of all hostages and the ultimate freedom of the Jewish people.



Isaac Barchichat
is President of Mizrachi France.



Visiting soldiers recovering at Sheba Hospital.



A Mizrachi France mission visiting a youth village.



ORTHODOX ISRAEL COALITION



AMIT
Building Israel. One Child at a Time.



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

30,000

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

2 million

NIS towards supporting solidarity delegations during the war

290

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

27 million

NIS raised for youth villages and Israeli Religious Zionist institutions

4 million

NIS towards activities in Religious Zionist communities across the world





MIZRACHI
WORLD MOVEMENT

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



Gael Grunewald
Deputy Chairman, WZO



Roi Abecassis
Deputy Chairman, KKL



1,000,000+

views on digital content and inspiration connected with the war

88 million

NIS raised

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

90+

Mizrachi missions to Israel from 14 countries around the world



4,000

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



40,000

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

600

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

3300+

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



2 million

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



160+

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

From the Desk of Gael Grunewald

In normal times, the Rural Growth and Development Division (*Chativa LeHityashvut*) at the World Zionist Organization is engaged in strengthening rural settlement across Israel. However, beginning on October 7, while continuing its regular work and establishing new communities, it has worked with Gaza Envelope residents evacuated from their homes.

The *Chativa LeHityashvut* promptly offered support to community leaders by providing therapeutic assistance. Around 50 professionals were deployed to assist the evacuated communities, aiding them in addressing the tough challenges of displacement, grieving losses, coping with the captivity of friends and family in Gaza, and navigating the uncertain path ahead.

A Hospitable Kibbutz

Chairman of the *Chativa LeHityashvut*, Gael Grunewald, visited Kibbutz Shefayim, which welcomed the families of Kibbutz Kfar Aza. Together with the Settlement Ministry and the Tekuma Administration, the *Chativa LeHityashvut* is building a temporary neighborhood in Shefayim for the Kfar Aza evacuees.

This neighborhood allows the families to maintain the communal life that characterized their own *kibbutz* and helps them strengthen their resilience in the wake of the trauma, pain and atrocities they experienced. During his visit, Gael remarked that, “The fact that Kibbutz Shefayim opened its doors immediately – no questions asked – to welcome the residents of Kfar Aza after the October 7 massacre is a badge of honor for Israeli society. Shefayim enlisted all the resources at its disposal for this mission, embracing the residents of Kfar Aza with the warmest hug they could have wished for.”

From South to North

The evacuees from Nachal Oz arrived at Kibbutz Mishmar HaEmek, where the *kibbutz* immediately provided the evacuees with accommodation until a temporary neighborhood could be created. Immediately following October 7, the *Chativa LeHityashvut*, together with the Settlement



Gael visiting Kibbutz Shefayim.

Ministry and the Tekuma Administration, began building a 50-home neighborhood for the evacuees. Within a few months, the *Chativa LeHityashvut* had the neighborhood in place, from laying the infrastructure to the families actually living in their new homes. According to the plan, the evacuees will stay in Mishmar HaEmek until the war ends and their *kibbutz*, which was heavily damaged on October 7, is restored.

Building a United Society

As part of the work of establishing new communities, the Chairman of the *Chativa LeHityashvut* visited the Ramat Negev Regional Authority, met with Mayor Eran Doron, and toured the new village of Shizaf. This is a mixed community of religious and non-religious Jews on the Egyptian border that aims to build connections among Israelis. “Particularly during these times, the establishment of a mixed community is more significant than ever. We see how important it is to live together, despite differences of opinion and lifestyle. We have far more in common than we think and we must take responsibility for building a mature society that knows how to work and live together,” said Gael.

Society and Security Conference

Within the framework of Makor Rishon’s Society and Security Conference, Gael



Gael speaking at the Society and Security Conference.

Grunewald lectured on the place of settlement in the current war: “Even if we destroy the whole of Gaza and completely annihilate Hamas, if the communities of the Gaza Envelope have still not returned to flourish again, we will not have won this war. The real victory is strengthening settlement in the south, north and in Judea and Samaria too.”



Gael Grunewald

is Chairman of the Rural Growth and Development Division (*Chativa LeHityashvut*) and Deputy Chairman of the World Zionist Organization.



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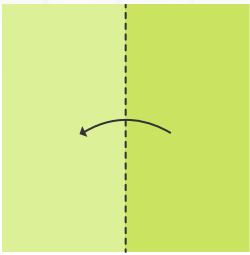
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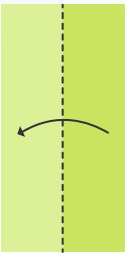
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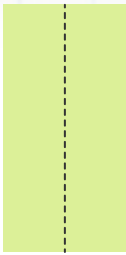
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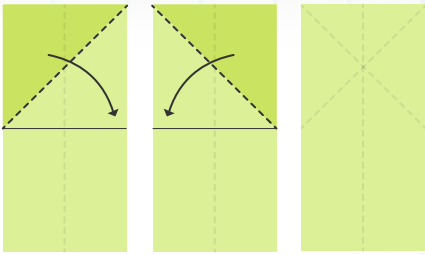
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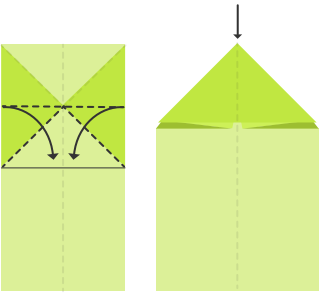
HOW TO MAKE HOPPING FROGS FOR YOUR SEDER TABLE!

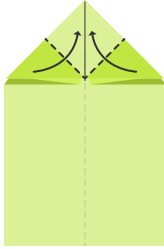
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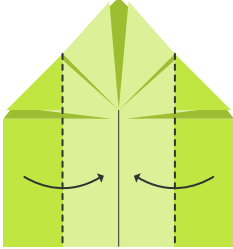
Fold a square of paper in half.
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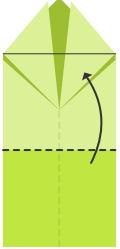
Fold the paper in half again.
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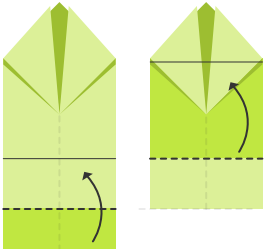
Unfold the paper once.
- 


Fold the left corner down and unfold, then fold the right corner down and unfold.
- 

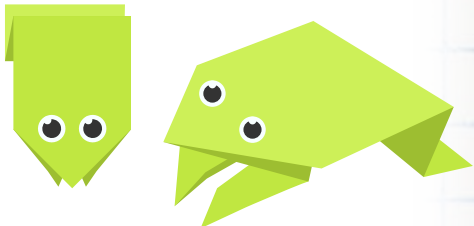
Push the side triangles in to meet at the middle. Then push the top triangle down to look like this.
- 

Lift up the left and right corners of the top triangle.
- 

Fold in the left side to the middle crease. Repeat with the right side.
- 

Fold the bottom up to the top of the rectangle and unfold.
- 

Fold the bottom up to the middle crease. Then fold the middle crease up to the top of the rectangle.
- 

Fold down the tops of the top triangles to make feet. Then flip your frog over.
- 

Draw on some eyes and it's ready to hop!



Test Your Knowledge

What is the last Shabbat before Pesach called?

What is the date of Pesach Sheini?

What do we start doing on the second night of Pesach?

Look for the answers in the Parshat Acharei Mot Youth Edition.



MEET ESTHER ARDITI



1937 – February 20, 2003 (5697 – 18 Adar I 5763)

Esther was born in Bulgaria, and her family was expelled to Italy during the Second World War. When the State of Israel was established Esther heard about the new country and moved to Israel, insisting on enlisting in the IDF early. She was only seventeen when she became a hero. She rescued injured people from a burning airplane and became the first woman in Israel to receive a commendation from the IDF chief of staff, receiving the Medal of Distinguished Service. Years later, the paratroopers who stormed toward the Kotel during the Six-Day War thought they were seeing an angel. A small woman, in a white robe and with a helmet on her head, accompanied them through the alleyways of the Old City. She was always with them, never sleeping, taking care of people, saving dozens. She was often known as the Angel in White. She was the first female ambulance driver in the state, and a registered nurse, and when the Yom Kippur War broke out, Esther appeared at the Suez Canal to treat the wounded. When Esther retired she became a tour guide for Italian tourists, teaching them to see the beauty of the state and the land.



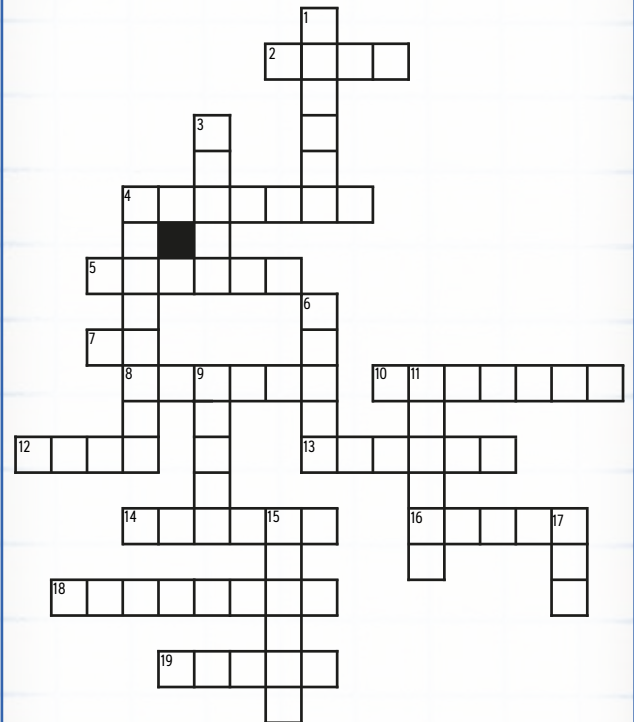
Adapted from *Iconic Jewish Women* by Dr. Aliza Lavie. Scan the QR code to purchase on Amazon.



DID YOU KNOW?

- Moshe is only mentioned one time in the Haggadah!
- The largest seder in the world is held in Kathmandu, Nepal and hosts 1,000-1,500 people!
- It's very common for there to be an egg shortage in Israel over Pesach!

PESACH CROSSWORD



Across:

- How many cups of wine?
- What we don't eat on Pesach
- Body of water split
- Let my people ____
- The third son
- Leader of Egypt
- Direction that we lean in
- Pesach is in what Hebrew month?
- Moshe's sister
- Place where Jews were slaves
- Read on Pesach
- A red plague

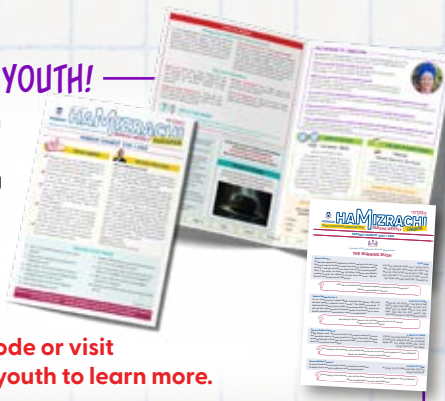
Down:

- A hungry plague
- A hoppy plague
- Mixture of wine, apples, and cinnamon
- How we prepare for Pesach
- Bitter herbs
- One is ____
- Moshe's brother
- Number of plagues

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PESACH CROSSWORD ANSWERS

Down: 1. LOCUST 3. FROGS 4. CHAROSET 6. CLEAN 9. MAROR 11. HASHEM 15. AHARON 17. TEN

Across: 2. FOUR 4. CHOMETZ 5. YAMSUF 7. GO 8. SIMPLE 10. PHAROAH 12. LEFT 13. NISSAN 14. MIRIAM 16. EGYPT 18. HAGGADAH 19. BLOOD

JERUSALEM LUXURY LIVING

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REUVEN 12



AHAD HA'AM 11



GAD 12

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