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www.mizrachi.org
www.mizrachi.tv
office@mizrachi.org
+972 (0)2 620 9000
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A Torah Giant of Religious Zionism

PAGES 12–25



Pesach Torah

PAGES 27–47



Remembering the Yaniv brothers

PAGE 48

JEW'S with VIEWS

Jews from around the world share their most meaningful part of the Seder.

PAGES 42–43

REGULARS

- | | | | | | |
|----|----------------------|----|---------------------------|----|--------------------|
| 4 | Rabbi Doron Perez | 30 | Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l | 52 | Aliyah Diaries |
| 27 | Rabbi Reuven Taragin | 33 | Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon | 54 | Hallel and Shammai |
| | | 34 | Sivan Rahav-Meir | | |

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EDITOR Rabbi Elie Mischel editor@mizrachi.org | ASSOCIATE EDITOR Rabbi Aron White
CREATIVE DIRECTOR Leah Rubin | PROOFREADER Daniel Cohen

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FROM THE

Editor

Teach Your Parents Well

Not long ago, we hosted an American seminary student – let’s call her ‘Shira’ – for Shabbat. Inevitably, the conversation soon turned to her future plans. “Will you be back in Israel next year? Where are you planning to go to college?” Her response – “I hope to stay in Israel, do *Sherut Leumi* next year and make *Aliyah*” – delighted us. Another Religious Zionist success story!

Still, nothing in life is simple. Shira explained that her plan was causing a family crisis. Her parents, solid Religious Zionists who *shlep* into New York City (almost) every year to the Israel Day Parade, strongly objected to her decision. They had sensible arguments: “You’re only eighteen; are you *sure* you really want to do this?” “You’ll be alone in Israel without any immediate family support. It would make more sense to consider *Aliyah* after college, together with a husband!” And most painfully: “We love Israel too, but if you make *Aliyah*, the family won’t be together anymore...”

Since the birth of modern Zionism over 125 years ago, untold numbers of families have struggled, argued and wept over their children’s decision to make *Aliyah*. Before modern air travel, a child’s *Aliyah* likely meant a separation of *years*. Many idealistic young *olim*, like Rabbi Aryeh Levin zt”l, never saw their parents again.

But hasn’t it always been this way? The debate over *Aliyah* between parents and children did not begin with Herzl, or even with Rav Mohilever and the Chovevei Tzion. The tension was there from the very beginning of our history:

“Rabbi Meir said: When the Israelites stood by the Red Sea, the tribes strove with one another, each wishing to descend into the sea first. Then sprang forward the [youngest] tribe of Binyamin and descended first into the sea.” Only Binyamin, the “child” among the tribes, did more than *talk* about redemption; only Binyamin was brave

enough to dive into the sea! “Thereupon the princes of Yehudah hurled stones at them” for their brazenness. But the young tribe of Binyamin ignored the insults of the older, more ‘important’ men of Yehudah, and dove headlong into the sea. “For that reason the righteous Binyamin was worthy to become the host of the All-Powerful [i.e., the *Beit HaMikdash*]” (Sotah 36b).

A short time later, the tragic sin of the spies once again revealed the gap between the generations. It was the fathers, not the sons, who wept upon hearing the report of the ten spies. It was the fathers, not the sons, who valued the “cucumbers, watermelons, leeks, onions and garlic” of Egypt (Bamidbar 11:5) over the blessing of national freedom. And so the fathers, not the sons, were destined to die in the wilderness. Despite the sins of their fathers, the young people of Israel remained true to the Torah and their Land.

I don’t believe that the generation who left Egypt were bad people, G-d forbid. Through years of slavery, they kept the faith, and cried out to G-d for salvation. But after a lifetime of servitude and exile, they had learned to be sensible, to avoid taking risks. And they were afraid – afraid of change, afraid of uncertainty, and afraid of the unknown.

As we age, our minds begin to think differently. We assume that what is before us is merely a copy, a repetition, of what came before, and that the years ahead will look the same as the present. The older we get, the harder it becomes to imagine a future that is different or greater than the life we have known.

Teaneck, Boca Raton, Los Angeles, London – we who spent decades in thriving Diaspora communities like these can easily believe that living in these places is safer and more sensible than a life in Israel – that the future of these communities will be more or less like their past. But the ground beneath our feet is never as stable as we’d like to think.

The return to Zion after 1,897 years of exile should shatter this way of thinking. It is an unprecedented drama, a radical miracle in disguise that has never before occurred in all of human history. Like the Exodus from Egypt, the modern State of Israel is living proof that Jewish history will not remain static, that our future will not be like the present!

Ironically, our children – who lack our life experience and hard earned wisdom – often possess a clearer vision of the future than we do. Unfettered by the past and without the fears and burdens of their parents, they know that the future of our people is not in exile, but in the Land of our fathers.

Shira – if you’re reading this, don’t despair! As Graham Nash said, “Teach your parents well... feed them on your dreams... and know they love you.”

Elie Mischel

Rabbi Elie Mischel
Editor



Rabbi Elie Mischel
is the Editor of HaMizrachi magazine.



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The Jewish State

Challenges and Opportunities

Rabbi Doron Perez

*Next month, Mizrachi Press will release **The Jewish State – From Opposition to Opportunity**, by Rabbi Doron Perez, Executive Chairman of the Mizrachi World Movement. World Mizrachi is proud to partner with Gefen Publishing House in publishing this timely and important work. The following essay is adapted from the book's introduction.*

Jewish sovereignty is the greatest opportunity of our generation. It is also our greatest challenge.

The collective return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel after two thousand years of wandering and statelessness is one of the most remarkable human and Jewish stories in all of history.

It is almost beyond belief that so soon after the horrific ovens of Auschwitz and the wholesale decimation of European Jewry the Jewish people would somehow rise like a phoenix from the ashes and establish an independent state for the first time in two thousand years. Withstanding three full-scale wars aimed at its destruction in its first twenty five years, Israel transformed adversity to blessings of biblical proportions – gathering in millions of immigrants from every corner of the globe, reviving an ancient language and revitalizing a desolate land. In seventy five short years Israel has become a leading first world country – a regional economic and military superpower and one of the leading global hubs of high-tech innovation, research and development. Many of the great *yeshivot* and learning centers destroyed in Europe have been rebuilt in Israel with more Torah study today than arguably any other time in history.

Growing more than tenfold from a population of six hundred and fifty thousand Jews in 1948 to a Jewish population of over seven million and a general population approaching ten million, Israel is an ongoing miracle and the fulfillment of scores of biblical prophecies which envisioned the return of the exiles and the revival of the barren Land.

This marvel has been met with violent and vitriolic opposition – not only major regional wars aimed at Israel's destruction but the ongoing threat of nuclear annihilation, consistent terror attacks from within and an incessant global delegitimization campaign against the very right of a Jewish state to exist.

Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik of blessed memory, the great rabbinic leader of American Jewry in the 20th century, highlighted this point in his masterful lectures on the spiritual meaning of Zionism and Jewish statehood. He taught that the greatest spiritual endeavors of the Jewish people in every generation – such as the establishment of the State of Israel – are invariably met with the greatest opposition and condemnation by her enemies. It is this very opposition which highlights the holiness and spirituality of the enterprise itself.

The 75th anniversary of Israel is a historic milestone and therefore a significant moment to reflect on the meaning of the endeavor of Jewish statehood. Understanding the centrality of sovereignty in the Jewish mission is critical to understanding Israel and the transformative contribution it can make to Jewish and human history.

This book aims to address both a metaphysical understanding of the great opportunities Israel provides as well as the spiritual meaning of the unparalleled opposition it faces – and indeed the connection between this opposition and opportunity.

As such, the following penetrating questions will be addressed in this book:

1. Why has the Jewish state not solved the problem of antisemitism, as Herzl believed it would, but become the cause of a new and no less virulent type of antisemitism – anti-Zionism? How is it that the very Jewish state that Herzl believed would solve antisemitism is today the *source* of it?
2. Why did antisemitism change from opposition to Judaism and the Jewish people to opposition to the Jewish state? How can it be that in living memory of the Holocaust it is as dangerous for a Zionist

Jew today to walk the streets of Damascus, Ramallah or Baghdad as it was for a European Jew in Berlin, Warsaw or Vienna in 1940?

3. Why have the Arab world and the Palestinians consistently turned down every offer of a two-state solution for over 80 years? Why will they not accept a Jewish state and an Arab state, side by side in *Eretz Yisrael*?

4. Why have all conventional paradigms of diplomacy and peacemaking dismally failed thus far in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Why did one of the world's greatest peacemakers, Professor Pádraig O'Malley – who played a significant role for over twenty five years in achieving peace in war-torn Northern Ireland and then spent twenty years aiding apartheid South Africa's peaceful transition to democracy in 1993 – give up his attempts for peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after five years, coining the phrase “The Two State Delusion”? Is it possible that the solution to the sustainability of a Jewish state lies not in the realm of geopolitics but in metaphysics – that the ultimate solution is a spiritual one and not only a political one?

5. Why is the world disproportionately obsessed with the Jewish people – termed by a leading historian of antisemitism as a “lethal obsession”? Why is the Jewish state judged by a double standard and a higher moral expectation than every other nation?

6. What can the Tanach teach us about addressing the vehement opposition to Jewish statehood and the deep divisions and ideological diversity within Israeli society today?

7. Is there a recipe for unity in Israel today that will allow the different ideological camps within Israeli society to move from continuous conflict and confrontation to harmoniously living together?

8. Is it truly possible to separate religion and state in Israel and how is this issue unique to the unity of a Jewish state?

9. What is the connection between the unity of the Jewish people and Yishayahu's prophetic call to be “a light unto the nations”?

10. How can Israel's greatest political leader, King David, guide us to a sustainable solution?

Jewish sovereignty has invoked both fierce antagonism and enormous opportunities for the future of Jewish destiny. What is required are new paradigms for thinking about the Jewish state – both its challenges and potential solutions. Issues relating to collective Jewish destiny ought to be viewed through a spiritual paradigm, reflecting the Divine mission that the Jewish people have always believed has been bestowed upon them. The Tanach, the book of books reflecting the Jewish people's great contribution to humanity, has much to contribute to the pressing issues of our time.

It is impossible to fathom the unique phenomenon of Jewish destiny without reflecting on our ancient and sacred texts and the interpretations of our great sages to assist us in better framing and understanding the issues of the hour. Modern Jewish sovereignty may be an innovation of the 20th century, but this is not the first time we have been a sovereign nation, and not the first time we have faced violent opposition to our sovereignty.

Weaving together ideas from great thinkers and leaders, this book will grapple with these big questions: A phenomenal idea of the Gaon of Vilna on the categories of antisemitism and their biblical antecedents; Professor Robert Wistrich's historical research which bears this out; Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, Zionism's greatest rabbinic leader, on the meaning of a Jewish state and his remarkable thesis of how to unite it; and Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, arguably the greatest rabbinic thinker and moral leader of this generation, on the modern mutation of antisemitism and the meaning of Jewish destiny. Infused with a spirit of Religious Zionism, this book presents a new-old contemporary vision of Jewish statehood and a paradigm for its internal unity. The biblical figures of Avraham and David are the founding pillars of Jewish nationhood and sovereign leadership respectively, and they serve to anchor some of the central ideas presented, particularly Rav Kook's unique recipe for Jewish unity. The



The Jewish State - From Opposition to Opportunity will be launched at the World Orthodox Israel Congress, following Yom HaAtzmaut.

book will engage in Yishayahu's vision of a Jewish state being 'a light unto the nations' – being a positive example of how modernity and morality, statecraft and spirituality, particularity and universality can be woven together for the sake of a better spiritual and ethical world.



Rabbi Doron Perez
is the Executive Chairman
of World Mizrahi.



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“Arami Oved Avi”

The Passage of Redemption

Rabbi Jonny Brull

One of the hallmarks of *Maggid* on *Seder* night is the exposition of the Exodus as presented in the paragraph of “*Arami oved avi...*,” namely, the verses taken from the passage recited upon bringing *bikkurim* (first fruits) to the *Beit HaMikdash*. We recite the verses and expound them in Talmudic fashion, gleaming hidden meaning from each and every word.

The notion that we are compelled to recount the Exodus through Talmudic exegesis is intriguing. Yet, it would appear that the Exodus story is recalled in a variety of forms on *Seder* night, and the expounding of the verses of “*Arami oved avi*” is just one of the many ways that we retell the story of leaving Egypt, with the combination of these different styles necessary in order to engage each and every Jew, in the spirit of “*chanoch lana’ar al pi darko*,” “educate the young person in his own way” (*Mishlei* 22:6).

What is puzzling, however, is that we do not seem to conform to *Chazal*’s requirements for reciting the passage of “*Arami oved avi*.” The *Mishnah* (*Pesachim* 116a) states: “One must expound from ‘*Arami oved avi*’ until one concludes the passage in its entirety.” In practice, however, we do not conclude the entire passage. Rather, at the *Seder*, we only read the first four verses:

“My father was a runaway Aramean. He went down to Egypt with meager numbers and sojourned there; but there he became a great and very populous nation. The Egyptians dealt harshly with us and oppressed us; they imposed heavy labor upon us. We cried to Hashem, the G-d of our ancestors, and Hashem heard our plea and

saw our plight, our misery, and our oppression. Hashem took us out from Egypt with a strong hand, with an outstretched arm and with awesome power, and with signs and wonders.”

On *Seder* night, we omit the final two verses of this passage, thereby neglecting to mention the climax of the story:

“And He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. Wherefore I now bring the first fruits [*bikkurim*] of the soil which You, Hashem, have given me.”

How do we reconcile our practice on *Seder* night with the requirements laid out in the *Mishnah*? How can we omit the conclusion of the Exodus story?

Rabbi Shimon ben Tzemach, colloquially known as *Rashbetz*, suggests an answer to this problem. He notes that we indeed stop short of concluding the passage in the classic sense; however, we do reach the finale in an alternative fashion:

“We expound until ‘Hashem took us out from Egypt with a strong hand,’ yet there are [additional verses], ‘And He brought us to this place and gave us this Land’.. Therefore, we conclude with the praise of ‘How many kindnesses Hashem has performed for us’ [i.e., *Dayeinu*] before we were able to bring this piece of fig or cluster of grapes, and Hashem is satisfied with a small tribute such as this [first fruit] as payment for all the kindnesses He has performed for us before we could bring this fruit... Thus, there are many kindnesses which Hashem has performed for us, many times

over, from the Exodus from Egypt until His building of the Temple for us to atone there for all our sins – and it is in this manner that we complete our expounding from ‘*Arami oved avi*’ to recount the Exodus from Egypt” (*Haggadat HaRashbetz*).

Rashbetz provides us with an incredible explanation. We do indeed expound up to the end of the “*Arami oved avi*” passage, but rather than read the actual verses, we instead pause to reflect on each phase of the redemption journey, as laid out in the text of *Dayeinu*. Ultimately, Hashem did bring us to *Eretz Yisrael*, where we can, in return, pay tribute with our *bikkurim*; but there were so many steps from the Exodus up to that point which we must recognize and thank Hashem for. The end goal is important, but it is the climb – each and every step – that is the focus of *Pesach*. It is on *Pesach* that we begin the count to *Shavuot* – *Yom HaBikkurim* – and it is only when we break down the journey into steps, and show gratitude for each one, that we truly fulfill the mandate of the *Mishnah*, to conclude the story of the Exodus “in its entirety.”



Rabbi Jonny Brull

is Rosh Kollel Torah MiTzion at Mizrahi Melbourne. He learned for ten years at Yeshivat Har Etzion, and has a B.Ed in Torah Shebe’al Peh and Hebrew Language from Herzog College and an M.A. in Jewish Education from the Hebrew University.



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MIZRACHI'S GLOBAL FOOTPRINT

World Mizrachi serves as the international headquarters of the Mizrachi movement. In the past weeks, we have been involved in Mizrachi conferences and activities around the world, from Melbourne to Toronto.

Here is a selection of photos from some of the recent events across the world.



Rabbi Doron Perez visiting Mizrachi Canada in Toronto.



Rabbi Danny Mirvis at the Mizrachi Australia Conference in Perth, Australia.



Rabbi Hillel Van-Leuween meeting with some of the Mizrachi Shlichim in the UK.



Rabbi Doron Perez, Roi Abecassis and Gael Grunewald at a Mizrahi seminar in Paris, France.



Gael Grunewald visiting Israeli Shlichim in New York, USA.



Gael Grunewald visiting the Jewish community of Barcelona, Spain.



Rabbi Yechiel Wasserman meeting with Mizrahi representatives in Budapest, Hungary.



Rabbi Doron Perez and Rabbi Yechiel Wasserman meeting with the leadership of the Religious Zionist community of Antwerp, Belgium.



Rabbi Danny Mirvis in conversation with Shula Lazar, Principal of Leibler Yavneh College in Melbourne, Australia.



Rabbi Doron Perez, Rabbi Yechiel Wasserman, and Roi Abecassis at the Straus-Amiel shlichut conference in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Rav Soloveitchik and Religious Zionism

Rabbi Menachem Genack

For over half a century, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik zt”l was the leading voice of the Religious Zionist community in America. A talmudic master, profound philosopher, and a stirring orator, the Rav was one of the greatest leaders and thinkers in 20th century American Orthodoxy, leaving an indelible mark on the many institutions he led and served.

In 1944, Rav Soloveitchik became the chairman of the Central Committee of the Religious Zionists of America, assuming the leadership of Mizrahi in America. Over the next fifty years, he would develop a unique and profound philosophy of Religious Zionism that continues to influence generations of students throughout the world.

As we mark his thirtieth yahrzeit on 18 Nissan, the fourth day of Pesach, we are honored to dedicate this edition of HaMizrachi to a study and celebration of Rav Soloveitchik’s Religious Zionist legacy and philosophy.

In this introductory essay, Rabbi Menachem Genack, a close student of the Rav who has dedicated years to publishing the Rav’s writings, captures the complexity of the Rav’s approach to Zionism.

The Rav’s Zionist orientation did not stem from his upbringing or early home environment. His grandfather Rav Chaim was an opponent of Zionism – yet the Rav stated that Rav Chaim was perhaps the greatest lover of Zion in his generation. Rav Moshe, the Rav’s father, was not a Zionist, but nevertheless became the head of the Tachkemoni Rabbinical Seminary in Warsaw, which was affiliated with Rav Reines’ Mizrahi movement. Early in his life, the Rav was an Agudist, participating in the first *Moetzes Chachmei HaTorah* of the Agudah in America. When the Rav shifted his affiliation from Agudah to the Mizrahi, he paid a price among his rabbinic colleagues. In the first of his *Chamesh Derashot* (published in English as *The Rav Speaks*), he describes those joining the Mizrahi as aligning with Joseph the dreamer, whose brothers, Levi and Judah, bearers of the crowns of Torah and leadership, distanced themselves from him. “Joseph himself possessed greatness in Torah learning, leadership, and saintliness, and the yawning gap which had grown between him and his brothers caused him much sorrow. To be separated from his outstanding brothers, ostracized, as it were, not only by ‘part of the Sanhedrin’ but by the majority of them, was a tragedy for Joseph.”

Ironically, the Rav had also paid a price for his membership in the Agudah. He was one of three candidates for the chief rabbinate of Tel Aviv in 1935; the other two contestants for the position were Rav Yitzchak HaLevi Herzog and Rav Moshe Avigdor Amiel, a truly impressive field. During the elections for this position, Rav Kook passed away, and Rav Herzog was chosen to be Rav Kook’s successor as Chief Rabbi of Palestine. Of the two remaining candidates, Rav Amiel was elected as Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv. My uncle Eliyahu Moshe Genachowski, a member of the first Knesset, told me

that Rav Meir Bar-Ilan (himself the Rav’s great-great uncle) gave his support to Rav Amiel’s candidacy because the Rav was then affiliated with the Agudah, while Rav Amiel was affiliated with the Mizrahi. My uncle reported Rav Bar-Ilan’s evaluation of the three candidates: “Rav Herzog is the most pious; Rav Soloveitchik knows best how to learn, but Rav Amiel – he will be the next Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv.”

The Rav, as far as I know, did not detail how he came to change his mind about this topic, but he offered his view of the dispute between “Joseph and his brothers.” “Joseph’s brothers,” the non-Zionist majority of Orthodoxy in Eastern Europe, related to the future as a continuation of the present, whereas “Joseph,” the Mizrahi “dreamer,” foresaw that the Eastern European world he knew was coming to an end, and he began to prepare a new world in the Land of Israel. “In this dispute in the name of Heaven,” the Rav remarked, “Divine Providence decided in favor of Joseph, and the house of Jacob was saved only due to Joseph’s dreams.”

For the Rav, achieving Jewish sovereignty over the Land of Israel was the fulfillment of a religious imperative, not merely a nationalist aspiration. He did not refrain from criticizing secularist policies of the State with which he disagreed, but none of that negated the religious value of statehood itself. On the other hand, the Rav, an ardent individualist, focused more on the seeking individual than on nationhood. On one of my visits to the Rav in Boston, I gave him a copy of the matriculation examination from the Israeli high school system, proudly telling him that his essay *Kol Dodi Dofek* was required reading for the students, and directing his attention to one of the questions on the exam about the six “*defikot*” – divine knocks on the door, i.e., signals of G-d’s

providence contained in Israel's founding. The Rav sighed and said, "Everybody ignores the real significance of *Kol Dodi Dofek*. Its real significance deals with Job and suffering." His focus was on the uniqueness of the individual, hence his preoccupation with Job, the archetype of the suffering individual. This was typical of the Rav's more lachrymose existentialism, but despite the Rav's view of his essay, it is a powerful expression of the divine message of redemption embedded in the State's founding.

"We admire the State with all our heart, we pray for her welfare, we send her our sons and stand united to defend her," the Rav wrote in *Chamesh Derashot*. "But it is not the highest good. Our highest ideal is our faith; the basic foundation of our existence is that 'beyond the river' which symbolizes the people in its confrontation with G-d and with its unique way of life."

In *Kol Dodi Dofek*, the Rav distinguishes between the covenants of fate and destiny. For two millennia, the Jewish people were governed by fate; they were acted upon but were not actors, objects, not subjects. For the Rav, the State of Israel represents a turning point in G-d's relationship with His people, transforming their covenant to one of destiny, and elevating their status to active partners in shaping that destiny. This gives their suffering new meaning as well. I remember hearing the Rav speak about the Israeli flag, which made a deep impression on me (this is printed in *Chamesh Derashot* as well):

I do not hold at all with the magical attraction of a flag or of similar symbolic ceremonies... Nonetheless, we must not lose sight of a law in the Shulchan Aruch to the effect that "one who has been killed by non-Jews is buried in his clothes, so that his blood may be seen and avenged..." In other words, the clothes of the Jew acquire a certain sanctity when spattered with the blood of a martyr. How much more is this so of the blue and white flag, which has been immersed in the blood of thousands of young Jews who fell in the War of Independence defending the country and the population (religious and irreligious alike; the enemy did not differentiate between them). It has a spark of sanctity that flows from devotion and self-sacrifice.

I remember how the Rav was visibly filled with pride for his grandson Rav Moshe Lichtenstein who was then serving in the IDF. In 1982, Professor Robert Aumann lost his son Shlomo, a teacher and soldier, who died fighting on behalf of Israel. The great *rosh yeshiva* Rav Yisrael Ze'ev Gustman, who survived the War in the forests surrounding Vilna, paid a *shiva* visit to Prof. Aumann, and said the following (as recorded by Rabbi Ari Kahn):

I am sure that you don't know this, but I had a son named Meir. He was a beautiful child. He was taken from my arms and executed. I escaped. I later bartered my child's shoes so that we would have food, but I was never able to eat the food - I gave it away to others. My Meir is a kadosh - he and all the six million who perished are holy. I will tell you what is transpiring now in the World of Truth, in Gan Eden. My Meir is welcoming your Shlomo into the minyan and is saying to him, "I died because I am a Jew - but I wasn't able to save anyone else. But you - Shlomo, you died defending the Jewish people and the Land of Israel." My Meir is a kadosh, he is holy - but your Shlomo is a sheliach tzibbur - a cantor in that holy, heavenly minyan.

This moving anecdote illustrates the Rav's view. The State of Israel did not eradicate the suffering of the Jewish people, but it nevertheless transformed that suffering and changed its meaning.



(ARTWORK: JESSICA ZEMBLE)

In the end, the attachment of the Jew to Israel, the Rav says, belongs to "the world of intimate relations between us and between the G-d of Israel. It is part of the Jewish mystery and the hidden lot of the stranger-resident. In *Eretz Yisrael*, there is sanctity, and we long for sanctity, for the Creator whose Divine Presence rests upon the stones and sands of the desert."



Rabbi Menachem Genack

is the Rabbi of Congregation Shomrei Emunah in Englewood, New Jersey and serves as the Rabbinic Administrator of the Orthodox Union's Kashrut Division. A close student of Rav Soloveitchik, he is the editor of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik: Man of Halacha, Man of Faith, and the author of *Birkat Yitzchak*, *Gan Shoshanim*, and *Chazon Nachum*.



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The Return to Zion

Rav Soloveitchik on Religious Zionism and the Role of Mizrachi

Beginning in the late 1930s and continuing for several decades, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik delivered the keynote address at the annual conventions of the Mizrachi Organization of America. Delivered in Yiddish, the Rav's mother tongue, each address was a tour de force of brilliant Torah learning, offering incisive insights into the meaning of Religious Zionism, the State of Israel, and Mizrachi's critical role in shaping the future of the Jewish people.

Originally published in Yiddish in 2021 by OU Press and Ktav Publishing House under the title *Drosches Vegn Shivas Tziyon un Kiyum HaUma*, OU Press will soon release *The Return to Zion: Addresses on Religious Zionism and American Orthodoxy*, an English translation. World Mizrachi is proud to partner with OU Press in publishing this landmark work.

In commemoration of Rav Soloveitchik's 30th *yahrzeit*, we are honored to share excerpts from this historic publication.

A Call to Return Home

Should we leave the great work of building the Land of Israel, with all of its historical complications and paradoxes and with the immensely significant influence it will exert on the lives of Jews in the Diaspora, in the hands of non-religious youth? At a *harat olam* hour, in the most critical period of our history, should we hide in caves and shadows? And later groan about the desecration of Shabbat in the Land of Israel?

(“And a Man Wrestled with Him until the Break of Dawn”, May 1946)

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

(Jewish Sovereignty and the Redemption of the Shekhinah, June 1948)

One can only exert influence on the Land of Israel through building, creativity, labor, and practical accomplishments in the plain sense of those words (without exegesis) – not through wearying, unhelpful pronouncements. “Carve for yourself two tablets of stone” (Shemot 34:1). Moses! If you want Jews to follow you and to accept the tablets for all time, so that they not break once again, then “carve for yourself”: hew them on your own, hack the mountains, plant vineyards and orchards, pave roads, build colonies, go to the Negev, protect the Judean hills, stand with your rifle and guard the land. Then “I will inscribe upon the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you shattered”: I will chisel the *Aseret haDibrot* on the stones that you have carved. Without the “Carve for yourself,” the Jewish people would not have received the completed tablets, even if the giver were joined by the Union of Orthodox Rabbis, the Rabbinical Council of America, and the preacher Rabbi Soloveitchik.

(Zionism and the Mizrachi from the Perspective of a Raven Head and a Dove Head, April 1954)



Rabbi Soloveitchik's class at Yeshiva University, 1960. (PHOTO: YESHIVA UNIVERSITY)

The Significance of the State of Israel

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

True, today we are bleeding profusely in the Land of Israel, the precious blood of “the dear children of Zion” (Eichah 4:2). But these sacrifices are not sacrifices of *hester panim*, which are not accepted, toward which G-d does not turn – “but to Cain and his offering He paid no heed” (Bereishit 4:5). Rather, they are fragrant offerings, through which we build a glorious future and which bring to the Jewish name honor and praise. Perhaps even today the *middat haDin*, the attribute of judgment, still prevails, and the *Knesset Yisrael* suffers and bleeds. But one cannot consider this the *hester panim* of Treblinka and Dachau. One must always distinguish between *hester panim* and *middat haDin*. *Hester panim* means aimless, crazy sacrifice; *middat haDin* means purposeful sacrifice. The progression of Jewish history has ceased to be chaotic, insane, and absurd. It now has a sense of purpose and significance. It has a direction and an objective.

(*Jewish Sovereignty and the Redemption of the Shekhinah*, June 1948)

Let me clarify why I feel so connected to the Mizrahi.

First, *rabbotai*, simply as an expression of gratitude, of historical appreciation. “I accounted to your favor the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride – how you followed Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown” (Yirmiyahu 2:2). The Mizrahi and HaPoel HaMizrachi built the Land of Israel at a time when other religious groups still kept the building of the land at arm's length. Yes, “You distinguished.” Providence selected them as partners in the great miracle of the redemption of the land, which is being realized now before our very eyes.

I say this not so much with joy as with pain, because I would have preferred that all religious groups would have contributed to the work in which the G-d of Israel is interested – and, seemingly, highly interested. For how else can we explain the great miracle that is the State of Israel? Are you really going to tell me that the Master of the Universe is not building the Land of Israel? Heaven forbid! “Unless the L-rd builds the house, its builders labor in vain on it” (Tehillim 127:1). But who is actually participating in the building? The sinners. Are you really going to tell me that the Master of the Universe is not defending the Land of Israel from all of its enemies? Who is protecting the Land of Israel? The State Department, the Security Council, [John Foster] Dulles, Churchill, Eden? I wish that all Orthodox Jews, from the Neturei Karta to the Rabbinical Council of America, would grasp that the State of Israel, with all of its deficiencies, has accomplished something that no human fantasy could imagine: in a historic way, it has sanctified G-d's Name in the face of the Christian world.

During the Hitler era, thousands of missionaries and plain theologians, including the great Karl Barth, would regularly claim that the words of the New Testament and the [blood] curse of That Man [Jesus] were being fulfilled. The Jewish people was being obliterated because it had not accepted the Nazarene. Lectures to this effect could be heard on America's greatest university campuses. Speakers would read aloud chapters from the New Testament and compare them with the facts being reported in the newspapers. I myself had to debate with many Gentiles about this. Jewish boys and girls were being influenced by such messaging. The youth began asking questions, big questions, historic questions. And within the specific climate of the American Jewish community, with its neurotic fear of antisemitism and its glorification of Christianity, in which Reform clergymen played a large part, there loomed the danger of extinction. The *shtiblech* of Williamsburg and a proclamation by the Union of Orthodox Rabbis would have helped little in this connection. Jews were on the verge of losing their faith in Eternal Israel.

Do you know who, with a single declaration, negated all of their theological claims and arguments? The people assembled at that late Friday afternoon gathering at which Ben-Gurion presided and which declared Israel's independence. You know who else? The Jewish army, the girls and boys with their rifles and self-sacrifice. “Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt” (Yehoshua 5:9). In fact, they put Christian theology on the defensive. It is an open secret that the opposition to the Land of Israel on the part of the Vatican and enemies from certain quarters in America actually derives from a deep awareness that if the State of Israel remains a reality, part of Christian theology, from That Man down to the great Scholastics, is void. Take away the State of Israel, Heaven forbid, and a wave

of assimilation and apostasy, the likes of which we have never seen before, would inundate American Jewry. The Tituses of yesterday and today would once again bellow: “Where is their G-d, the Rock in whom they sought refuge?” (Devarim 32:37; see Gittin 56b). And this cry would echo from one end of the earth to the other. The Mizrachi understood this then, continues to understand it now, and does not allow itself to be deterred or led astray. It deserves credit for this, and I feel that my place is with it.

(Zionism and the Mizrachi from the Perspective of a Raven Head and a Dove Head, April 1954)

In the last two thousand years the Jewish people played no role in the historical arena. Revolutions transpired, worlds have been destroyed and rebuilt – our people played no role; we lived in obscurity, in anonymity. And now, a great miracle happened that our people somehow emerged from the shadows, from the anonymity in

which it lived for so long, and is now in the center of the universal stage of historical occurrence...

Chazal said – and it is already in the Bible that we may find this criterion – that redemption related events must excite universal wondering and amazement. They must puzzle the peoples of the earth, they must fascinate them and also frighten them. Many will admire, some will envy, and some will begin to hate the Jewish people with a greater intensity and greater fury, but everybody must be somehow involved in the great events. “Then shall they say among the nations, ‘The L-rd has done great things for them’” (Tehillim 126:2).

(Reflections on the Six-Day War, June 1967)



Rabbi Soloveitchik at his home in Boston, 1945. (PHOTO: RABBI SAMUEL STOLLMAN)

On Secular Zionism

How can the Zionist Organization of America – from which the Land of Israel now demands not only money and political pressure but, more importantly, pioneering spirit, human souls, and practical participation in the building of the land – approach a young American Jew, who has no inkling of the G-d of Abraham, is less familiar with the Bible than the average Protestant, and does not even know about the existence of the Torah or about the most significant events in Jewish history (like the destruction of the Temple), and inspire him with Zionist ideology, calling upon him to sacrifice for the cause? How can the radical movement, the camp of secular Judaism, explain to such an ignoramus, such a heathen, the importance of secular Jewish culture? How can the so-called modern, Americanized Orthodoxy, which stares wide-eyed at Mount Sinai and speaks with angels, cultivate a traditional Jewry in a vacuum of ignorance, in chaos, in which the first, axiomatic ideals and truths do not exist? How can the rabbinic organizations, old and young, speak of the wisdom of the Torah, convene Torah gatherings, debate Torah matters, and assert optimistically that, thank G-d, Torah is surviving and thriving in America, when ninety-nine percent of our generation knows less about Judaism than an educated, cultured Gentile?

(The Letters of Creation: Jewish Axioms and Education in America, October 1944)

It appears that the modern Jew is a victim of the same tragedy suffered by the mighty Shimshon when he, inebriated and lulled by Delilah's professions of love, revealed the secret of his strength to the seductive Delilah: "No razor has ever touched my head, for I have been a nazirite to God since I was in my mother's womb. If my hair were cut, my strength would leave me and I should become as weak as an ordinary man" (Shoftim 16:17). Rapt in a state of delight and pleasure on Delilah's knees, he lost the crown of his head: "She lulled him to sleep on her lap. Then she called in a man, and she had him cut off the seven locks of his head" (16:19). "It shall remain consecrated until the completion of his term as nazirite of the L-rd, the hair of his head being left to grow untrimmed" (Bamidbar 6:5). And when Shimshon sobered from his intoxication, he discovered two things:

First, that the Philistines' manner of relating to him had not changed. "She cried, 'Shimshon, the Philistines are upon you!'" (16:20). The seductive Delilah continued ridiculing him. And second, "For he did not know that the L-rd had departed from him" (ibid.). Shimshon could no longer perform the trick of pulling "the tendons apart, as a strand of tow comes apart at the touch of fire" (16:9). No holiness, no "seven locks of his head"; now he was hopeless and despondent.

The modern-day Delilah – false, seductive European culture, with its assurances and its coquetry, with its professions of love and its secretiveness – has lulled

Yisrael Sava to sleep, duped him into divulging his secret, shaved off his mysterious hair, which had connected him with the past and with the future, and begun tormenting him.

In their encounters with Gentiles, the leaders of the secular Jewish movements can sense that the "seven locks of his head" are missing. All of them, including the Zionist leaders, have, on Delilah's knees, lost those seven holy, mysterious locks, and without them, "his strength slipped away from him... He awoke from his sleep, thinking he would break loose and shake himself free as he had the other times. For he did not know that the L-rd had departed from him" (16:19–20). The movement to return to Zion, in particular, must possess the seven locks of Samson, for it faces a great battle. And who will rediscover this mysterious hair if not us, the representatives of Orthodoxy?

We must not fool ourselves; we should not expect any sort of sudden salvation or comfort to come from the nations of the world even after there is peace, once Hitler, may his name be blotted out, and his gang of villains are in Gehenna. We know well the two-faced politics of English governments; our friends in Washington, too, have little understanding of Zionism and of the idea of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel. I do not speak here in despairing, pessimistic spirits, Heaven forbid. I am not one to be overly taken with Delilah's flirtations, nor do I lose resolve when she reveals her true face. I know that the Master of the Universe will fulfill His covenant, and His prophecies have more power than the [1939 British] White Paper. Still, we must be realistic and not adopt foolish, fantastical hopes. "The honor will eventually come" (Nedarim 62a), but the road to redemption will be long and difficult. The question is: how will we hold onto the Jewish masses, who are, unfortunately accustomed to cheap effects and silly sentimentalism? On what can one base an ideology that would enable them to weather all the fluctuations and disappointments? On what? On the Friday night "*Shalom Aleichem*," or on [Nathan Alterman's] "*Shir ha-Emek*?"

The Zionists employed a particular strategy in founding their movement to return to Zion. Herzl, too, was tripped up by this. It is the negative method of returning to Zion. On this view, antisemitism is a natural phenomenon, and only the Land of Israel can solve the problem. I am basically in partial agreement with this outlook. There exists an eternal hatred for the Eternal Nation, which neither Sholem Asch's Nazarene nor the Institute of Jewish Affairs will defeat. But this is a faulty ideological basis for such a powerful movement as that which seeks to return to Zion.

First, this is an outlook that is foreign to the Anglo-Saxon Jew generally, and to the American Jew specifically, who believes that, notwithstanding various periodic antisemitic outbursts, the majority of the

American population will not allow itself to be led astray by antisemitic demagogues. True, the American Jew knows that social antisemitism will always exist, but he does not believe – and I likewise do not believe – in the possibility here of the type of bestial antisemitism that can be found in Europe. Especially after Hitler gets his just deserts, antisemitism will not assume zoological proportions, despite all the dark forces at work in America...

Morai ve-rabbotai, no great ideological movement can be founded upon dread. It is too lowly an emotion to serve as the basis for great ideals and a national movement. Such an ideology and worldview must draw on more elevated sentiments than fear: on love, on moments of spiritual uplift, on a drive toward holiness...

The ideology of building the land can only be based upon the ideology of the land's holiness. A Jew who believes in the land's holiness knows, too, the *halachah* that the second sanctification of the land in the days of Ezra was in effect "in its own time and for all time" (Rambam, *Hilchot Terumot* 1:5), and so he cannot despair, for "You, O L-rd, are enthroned forever, Your throne endures through the ages." Even if many White Papers, filled with antisemitism, seek to shatter the divine throne, they will not prevail. "Hatch a plot – it shall be foiled; agree on action – it shall not succeed. For with us is G-d!" (Yishayahu 8:10).

(*The Parchment Is Consumed, but the Letters Fly Free*, January 1944)

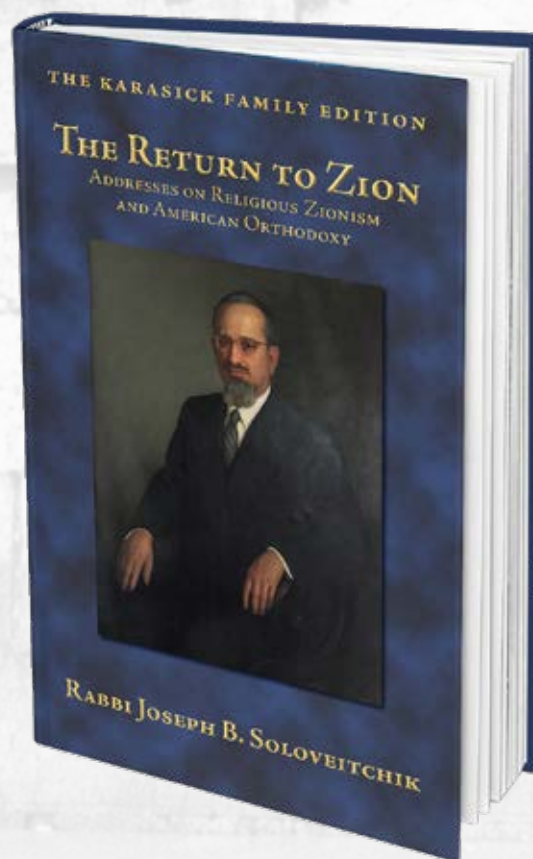
All of the dreams about a secular Judaism in America have shown themselves to be false, hollow dreams. Not even Zionism will be able to exist here if it takes on a completely secular form. The fact that the second generation of American Jews are committed to Zion despite being distant from Judaism proves nothing. They were raised in Jewish homes. Their parents brought the Zion ideal with them from the old country. As a result, these fundamentally religious sentiments passed to their children. They demonstrate their sense of religious belonging through their loyalty to Zion ("Moses only became wealthy via the waste of the tablets" [Nedarim 38a]). The third generation, which is not *frum*, already lacks this relationship with the Land of Israel.

(*Questions Posed to the Mizrachi as a Servant before the King*, November 1955)

On the Western Infatuation with the Arab Cause

There is a certain tendency among all the great powers to flatter the Islamic world. Europe is in ruins, its culture in decline; it is weak and insecure, and it seeks the favor of the East. Esau joins forces with Ishmael; in the meanwhile, Jacob is entirely repudiated. Whatever the reasons – imperial interests, economic concerns – the Arabs are now the darling child of the Western world. Society ladies prance about them.

(*Recognition of the Present and Vision for the Future*, June 1945)



Right: *The Return to Zion: Addresses on Religious Zionism and American Orthodoxy*, soon to be published by OU Press in partnership with World Mizrachi.

The Significance of “Mundane” Zionism

The Jews sanctified the Land of Israel twice, the first time in the days of Joshua and the second in the days of Ezra. When one compares the two eras from a secular-historical standpoint, from a political-economic perspective, the second entry into the land, Ezra's sanctification, is no more than a pale reflection, a weak echo, of a great and glorious epoch, such that the comparison itself arouses gloom.

In the days of Joshua, the nation was young, filled with an aggressive, militant spirit, and pounced on the Land of Israel like a youthful desert lion, defeating thirty-one kings, claiming one victory after another... They were proud and youthful, pugnacious and courageous, filled with all the romanticism of a nation stepping out onto the historical stage and enjoying the respect, awe, and admiration of its neighbors. “Dread of you has fallen upon us, and all the inhabitants of the land are quaking before you” (Yehoshua 2:9).

In the days of Ezra, the ten tribes were entirely absent, having been exiled to Halah and Habor... A segment of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin wanted no part in the return to Zion, the Second Temple, or the redemption. They were happy sitting by their fleshpots in Babylon, Persia, and Media. Cyrus, Darius, Ahasuerus, and the other kings altered their edicts seven times a day, each new declaration repealing the previous one: one moment immigration was allowed, the next, they issued a White Paper halting entry... And the internal situation? Economic hardship and spiritual impoverishment, intermarriage and ignorance, lack of language and tradition. And above all, “we have become a mockery” (Nechemiah 3:36): we have become objects of shame and derision.

Nevertheless, Maimonides, the great Jewish teacher, the pillar of the *halachah*, comes along and rules that “the first sanctification... was in effect in its own time but not for all time,” whereas the “second sanctification is in effect forever, both in its own time and for all time” (*Hilchot Terumot* 1:5). You hear? Joshua's sanctification via capture and military victory, undertaken in an unbridled, gushing, enterprising spirit of conquest, when proud prophets, warriors, elders, students of our teacher Moses, and heroic legions seized the Land of Israel, was no more than a temporary phenomenon: Nebuchadnezzar abrogated it. But Ezra's sanctification, which came about through daily, small-scale, unheroic, painstaking work, through disappointments and despair, intercession with and requests from the authorities, insults and humiliation – that remains forever: neither Titus nor Hadrian, neither Islam nor the Crusades, neither Turkey nor even the [British] Colonial Office can undo it...

Joshua's sanctification was not the result of hardship but of historical success during glorious moments of Jewish history – none of which is forever. Ezra's sanctification, by contrast, came about through occupation, settling the land, through the word of G-d, through adversity, martyrdom, spiritual pain and despair, mockery and derision. Ezra's sanctification emerged from crisis, tribulation, and subjugation. Redemption born of suffering, the messiah born following birth pangs, are eternal – sanctification for all time!

(Recognition of the Present and Vision for the Future, June 1945)



On Mizrachi's Mission

The responsibility for leading the fight lies with the Mizrachi. The Mizrachi is the only Orthodox party that can gather around itself a respectable, organized Orthodoxy. Already at the 1939 convention in Atlantic City I stated that the Mizrachi Organization must become a powerful instrument not only for the building of the land but also for the building of the nation. For we find ourselves faced with Achad Ha'am's question: what happens "if the nation is destroyed?"

The Mizrachi must be the great Orthodox party that represents the interests of *Yisrael Sava* with dignity. And if this was true in 1939, before the destruction, how much more so today, when the parchment has been consumed but the letters fly free and must be rescued? Neither the Jewish radicals nor the formalistic Hebraists will save the historical Jew, *Yisrael Sava*, from destruction; only Torah-true Jews and the tradition will do so. Great and expansive will be Orthodoxy's work in all areas.

(The Parchment Is Consumed, but the Letters Fly Free, January 1944)

The difference between the Zionist Organization and the Mizrachi is this: while the first can maintain its financial-political apparatus without any ideology, because there are certain factors like antisemitism, the Jewish sense of inferiority, fractiousness, and anxiety that contribute to the upkeep of a dry party skeleton, the Mizrachi cannot expect the same. The Mizrachi movement cannot count on negative factors; it must have positive content, which is the opposite of ignorance...

The Mizrachi ideology cannot harmonize with illiterate piety. Zealotry that is not based on true Jewish axioms (not to speak of a deep, colorful worldview) absolutely cannot join the Mizrachi. Piety that constantly revolves around questions of shaving one's beard during *Sefirah* and eating American cheese or ice cream cannot relate to a movement that dreams of redemption...

A political party must become a movement – not of traditionalists, conservatives, and status quo men, who are bereft of vision and do not dream, but of pioneers and trailblazers, visionaries and those endowed with *ruach ha-kodesh*. We must shatter the petty traditions of ignorance, passivity, indifference and skepticism, unwitting resignation and plain old cowardice. Kingship, redemption, and Torah are bound up with the ideal of prophecy, with the music of the future, of the "lyres, timbrels, flutes, and harps," with the notes of "the days to come" (Yishayahu 2:2), with the dream that "the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

This movement must fulfill Samuel's words: "The spirit of the L-rd will grip you, and you will speak in ecstasy along with them; you will become another man"!

(The Letters of Creation: Jewish Axioms and Education in America, October 1944)

I wish to speak here of the Mizrachi as a Torah movement, for otherwise neither the Mizrachi nor any other Jewish movement has a future. Ignorance destroys not only traditional, positive Judaism but even Jewish heresy and rebellious sinfulness. Soon, we will have neither Talmudists nor rebellious sinners, and the loss of both of them upsets me. With respect to Torah scholars, you understand: without them, a Jewish world is completely inconceivable to me. But I would want rebellious sinners as well, because they demonstrate best that Judaism is alive and that there is a Being against whom to rebel. I think highly of the Wise Son, as well as of the Wicked Son. I am always afraid of the Simple Son (in general, one must fear a stupid person) and of the Son Who Does Not Know How to Ask. Both the Wise Son and the Wicked Son can build the Land of Israel. The Simple Son and the Son Who Does Not Know How to Ask, however, will not succeed in doing so.

(Recognition of the Present and Vision for the Future, June 1945)

Morai ve-rabbotai, happy are we that we merited to see that today the *Knesset Yisrael* can interpret "the great, mighty, and awesome" according to its simple meaning, in the sense of physical and political might and heroism. This is an *atchalta di-ge'ulah*. Today, together with Moses, we sing: "I will sing to the L-rd, for He has triumphed gloriously; horse and driver He has hurled into the sea" (Shemot 15:1). The heroes of the Land of Israel sanctify G-d's Name. But not for one moment can we forget that "the great, mighty, and awesome" must become an expression and manifestation of a much higher idea, and this idea must not be lost. Otherwise, it will turn into idolatry, the deification of the state. Therein lies the principal task of the Mizrachi.

(Jewish Sovereignty and the Redemption of the Shekhinah, June 1948)

Left: The 1961 Semikhah class at Yeshiva University. First row (left to right): Abba Bronspigel, Matisyahu Weisenberg, Rabbi Samuel Belkin, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Aaron Rothkoff, Jeremiah Wohlberg. Second row (left to right): Yosef Blau, Alan Greenspan, Robert Klein, Naftali Friedman, Jerry Witkin, Simeon Schrieber, Bernard Cohen, Jack Steinhorn, Raphael Weinberg. Third row (left to right): Reuben Rudman, Ephraim Zimmand, Moshe Yaged, Milton Pine, Emanuel Federbush, Israel Rivkin.

On Israel vs. the Diaspora

Unfortunately, the way modern Judaism, even *from* Judaism, is developing in the Diaspora, it is missing this three-dimensional perspective. It is limited to lines and planes. Judaism has become fossilized in the *beit midrash*, cemetery, and ceremonial forms. I am not saying that these things are unimportant, but they are very far removed from reflecting the beauty and splendor within Judaism. This is Judaism without gusto, profundity, and loftiness – flat, monotone, and gray. Is it any wonder that the younger generation does not want to hear from us, and it is difficult to entice its members to come to the synagogue? The young people going out into the street, full of sociopolitical problems and doubts, philosophical questions and queries, hear nothing from our modern rabbis and non-Orthodox clergymen but a couple hackneyed phrases and banal sayings. Why is that? Judaism, instead of being a worldview, has become a cult religion, that which Judaism despises to no end.

In my opinion, it is here that the religious conception of the ideology of the return to Zion lies hidden. I do not refer simply to the *mitzvah* to settle the land or to other *mitzvot* connected with the land. Much more depends on this: the entire character of Judaism and its essence. Will Judaism remain a unidimensional line or a two-dimensional plane, or will it be transformed into an all-encompassing space – long, wide, and deep, with distant horizons and unending boundaries – in a word: a true worldview? I believe that, even with the best of intentions, Diaspora Jewry cannot accomplish this. Observance can exist but not a multidimensional Jewish society.

“And a Man Wrestled with Him until the Break of Dawn”,
May 1946)

In the Land of Israel, the Orthodox have a fighting chance. The character of Jewish life there will not crystallize in two or three years. It will be generations before

a portrait of the *Yishuv* will come into focus. And if we want the foundations of social life in the Land of Israel to be Torah foundations, then we can fight ideological battles with the secularists. That is how the prophets behaved, and that is how *Chazal* behaved in the Second Temple period. In a Gentile environment, by contrast, you have no ability whatsoever to wage war against idolatry. On the contrary, go fight the spirit of Christmas, which inundates every house here... Here, you can shut yourself off, isolate yourself from the street, but you cannot fight it. In the Land of Israel, you have an opportunity to fight for Judaism.

“He Sets His Sights on Wisdom, Knowledge, and Skillful Enterprise”, January 1948)

We often say that we, the Jews of exile, dare not mix ourselves into the affairs of the Land of Israel. This is simply because, in a formal-legal sense, we are citizens of another country! On a social-philosophical level, too, will the Jew in exile have nothing to do with the political nation-state that, over the course of time, will appear in the Land of Israel? Does this mean that there will be a split in the *Knesset Yisrael*, and we will be classified into two groups? Heaven forbid! The *Knesset Yisrael* must remain united. “And who is like Your people Israel, one nation on earth?” (Shmuel II, 7:23).

“Jewish Sovereignty and the Redemption of the Shekhinah”,
June 1948)

● Special thanks to Rabbi Dr. Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff for providing photos of Rav Soloveitchik for this article.




Rabbi Soloveitchik, Rabbi Chaim Heller and Rabbi Theodore Adams.



Rabbi Hershel Schachter with Rabbi Soloveitchik.



Rabbi Soloveitchik and Rabbi Samuel Belkin at a Yeshiva University Rabbinic Almuni conference, 1966.



"A Great Religious Personality"

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik Reflects on
Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook

No Religious Zionist thinker has had a greater impact on the people and State of Israel than Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, the revolutionary Religious Zionist thinker whose influence only continues to grow with time.

The following is an edited transcription of a 1959 recording in which Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik recounts a telling anecdote about Rav Kook. Though many would argue with his view that Rav Kook "was not a philosopher," his deep respect for Rav Kook is evident.

Twenty-four years ago, the only time I was in Israel, I visited a Stalinist *kibbutz* called Kvutzat Kinneret, one of the oldest *kibbutzim* in Israel.

I came to the *kibbutz* during the Three Weeks, and I remember it was a very hot day. The workers were in the fields, the vineyards and the orange groves, working very hard. When I arrived they called me "rav, rav, rav" in a half cynical, half sarcastic way. They had a cynical approach to American Jews in general, and particularly towards an American rabbi.

I assumed the *kibbutz* kitchen was *treif*. They offered me some fresh grapes, but I refused to eat them. They asked me, "Why won't you eat, what's wrong with grapes?" I explained, "the grapes are *treif* in *Eretz Yisrael* if *terumah* and *ma'aser* are not taken; it's forbidden, just like eating milk and meat together." They said that the *shaliach* from the *rabbanut* comes and sets apart *terumah* and *ma'aser*. But then they said, "we can assure that our kitchen is kosher." When I heard this I opened my eyes and said: "you have a kosher kitchen?! What made you introduce a kosher kitchen?" They then told me the following incident, which took place a few years before.

Many people think Rav Kook was a great philosopher. This is wrong. With all my reverence for Rav Kook, he was not

a philosopher. He was a *great religious personality*. To him, Judaism was not an idea; it was a great experience, a passion, a love and lived reality. He not only comprehended Judaism with his mind, but also perceived it with all five senses. Judaism to him was a sense experience, not an intellectual experience. If you ask me what Rav Kook's philosophy was, I don't know how to answer; I don't believe it's possible to systematize his philosophy. But I don't need to find complete philosophical coherence in his writings. When you read them, it is like a storm or powerful tide that is driving you into lands unknown, into mysterious paths. His impact is still felt in *Eretz Yisrael*. A few days ago, I spoke with the rabbis of Israel, and it's clear they still have great reverence for Rav Kook, many years after his death.

Rav Kook once came with his *shamash* to this *kibbutz* for Shabbat. They brought their own *challot* and wine because the dining room then was completely *treif*. On Friday night, they sat down together with everyone else. He made *kiddush* on his wine, *hamotzi* on the *challah*, and then *benched* - he didn't eat anything else. All night long, the *kibbutzniks* turned lights on and off; they ignored Rav Kook's presence and acted as if he wasn't there. On Shabbat morning, they wouldn't make a *minyan* for him, so he *davened* by himself

as they worked the land. At lunch, he again quietly made *kiddush* and ate his *challah*, while the *kibbutzniks* were cooking and sewing.

After *havdalah*, the *kibbutz* gathered together and Rav Kook danced with them. He told them stories about his past, about his father and mother - but never indicated any disapproval regarding their behavior during Shabbat. On Sunday morning, as he was leaving, he said, "*Shalom, lehitra'ot, v'le'echol beyachad seudah achat*," "goodbye, and may we soon eat together as one." The next day, all the dishes were thrown out and the kitchen was *kashered*.

I can tell you that a *cheirem* (ban) of the Agudah's rabbis wouldn't have made a difference [in that *kibbutz*]. What was the power he exerted? It was the power of his religious personality. He was in love with Judaism. As Maimonides says, "as one who is in love with a woman, so should a Jew be in love with Judaism, with G-d."

● The audio recording of Rav Soloveitchik is available at Ohr Publishing - Videos of Rav Soloveitchik. Special thanks to Odelia Gladiusz for her help with transcribing this recording.

The Students will Bring Redemption

Rav Soloveitchik's Views on Aliyah

Rabbi Dr. Aaron Adler

The Rav's manifesto on Religious Zionism in general, and on the national need for increased *Aliyah* to Israel in particular, was eloquently articulated in his 1956 Yom HaAtzmaut address at Yeshiva University entitled *Kol Dodi Dofek*. Subsequently, this speech, originally delivered in Yiddish, was printed in both Hebrew and English translation. In his capacity as Honorary President of the Religious Zionists of America, the Rav would deliver a keynote address at the organization's annual convention. Many of these speeches appeared in book form entitled, "The Rav Speaks." It is clear to all who heard or read these talks that the Rav had a very positive outlook on *Aliyah*.

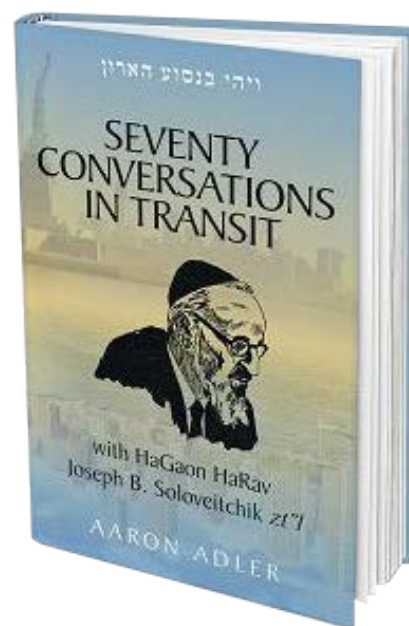
The Rav told me that he never liked the word "Diaspora" because it lent legitimacy to those living outside of *Eretz Yisrael*. The appropriate word should be "*galut*," exile, giving one the sense of detachment from one's home. Without a constant sensation of "*galut*," there could be no longing for *Aliyah* to Israel.

Yet when it came to his own students who occupied positions in the rabbinate or

education, the Rav was far less enthusiastic – to say the least.

In March 1977, I began my tenure as a community rabbi at Congregation Sons of Israel in Long Island City, NY, and concurrently served as a teacher of Jewish Studies at The Frisch School in Paramus, NJ. I shared my *Aliyah* ambitions with the Rav during the course of 1978. I felt all along that I had to fight to obtain a proper blessing from the Rav prior to our expected *Aliyah* in July 1979. In fact, it became increasingly evident that the Rav was hopeful that his students would recognize their national responsibility to do G-d's work on American soil.

My Jewish Agency-sponsored pilot trip coincided with Chanukah of 1978. I argued that in the dispute between the *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel* schools regarding the order of candle lighting – from eight to one or from one to eight – the Talmud (Shabbat 21b) refers to *Beit Shammai's* view as "פוחת והולך," "descending order," as opposed to the view of *Beit Hillel* of "מוסיף והולך," "ascending order." When considering the future of the Jewish people, with intermarriage and assimilation increasing at



alarming rates, it's clear that the American scene is a "פוחת והולך" situation, while Jewish population growth in the State of Israel is a "מוסיף והולך" scenario. As we all know, the *halacha* is in accordance with *Beit Hillel!*



Rav Soloveitchik and Rabbi Dr. Aaron Adler.

I, therefore, argued that my future should be with the future of our people.

I referred to a *shiur* delivered by the Rav before Pesach, based upon the *Haggadah* story of the *Seder* in Bnei Brak. The Rav homiletically explained that the Torah giants of each generation are deeply concerned throughout the long night exile about the fate of the nation: “They were discussing the Exodus from Egypt all through that night.” I asked the Rav permission for me to continue on this homiletic line: “until their students came and told them: ‘Our Masters! The time has come for reciting the morning *Shema!*’” It would ultimately be the students – not the teachers – who would usher in the redemptive era. And I saw myself as part of that crowd of students.

On another occasion, I recall quoting the Talmudic ruling (Ketubot 110b) that “it is always preferable to reside in *Eretz Yisrael* even in a city with a gentile majority, rather than living in the Diaspora in a city with a Jewish majority.” I suggested to the Rav that if we plug in modern-day coordinates to this ruling, we could say that it would be preferable to live in Nazareth – an Israeli city with

a guaranteed non-Jewish majority – rather than live in Monsey, NY, in a heavily populated Jewish community. My occupational possibilities in Nazareth would include, perhaps, driving an Egged bus or working as a plumber, while in Monsey, there would surely be opportunities in the rabbinate or education. Yet the Talmudic ruling says “always” when talking about residing in *Eretz Yisrael*, irrespective of vocational consequences! To this the Rav remarked: “It’s a very nice *drasha!*”

The Rav then voiced his concerns that I may not “find” myself in Israel, and that it would be a waste losing me in America. He assured me that in twenty years’ time, I would be elected President of the Rabbinical Council of America. To which I retorted, with as much respect as I could muster, “Does the Rav have any other ‘blessings’ up his sleeve?” Finally, I promised the Rav that no matter what I would be doing in Israel, I would try my utmost not to embarrass his good name.

I recall, at the time, telling the Rav that I thank G-d for being a *talmid* of the Rav and not a *chassid* of the Rav! In *Chassidic* circles, the Rebbe’s “advice” was a determining

factor on personal decisions. The Rav never wanted to serve in such a capacity. He believed that his students had the right to decide on personal matters even against his “advice.” As a matter of fact, the Rav had an overall negative opinion on the doctrine of “*Da’at Torah*” – the attitude developed by Rav Elchanan Wasserman *hy”d* and the Chafetz Chaim *zt”l* – which grants Talmudic scholars “Torah wisdom” in general areas of life such as medical issues, politics and the weather. Questioning the Rav on his thoughts concerning “*Da’at Torah*,” he responded: “When you figure it out, come back and tell me.”

On July 1, 1979, en route to JFK Airport to begin a new life for myself and my young family in Israel, I received a warm telephone greeting and blessing from the Rav; he requested of me to keep him abreast of my undertakings.



Rabbi Dr. Aaron Adler

is the Rabbi Emeritus of Ohel Nechama Community Synagogue in Katamon, Jerusalem, and the Founding Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Bnei Akiva, Ner Tamid, Chashmonaim. This chapter is excerpted from Rabbi Adler’s “Seventy Conversations in Transit with HaGaon HaRav Joseph B. Soloveitchik *zt”l*” (Urim Publications, 2021).



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Pesach, Matzah, Maror

Rabbi Reuven Taragin

Rabban Gamliel used to say: “Whoever does not discuss the following three things on Pesach has not fulfilled his duty, namely: Pesach (the Pesach sacrifice); Matzah (the unleavened bread); Maror (the bitter herbs).”

Key to fulfilling our duty

Rabban Gamliel asserts that without speaking about the *korban pesach*, *matzah* and *maror*, one does not fulfill his obligation. Why is speaking about these objects so important?

The answer becomes clear when we appreciate the passage that follows Rabban Gamliel’s teaching in the *Haggadah*: “*Bechold dor va’dor*,” “In every generation a person is obligated to regard himself as if he had come out of Egypt...” This paragraph describes the obligation to not only *recount* the story of the Exodus, but to see oneself as having *personally left* Egypt.

By discussing the *korban pesach*, *matzah* and *maror*, we are able to transcend time and feel as if we are experiencing the Exodus ourselves. They are tangible *mitzvot* that allow us to not only talk *about* the Exodus, but to re-experience it ourselves.

Pesach

The *korban pesach* commemorates Hashem’s having been “*posei’ach*” over the homes of the Jewish people. The verb *posei’ach* is generally translated as “skipping over” (Melachim I 11:21), which is why the name of the holiday is translated as “Passover.”

This makes sense according to the way the *Haggadah* presents the plague of the firstborn – that it was Hashem Who personally passed through Egypt to kill them.

Sefer Shemot (12:23), however, describes a *mashchit*, a “destroyer,” as the one who did the killing and whom Hashem prevented from entering the Jewish homes. If so, it would make sense to translate the word *posei’ach* as ‘protected’ (Yishayahu 31:5), meaning Hashem protected the Jewish

homes from the *mashchit* who was killing the Egyptian firstborn sons.

Matzah

Rabban Gamliel explains that the *matzah* commemorates our speedy departure from Egypt. The problem, however, is that the people were commanded to eat *matzah* while they were still in Egypt, *before* the departure occurred! Avudraham learns from here that *matzah* has a second significance – it is the *lechem oni*, the “bread of poverty” that reminds us of our enslavement.

Tosafot explain that the “poverty” facet of *matzah* dictates its physical makeup. This is why the *matzah* is made of simple flour and water, and why we eat broken pieces at the *Seder*. At the same time, the “freedom” facet of *matzah* is expressed by eating the *matzah* while leaning comfortably. We take an objective symbol of slavery and eat it as free men.

It is interesting that the *matzah* commemorates seemingly contradictory parts of the narrative. The message is that both slavery and redemption are critical aspects of the story and of Hashem’s plan for *Am Yisrael*. As Rav Yissocher Frand writes: “The message in this is that in order to be a free person, we do not need anything. If a person specifically needs “bread” as opposed to *matzah* to consider himself free, then he is not a free person. A person who *needs* the physical pleasure of bread to give him his sense of freedom is not really free. Rather, he is a slave to his physical needs. The Master of the Universe emphasizes that freedom has nothing to do with externals. It is entirely a phenomenon of one’s internal awareness. I can eat the same piece of *matzah* that I ate as a slave and also eat it now as a free person. This is true freedom” (*Matzah: The Bread of Affliction and the Bread of Redemption*).

Maror

Rav Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter, the author of the *Sefat Emet* (Pesach 5653), explains that

we eat *maror* and remember the bitterness of our slavery in order to emphasize that the bitterness was also part of Hashem’s plan. Throughout the *sefer*, Rav Alter explains that exile, though deeply painful, was ultimately beneficial to *Am Yisrael*. It helped us enter into the covenant with Hashem (Pesach 5632), and the bitter suffering strengthened us as a people and gave us the ability to survive similar situations in the future (Pesach 5647).

Rav Kook (*Ma’amar HaDor*, 107) explains that the extreme bitterness of the slavery demonstrated that our ancestors’ enslavement in Egypt was unnatural and ensured that we would one day be free. A nation that is disgusted with its present state and refuses to be reconciled with its current situation has the potential to change its destiny. Historically, the Jewish people refused to reconcile with exile – which was the foundation for our people’s miraculous return to *Eretz Yisrael* after almost 2,000 years.



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Rabbi Reuven Taragin
is Educational Director of Mizrachi
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When the Aruch HaShulchan Could Not Begin his Seder

Rav Meir Bar Ilan זצ"ל

The youngest son of the great Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin (the Netziv), Rabbi Meir Bar Ilan was also the grandson of Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein, the legendary rabbi of Novardok and author of the Aruch HaShulchan. A prolific and powerful writer, Rav Bar Ilan wrote movingly and honestly about both his father and grandfather.

The following story about Rabbi Epstein is a translation of a passage from Rav Meir Bar Ilan's autobiography, From Volozhin to Jerusalem, in honor of Rav Bar Ilan's 74th yahrzeit, on the 18th of Nissan.

When the family asked Saba how it is possible to be a posek, when there are *shivim panim l'Torah*, seventy ways to understand every law, when you can always find a flaw in every proof, when every law can be interpreted in many ways, and a posek is likely to stumble and forbid the permissible or permit the prohibited, he answered:

"A person must focus his heart on *paskening* correctly, and beyond that - well, 'the Torah was not given to angels,' and if everyone is always worried that his understanding is incorrect, to whom, then, has the Torah been given to? A person must have good intentions and seek the truth, and the rest? 'He is compassionate, He forgives iniquity.'"

His strength and self-confidence enabled him to not only become the greatest posek of his generation, but also of generations to follow. And when he sought to be lenient, he would do so with awe of heaven and confidence that his approach was correct, even as others ruled strictly in order to remove themselves from doubt.

One year, on the night of the second Seder, a woman came to ask my grandfather a question - a serious question that, if my grandfather ruled strictly, would have a dire impact not only on the Seder but which would render all of the food she had prepared for Pesach forbidden as

chametz. This occurred as we returned from davening *ma'ariv* and were preparing the table for the Seder. My grandfather listened to her question, and instead of answering immediately as he normally did, he took a candle and walked into the room with all of the *sefarim*. The woman who came to ask the question stood waiting. Ten minutes went by, fifteen minutes, twenty minutes and more. Everyone was waiting to begin the Seder, and one of the grandchildren was sent to the room to call Saba to the table. Saba was immersed, looking through various books, and said "just a minute, just a minute, I'm coming."

A little more time passed, and Saba finally walked into the room - the table was all set, everything was decorated beautifully, only awaiting his arrival - and his face was aglow as he turned to the woman and said: "It's kosher, go home to prepare your Seder. Next time, just be careful to avoid questionable situations."

He then turned to the family and said: "How could I sit down to begin the Seder as long as this woman could not return home and celebrate the Seder with her own family?"



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The Cup of Hope

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ל"צ

As a child, I used to be fascinated by the cup of Eliyahu at the *Seder* table. Would the prophet come when we opened the door after the meal? Would he be visible or invisible? Did the level of the wine go down, however imperceptibly? The idea of the prophet who did not die, but went to heaven in a chariot of fire (Melachim II 2:11), and who would one day return to bring the good news of redemption was intensely dramatic. Only later did I discover the real significance of Eliyahu's cup, and found, as so often, that the truth is no less moving than the stories we learned as children.

The Mishnah in *Pesachim* speaks of four cups of wine. These are the basic requirements of the *Seder*, and the community must ensure that even the poorest person has sufficient wine to drink these cups. According to the Talmud Yerushalmi, they represent the four stages of redemption listed at the beginning of *Parashat Va'era*. God assures Moshe that despite the fact that his intervention with Pharaoh has initially made things worse, liberation will indeed come:

"Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am Hashem, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as My own people, and I will be your G-d'" (Shemot 6:6-7).

In the Babylonian Talmud, however, there is a strange statement: "The fifth cup: over

this one completes *Hallel* and says *Hallel HaGadol* (Tehillim 136, 'Give thanks to Hashem, His love endures forever'). These are the words of Rabbi Tarfon."

Rashi is puzzled by these words. Thus far, the discussion has been about four cups, not five. He is therefore driven to the conclusion that the text is a scribal error. It should say, 'the fourth cup.'

Rambam, however, accepts the text as it stands. After drinking the four cups and completing *Hallel*, he writes: "One may pour a fifth cup and say over it *Hallel HaGadol*... This cup is not obligatory, unlike the four cups."

Ra'avad (R. Avraham ibn Daud), contemporary of Rambam, takes a slightly different view. For him it is a *mitzvah* to drink a fifth cup. There is a difference between *mitzvah* and *chovah*. The latter is an obligation, the former an act which, though not obligatory, constitutes a positive religious deed.

Two questions arise on the views of Rambam and Ra'avad. The first is: why does the Mishnah speak about four cups if there are in fact five? To this the answer is straightforward: The four cups are obligatory, unlike the fifth. That is why the community must provide the poor with the means of fulfilling their obligation, but they do not have to make provision for the fifth cup, which according to Rambam is optional, and according to Ra'avad is desirable but not absolutely necessary.

The second question seems stronger. When G-d speaks to Moshe, He uses

four expressions of deliverance, not five. Hence, the four cups. Asking this question, however, takes us back to the text at the beginning of *Va'era*. It is then that we discover, to our surprise, that there is in fact a fifth expression of deliverance:

"And I will bring you to the Land I swore with an uplifted hand to give to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Ya'akov. I will give it to you as a possession. I am Hashem" (Shemot 6:8)

The drama of the fifth cup now becomes apparent. *Pesach* represents the start of the great journey of Jewish history, from slavery to freedom, Egypt to the promised land. What then became of it after the destruction of the Second Temple, the failure of the Bar Kochba rebellion, the Hadrianic persecutions and the long, tragic series of events that led to the greatest exile of Jewish history? Could Jews celebrate freedom under such circumstances?

The pathos of this question is evident in the opening words of the *Seder*: 'This is the bread of affliction our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt.' The very festival that spoke of liberty gained became – for almost 2,000 years – a poignant reminder of what the Jewish people had lost: freedom, a land, a home. A new phrase was born: next year. 'This year we are slaves; next year we will be free. This year we are here; next year in Israel.' The past became the future. Memory was transfigured into hope. It is not too much to call the Jewish people 'the people of hope'. What had happened once would happen again. As the prophets of exile – Yirmiyahu and

Yechezkel – said: there would be a second exodus. The loss was only temporary. The Divine promise was forever.

It was in this context that the debate over the fifth cup arose. Jews could speak about the four preliminary stages of redemption – but could they celebrate the fifth: ‘I will bring you to the land’? That is the debate between Rashi, Rambam and Ra’avad. Rashi says one should not drink a fifth cup; Rambam says one may; Ra’avad says one should.

Hence the extra cup at the *Seder* table. Out of respect for Rambam and Ra’avad, we pour it. Out of respect for Rashi, we do not drink it. According to the Sages, unresolved *halachic* disputes will one day be resolved by Elijah (the word *teyku* – ‘Let it stand [undecided],’ refers to Eliyahu: ‘The Tishbite [Eliyahu] will come and answer questions and problems’). Hence the fifth cup became known as ‘the Cup of Eliyahu’.

In our times, the Jewish people have returned to the Land. According to the late Rabbi Menahem Kasher, we should now drink the fifth cup. Be that as it may, it is no less moving to think back to the eleventh and twelfth centuries – the age of Rashi, Rambam, and Ra’avad – and know that in the darkest night of exile, the only question was: how far, in the present, do we celebrate hope for the future? Four-fifths? Or all five? The promise G-d gave Moshe spoke not just to that time, but to all time.

Pesach kept hope alive. Hope kept the Jewish people alive.





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First Fruits and Seder Night: Giving and Gratitude

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Go and learn what Lavan the Aramean wanted to do to our father Ya'akov. For Pharaoh had issued a decree only against the male children, but Lavan wanted to uproot everyone...

Why do we expound on verses from Devarim (Chapter 26) and not from Shemot?

At first glance, it would seem that the book of Shemot would be the best way to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt. The editor of the *Haggadah*, though, chose four verses in *Parashat Ki Tavo* in Devarim, which tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt in a much shorter form. Had we wanted to use the verses from Shemot, it would have made the *Haggadah* much longer and we might have been obliged to skip certain verses. When we use the verses that were chosen, dealing with *bik-kurim*, the first fruits, we can cover the complete story with a relatively short passage. One can fulfill the exposition, in the words of Mishnah, that "He expounds... until he completes the whole section."

Another reason for choosing these verses is that the verses in Devarim are part of the commandment of bringing in one's first fruits, whereby each person is required to bring his first fruits and to tell others about the Exodus from Egypt. This

is a description of the past and a demonstration of how to properly tell the Exodus story as more than just a description of events that took place.

One can add another reason: the commandment of bringing one's first fruits to Yerushalayim expresses the attribute of gratitude. The person goes down to his field, looks at his crop, and knows that everything is from G-d: "You shall rejoice with all the good that Hashem your G-d has granted you and your household" (Devarim 26:11). In this section, there is one major operative verb that is repeated time and time again - *nun, tav, nun* - to give. "Gives to you" appears twice, as well as phrases like "to give to you," and "who gave you the Land," "G-d gave me," "Hashem your G-d gave you." By being personally grateful and able to identify with G-d's abundant generosity, a person learns to thank G-d for all that He has done for the nation of Israel, for its deliverance, and for its redemption.

We can offer yet another reason why the *Haggadah* uses the verses in Devarim instead of those in Shemot. While it is true that the text regarding the first fruits is much shorter than those in Shemot, the former text does not look only at the Exodus from Egypt by itself like the latter one does. The recitation upon bringing

one's first fruits is also a look backwards and begins the description of the redemption from the time of Ya'akov. One thanks G-d by examining the course of history of the nation of Israel. This way, we understand that there is a Divine plan that leads our nation, from the beginning of our forefathers to the present day. Our thanks are not only for the Exodus from Egypt. The Exodus from Egypt is only an example of how G-d has helped Israel historically throughout the generations, and we thank Him on *Seder* night for all of His help.



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

is Head of Mizrahi's Educational Advisory Board and Rabbinic Council. He serves as the Chief Rabbi of Gush Etzion, Rosh Yeshiva of the Jerusalem College of Technology and is the Founder and Chairman of Sulamot and La'Ofek.



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MIZRACHI



The True Women's Lobby

Sivan Rahav-Meir

In the book of Bereishit there were matriarchs – Sarah, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah – who were singular women, unique in their generation. What sort of generation came after them? The book of Shemot introduces us to a generation that consists entirely of powerful women. This is our first encounter with a kind of Hebrew wonder woman, who has assumed mythological proportions down through the ages:

“Now the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one who was named Shifrah, and the second, who was named Puah. And he said, “When you deliver the Hebrew women, and you see on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall put him to death, but if it is a daughter, she may live.” The midwives, however, feared G-d; so they did not do as the king of Egypt had spoken to them, but they enabled the boys to live. So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this thing, that you have enabled the boys to live?” And the midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are skilled as midwives; when the midwife has not yet come to them, they have [already] given birth.” G-d benefited the midwives, and the people multiplied and became very strong. Now it took place when the midwives feared G-d, that He made houses for them.” (Shemot 1:15–21)

This is the description of two extraordinary Hebrew women in Egypt. Their legacy is one of faith in G-d in the face of a brutal dictator, having the courage to resist conventional thinking and behaviors, together with the willingness to take risks for the sake of the next generation, to persist in living the Jewish way.

Tzachi Michaeli shares a powerful perspective. These days we hear more and more about the “feminist lobby.” But we need to be precise and acknowledge that this lobby, that supposedly represents half of our people, the female half, only raises its voice, like a *shofar*, at events that protest the status of women, as if their voice represents that of all Jewish women.

I think that the real women's lobby was established in the story of the Exodus. Everything started there. For the first time, Israel receives the designation of ‘*am*’ or nation, albeit from Pharaoh. Among Pharaoh's harsh decrees is an order for the Hebrew midwives to kill every Jewish boy at birth. How will the women of this new nation, the nation of Israel, react?

Shifrah and Puah, who are actually Yocheved and Miriam, are, in fact, the first representatives of the Jewish nation, that only now has taken shape in Egypt, to appear in the Torah.

And how is the uniqueness of these righteous women expressed? “The

midwives feared G-d, so they did not do as the king of Egypt had spoken to them, but they enabled the boys to live.” In defiance of the Egyptian dictator, the midwives did not kill the baby boys, and the Torah makes a point of telling us that these women made sure the boys grew up strong by worrying about and caring for them in secret. Unlike Pharaoh, Shifrah and Puah see reality in a positive light – after all, Jewish boys are being born! And everything that happens is because they remember that Hashem, not Pharaoh, is their true king. Rashi comments with a quote from Yechezkel (19:2): “How was your mother a lioness!”, reminding us that Israel is compared to a lioness. This is the first women's lobby: positive action, faith, defiantly giving birth, and joy.

Up until this point, our focus has been exclusively on the midwives. But there are other members of the feminist lobby. Notice what we are told immediately afterwards: Amram marries Yocheved and Moshe is born. What does his mother do?

“The woman conceived and bore a son, and [when] she saw that he was good, she hid him for three months. [When] she could no longer hide him, she took [for] him a reed basket, smeared it with clay and pitch, placed the child into it, and put [it] into the marsh at the Nile's edge (Shemot 2:2–3).

Yocheved is also a lioness, who acts with the same spirit. And then Miriam appears, a little girl who acts like a mature woman of faith. According to the Midrash, Miriam's parents separated because they feared they would have a boy who, by Pharaoh's decree, would be thrown into the River Nile. But Miriam convinces her parents to remarry and never lose hope. So Moshe is born and his sister Miriam watches over him from the river's edge: "His sister stood from afar, to know what would be done to him" (Shemot 2:4).

This is a breathtaking passage. Some commentators explain that Miriam, being a prophetess, knew that everything would turn out okay, that salvation would come, except she did not know how it would happen. Therefore, she was not under duress, she was just standing there, waiting to see how things would work out for the best. "His sister stood from afar, to know what would be done to him."

And then a third woman enters the picture: "Pharaoh's daughter went down to bathe, to the Nile, and her maidens were walking along the Nile, and she saw the basket in the midst of the marsh, and she sent her maidservant, and she took it. She opened [it], and she saw the child, and behold, he was a weeping lad, and she had compassion on him, and she said, "This is [one] of the children of the Hebrews." (Shemot 2:4-5)

If previously it was only the Hebrew midwives, and then a Hebrew mother and her daughter, who opposed Pharaoh, now the daughter of Pharaoh herself joins in opposing him - an impressive, powerful display of sisterhood. These extraordinary women, the "wonder women" of their time, would deservedly become heroic figures in the history of *Am Yisrael*. May we merit to follow in their footsteps!

● *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 has a weekly radio show on Galei Tzahal (Army Radio).



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MIZRACHI
BY THE WORLD ORTHODOX CONGRESS

Israel: The Partnership between Man and G-d

Rabbi Stewart Weiss

The revelation at Mount Sinai was a truly momentous event in the annals of human history, as Divine law was transmitted from heaven to earth. The birds stopped flying and the waves stopped flowing as humanity stopped in its tracks and stood in awe as the Ten Commandments were bestowed upon mortal man.

Yet something seems strange here.

We Jews are an ever-wandering people with terminal wanderlust, traveling the length and breadth of the planet. So why do we not make pilgrimages to Mount Sinai?! Unlike our deep reverence for Mount Moriah, where the *Beit HaMikdash* stood, we retain no affinity whatsoever for Mount Sinai. How can we explain this?

When asked this question, Rav Joseph Soloveitchik answered with another question. "Why is it," he pondered, "that the blessings we recite after eating fruit and bread are so radically different?"

Fruit is a miracle, akin to the manna that fell from heaven. It is wonderfully colorful, nutritious, delicious and effortlessly accessible; it literally grows on trees! And yet, the blessing we recite after eating fruit associated with *Eretz Yisrael* is extremely brief, a mere sentence or two, almost an afterthought.

Bread, on the other hand, requires a huge amount of work by human hands. G-d provides the seeds, but it is we mortals who must invest significant effort – planting, sowing, reaping, sifting, and baking – to produce the finished product. Nevertheless, the blessing we recite after eating bread – *birkat haMazon* – is extremely long and poetic, filled with praise for G-d and referencing the Exodus, *Yerushalayim*, Israel, *brit milah* and a host of other topics.

"I would have thought," wrote the Rav, "that it would be quite the opposite! That we would wax poetic specifically over the fruit, which comes directly from G-d, and much less so for bread, which necessitates so much effort on our own part."

From this the Rav derives a major tenet of Jewish thought: the greatest moments in life with the deepest meaning are the moments when man and G-d work in tandem, creating a partnership in order to achieve an elevated purpose. It is precisely because we are so involved in the making of bread that we invoke the greatest blessing.

And so it is with the two mountains. *Har Sinai* was a unique event, but it was a "solo performance"; it was G-d's show and G-d's alone. We were expressly warned to stay away from the mountain and to keep our distance. As great as the giving of the Torah was, when it was over, it was over forever. The mountain returned to a hill of dirt; no holiness whatsoever remained. We moved on and we never looked back.

Mount Moriah was very different. There, Avraham took Yitzchak to the *akeida*, ready to do whatever Hashem commanded – even to the point of death – so as to comply with the Divine decree. The phrase "And the two of them walked together" refers not only to father and son, but also to man and G-d. Where the two interact and intertwine, *kedusha*, holiness, exists forever. And so this place would become the natural site for the *Beit HaMikdash*, where man and G-d would rendezvous on a daily basis, and it would retain its holiness forever.

The default shape of the universe is round. Natural phenomena take on a round shape; planets are round, most fruit is

round, and when rain strikes the ground or dust swirls in the breeze it does so in a round form. But the default shape of Judaism is square! The preponderance of Jewish religious objects have a square shape: *tefillin*, a *sukkah*, a *chuppah*, *matzah*, the *aron kodesh*, the *luchot*; even the way we marched in the desert from Egypt to Israel was in a strict square formation.

Why is this significant? Because while round items in nature can come from G-d alone, something square can exist only when man is involved in the process. Square, in short, is a signature that says, "Man was here." G-d decrees, man designs.

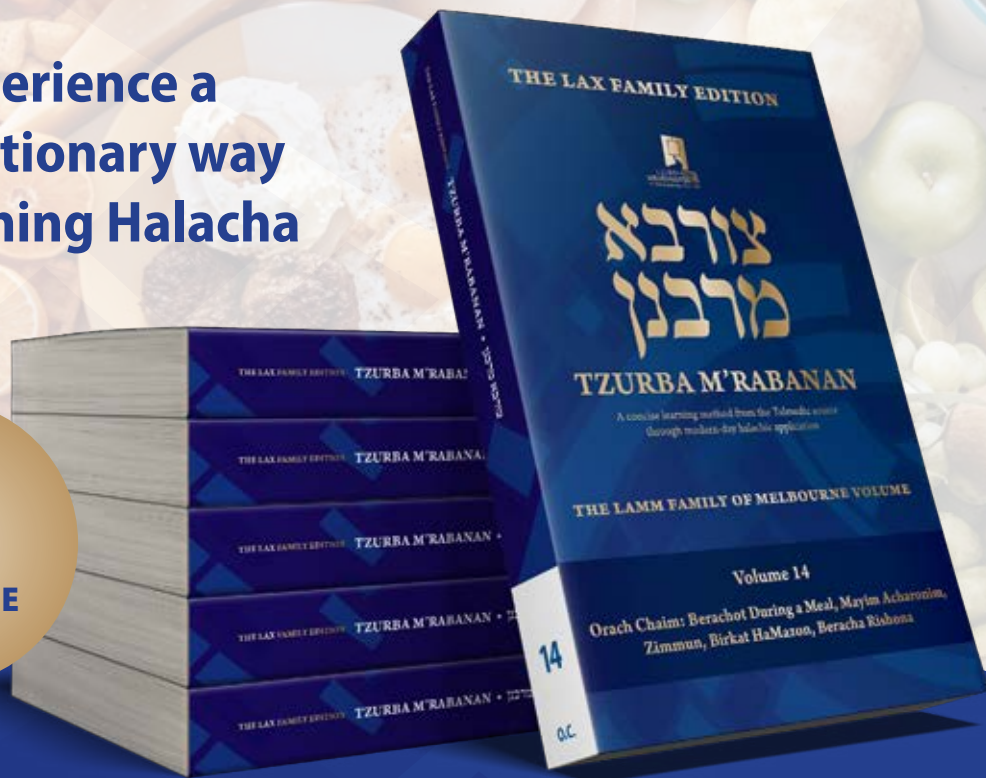
The State of Israel is the only country in the world where every facet of life – from our calendar to our street names to our agriculture – can represent a union of the secular and the spiritual, a meeting of G-d and man. And that is why, while spiritual edifices outside Israel may acquire temporary holiness, Israel is the only country on earth where every single centimeter has eternal holiness.



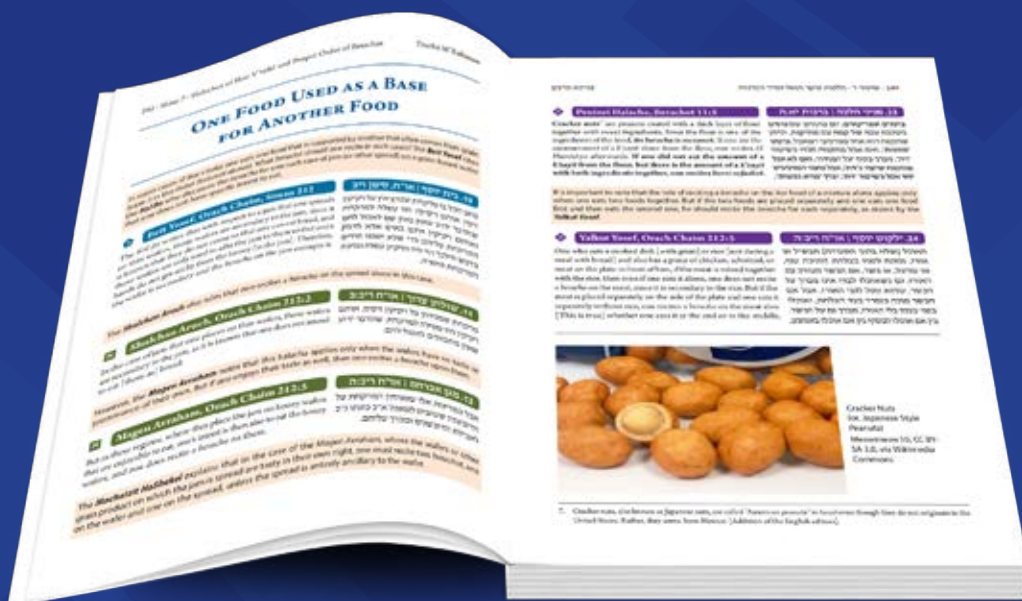
Rabbi Stewart Weiss
is director of the
Jewish Outreach Center of Ra'anana.

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The Time of our Freedom

Esther Rubinstein ל"צז

The only daughter of Rabbi Chaim Yirmiyahu Flensburg, Chief Rabbi of Shaki, Esther Rubinstein (1881–1924) studied Torah, rabbinic literature and Jewish philosophy with her scholarly father. Extraordinarily bright, she often startled people by reciting passages from the Talmud by heart. After marrying Rabbi Yitzchak Rubinstein, they moved to Vilna, where he was appointed the “Crown” rabbi in 1910. Esther founded several Jewish schools for girls and was a passionate Religious Zionist who spoke frequently about the critical role women must play in the return to the Land of Israel.

Only a few years after World War I, Esther contracted a rare blood disease and passed away at the young age of 42. The entire Jewish community of Vilna mourned her death, and thousands attended a memorial service for her in the Great Synagogue of Vilna. Esther was the only woman ever given this honor. Many distinguished rabbis and Religious Zionist leaders eulogized her, including Rabbi Yechiel Ya'akov Weinberg, whose eulogy appears following this essay.

Though most of Esther's family was tragically murdered in the Holocaust, her son Yosef, who later changed his last name to Even-Odem, made Aliyah and later published many books on medicine and nature.

The following essay was written in flawless Hebrew and published in the April 1, 1920 edition of HaMizrachi. It is translated here for the first time.

For two thousand years, our nation has celebrated *zman cheiruteinu*, the “time of our freedom,” on foreign soil. One might think that celebrating this holiday in exile is akin to celebrating the fiftieth *yahrzeit* of a great leader of our people; even if the celebration is observed with much splendor, everyone recognizes that the man at the center of the celebration is no longer alive and that only his memory lives on. So too, every year we celebrate the time of our “freedom,” even though every Jew knows that we are not free and that nothing is left of our freedom except a pleasant memorial day recorded in the columns of our Torah scrolls. For the nation is again in exile, oppressed and silent under the heavy yoke of servitude, weighed down with ceaseless and bitter suffering.

But in truth, this is not the case. For us, the “holiday of freedom” is not only a remembrance of the past, which is already gone, but also a yearning for a future that has yet to come. With this longing, the power of the holiday of freedom only grows, even during the worst moments of the present. And so year after year, when a Jew sits with his family on *Seder* night, he begins his *Seder* by calling out in joy and elevation of spirit: “This year we are slaves – but next year we will be free!” The “holiday of freedom” is about *hope* for freedom – the hope and faith that the servitude of the present exile is only temporary, that we must bear it knowing that it will pass, and that we will soon be free. *Freedom*. This must be and has always been our people's greatest desire. The yearning for freedom sustained our forefathers, and it also sustains us,

preventing us from sinking into the servitude of exile and losing our identity.

The people of Israel are never truly slaves. Rather, a Jew in exile feels that he is locked up in prison and that his freedom has unjustly been stolen from him. And so he waits for the day of his redemption, for the day when justice will emerge like light from darkness. The people imprisoned in exile anticipate freedom and constantly hope that they will soon be free, that their ancient homeland will soon be redeemed and the scattered ones of Israel “shall return and come with singing unto Zion” (Yishayahu 51:11)

“This year we are slaves – but next year we will be in *Eretz Yisrael!*” With this call, a Jew remembers and repeats for himself and his children, every year, that our dwelling in a

יום הזכרון הנעים על עמודי ספר חוררתנו. כי באיים שלא נמצאו
העם שוב בגלות, הולך נדכא ושוחח תחת עול העבדות הקצת
שצרו הרבים מכבידים עליו וכסירים את חייו בלי חשך.
אילם באמת לא כן הוא. הג-חרות" אצלנו איננו רק
זכרון העבר, שכבר חלף, כי אם גם שאיפת העתיד, שצד
יבוא. ובשאיפה זו גדול כחו של הג-חרותנו" גם בהצטרף
היותר איכות בחייו ההוה שלנו ועל כן מדי שנה נענה
בשבת העברי בלי הסדר בחוג משפחתו, הוא מתחיל את צדו
בקראו בשמחה ובהתרוטמות הרוח: השתא עבדי- לשנה דבא
בני חורין" הג-חרות" הוא- תקות הרוחו, התקוה והאנייה
כי העבדות הגלותית היא רק זמנית, ועלינו לסאת ולסבול איתו
כפגע בן-חלוף, אבל עוד נהיה שוב בני חורין- החרות- זו צינה
להיות והיא היתה השאיפה התמידית של עמנו. והשאיפה הנכסית
הנמרצת הזאת לחרות היא היא עצמה לאבותינו ולנו, פי לא
שקענו מעולם ביון העבדות הגלותית. אותה העריגה התמידית
של הנשמה העברית לחרותנו העתידה, המקוה הצילה את עמנו
מן השעבוד ומאבדן הכרה עצמותו בחשכת-גלות. מעולם לא
היה ישראל לעבד. הוא רק הרגיש את עצמו כתפוס בנ-
הסוהר שזולו מננו את חופשו בלא צדק והוא מוכה ליום גאלו
ליום שיצא כאור משפטו. והעם אסיר הגלות נעשה גם אסיר
התקוה ומקוה תמיד, שעוד מעט ויחד עמו גם ארץ נילוד
העתיקה תפדה ופזורי ישראל, מדויים לציון ברנה ישיבו...
השתא הכא לשנה הבאה בארעא דישראל" - בקריאה זו
הוא מזכיר ומשנן בכל שנה ושנה לעצמו ולבניו, כי ישנה
בנכר היא רק ארנית, וכל שאיפתו ומגמתו לעתיד היא לישב
ולהשתקע בארץ-ישראל, הארץ שהוא קשור אליה בכל ימיו
ונפשו. והקשר האמיץ והנצחי של עמנו לארץ אבותיו הוא
הוא שששה את העם העברי לנצח, לעמ-עולם. בקשר זה את
מוצאים אותו הכח הטמיר והנעלם. המחוק, המאחד והמאגד איתו
בכל ארצות פזורינו. בכח זה עובר העברי, הגודד הנצחי, את דרך גלאו
הכבדה והארוכה עם מטה הנודדים שבידו מכלי מצוא פני
לכף רגלו העיסה ונחם לנפשו הנדלאת, וכחיותו נדכה מלי ש

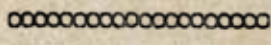
וההגנה עליה, רק עם כזה לא יקרע לנצח מעל אדמתו, ואם גם
גרש יגורש ממנה בתגרת יד גוים עריצים, גם אז ישוב אליה ולוא
רק באהרית הימים.

ולכן אפשר להנחיל תורה וארץ רק לעם המוכשר לשחוט
את הפסח, את השה, את אילי עשתרות-הצאן, המעשירות את
את בעליו, את זה ספר העושר והרכוש בימי קדושים.
אבל בני עם ההפך לחיות צריכים להיות מוכנים לסות
גם מות קדושים, גם מות גבורים, כי אם כל אחד יהרד לנפשו
ולחייו, אז בשעת הגזרות יעזבו את תורתם ובימי הסכנה יתרו
על ארצם. ולכן בשפיתת דם מילה הראה ישראל, כי למען קדש
שם אלהיו וטביעת חותם לאומי לנצח - גם על דמו, דם
בניו וורעו, לא יהוס.

ואו, עת נוכח הכביכול, כי עם בני ישראל נכון הוא גם לקרבנות
רכוש. גם לקרבנות דם ונפש, רק או ראה, כי הגיעה השעה, שבה אפשר
להוציא את העם ממצרים, לתת לו את התורה ולהביאנו אל
הארץ אשר נשבע לאבותינו; כי לא למען ובכדי יהיה כל הטורח הזה,
כי זאת איננה עבודה לשעה, רק לדורות נצח, כי ידע ישראל
לשמיר על חורתו כראוי ולהגן על ארצו כיאות.

ואו נשמע הקול האדיר, האומר לאסירים: צאו!

רג יהודא ליב ולוטניק.



זמן חרותנו.

כאלפים שנה הוג עמנו את זמן חרות" על אדמת נכר;
יש אשר יפיה על לבנו הרעיון, כי הג זה בנלות דמיונו לחג
יובל-שנים אחרי מות אדם גדול בעל בעמיו הג שכוה, גם בעת
שנערך ברוב פאר יהוד, הכל יודעים ומכירים, כי חתן-היובל
איננו עיד בחייב, ורק זכרונו עדין חי בעולם. וכן שנה שנה
חוגג עמנו את זמן חרותנו, אף כי כל איש עברי יודע ומכיר,
כי חרות לעברים איננה עיד במציאות ולא נשאר ממנה בלתי

foreign land is only temporary, and that his entire goal and longing for the future is to return and settle in Eretz Yisrael, the land to which he is bound with all his heart and soul. This powerful and eternal attachment of our people to the Land of our fathers is the very reason the Hebrew nation is eternal. For in this connection the nation finds the hidden and exalted power that strengthens, unifies and binds its people together in all the lands to which we have been scattered. With this strength, the Jew, the eternal wanderer, can pass through the heavy and long exile, holding the staff of wanderers in his hand without finding rest for his weary feet or comfort for his sighing soul. And as he is pursued by every nation and considered a foreigner in every land, he strengthens and comforts himself

in his suffering with the "comfort of Zion and Jerusalem."

When we reflect upon the chapters of our history that were written with Jewish blood, we see that our forefathers were always free men, even amidst their servitude. This places an obligation upon us, today, to ensure that we do not become slaves amidst our freedom. Now, as the sun of freedom rises over the entire world, we must not lose our national treasures and our spiritual freedom, which earlier generations kept safe from harm during even the darkest hours of our history - treasures that preserved us and carried us until this day...

Now, at this hour of freedom, as the chains of servitude are breaking all over the world, and every nation under its own flag

protects its spiritual wealth and its national language and literature - certainly we, the ancient people of the book, must preserve our spiritual heritage and our national language of Hebrew, so that it is not forgotten.

The language of our forefathers escorted our people when we dwelled in our Land and comforted us through generations of exile. Now it must be the language of our rebuilding, which will escort us and bring us to our redemption, to the true and everlasting "time of our freedom"!

Rabbi Yechiel Ya'akov Weinberg's Eulogy for Esther Rubinstein

The passing of Rebbetzin Esther Rubinstein has left the Jewish world in a state of shock. The news of her death caused all hearts to tremble. The mourning was universal - all circles and parties joined in eulogizing her. Rabbinic scholars and *yeshiva* students as well mourned her death. Not for nothing did the eulogizers deliver their eulogies - the loss caused by her death is great indeed.

She was a truly great woman. It can be said about her unequivocally that she left no one comparable to her. All the characteristics of her greatness were extraordinary. Her broad and comprehensive knowledge of Torah would have enhanced even a male rabbinic scholar whose only occupation was the study of Torah. Her profound and broad mastery of general culture is rarely paralleled even among intellectuals with all the proper diplomas. She combined within herself unparalleled natural talent, intellectual brilliance, profound understanding, broad knowledge, impeccable memory, literary flair, and was a gifted public speaker as well.

When she was suddenly "discovered," she was already in full bloom with all her talents at her disposal. Her first public appearance astounded her audience. Her reputation as a gifted speaker spread far and wide. Her words were incendiary; her listeners were moved by her fiery words. Those who heard her speak from the dais, or read her essays in print, were astounded by what they heard and read. Men asked: Is it the way of women to perform such wondrous acts? But those who conversed with her in matters of Torah and general wisdom ceased to be amazed. They realized that she represented a unique category of human being, one that was not subject to the whims of gender. They saw her greatness, recognized that she surpassed all others, and acquiesced... Her public appearances on the dais and in print became frequent and expected. Her views on contemporary issues were eagerly awaited...

We who knew her when she was still a youngster knew that she was worthy of the task. She was armed with an abundance of spirit and excellent work habits. As a young girl, she combined Torah and good deeds. She studied

Scripture and rabbinic literature. She was worthy of the task even before she made her first public appearance; we were astonished that she could contain herself for so long. Her ability to suppress her "prophecy" was, perhaps, her greatest talent. Those who knew her only from her speeches and essays knew only half of her. She mastered the Torah, *aggadic* literature, poetry, and philosophic literature - and knew how to draw out from them their richness and beauty. Even her ordinary conversation was replete with wisdom.

It is with a pained heart that I recall my last visit with her. I accompanied her husband, the rabbi (may he live and be well), on a visit to her at the hospital. Death was already gleaming through her eyes; she sensed that her last day was approaching. Her husband, the rabbi, began comforting her. But it was apparent that she was not receptive to his words of comfort. I was deeply saddened, and sat silently, as I shuddered from fright lest she fathom the true meaning of my silence. I decided to turn the conversation to words of Torah. She was engaged by the words of Torah and her eyes lit up. Thus while the blade was to her neck, she spewed forth words of Torah, interpretations of Scripture and rabbinic passages, sharp and to the point. As long as I live, I shall never forget that scene...

In the preceding paragraphs, I attempted to record a short epitaph for her tombstone. I sense, however, that I have not fulfilled my obligation to eulogize her. So I will record a few more lines. Her most salient characteristic, it seems to me, was her strength of spirit. Wherever one witnessed her greatness, one witnessed her modesty as well. This great and famous woman was also a modest woman. Her modesty did not derive from the weakness and softness of women. Rather, it was a modesty derived from spiritual strength, from a deep ethical commitment. She never appeared in the public arena for the sake of fame or in order to wield political power. As a youth, she never kept apart from the other girls her age, nor did she lord it over them. I once asked her before the War: "Why do you insist on maintaining such a low profile? Why don't you reveal to the world your literary prowess?" She answered me plainly: "The glory of a princess is indoors" (Tehillim 45:14). (As an aside, I will mention her beautiful

interpretation of this verse: The internalized world of a woman is her true glory and ornament.) With perfect simplicity and wholesomeness, she fulfilled her obligations as a daughter, wife and mother. Her entire deportment was characterized by simplicity; and even the simplicity passed by largely unnoticed.

Especially touching was the mutual love between father and daughter. Her father, Rabbi Chaim Yirmiyahu Flensberg of blessed memory, was Chief Rabbi of Shaki. He was a great scholar in Torah and general wisdom, and was one of the great preachers of his generation. How proud the old rabbi was of his daughter! It was his practice to call out – whenever a rabbinic passage came up in a discussion and no one could remember its source – “Let us call the girl and ask her what she thinks” (Bereishit 24:57). His deceased daughter was expert in Torah; she could recite by heart all its passages. The father’s soul was bound up with his daughter. When she left her father in order to join her husband in Genitchesk (where Rabbi Rubinstein had his first rabbinic appointment), he was very distraught... I heard that Rabbi Flensberg in his last years refrained from preaching in public as often as he did in earlier years. When asked why he curtailed his preaching in public, he replied: “I no longer have the audience that I had in earlier years.” He was referring to his deceased daughter, who was also his only daughter...

But the daughter’s love for her father was no less intense. She loved to tell over words of Torah in the name of “Abba.” Whenever she did so, she embellished them, explicated them, and added from her wisdom to his. It was as if she wanted to present a gift to “Abba” from own spiritual largesse.

In her published essays, she undertook to spread the notion that the revival of the Jewish nation will occur only with the participation of the Jewish woman. The resuscitation of the Jewish nation rings hollow without “the Hebrew mother.” Jewish education for women is perhaps the greatest problem we need to confront. In particular, we – the bearers of the flag of observant Jewry – need to wrestle with this issue openly as well as in the deepest recesses of our hearts. When I reflect on such issues, Esther Rubinstein’s image appears before my eyes. She serves as our model. Her well-ordered education, and her fulsome Jewish and general education, serve as a model program for the education of our daughters. She railed against the mistaken notion (that has taken root among some light-minded women) that the enlightened woman and the religious woman are mutually exclusive categories of women. This mistaken notion is a reflection of a narrow-minded spirit and a constricted soul. Such spiritual poverty allows what is fashionable to take precedence over Torah teaching.

Had Esther Rubinstein been granted longevity, she would have aided us in solving the problem of Jewish education for women. For she regularly chastised Jewish women for their frivolity and for their poverty of Jewish education. She left an indelible impression on her listeners and readers, for all knew that she was the living embodiment



A remembrance volume for Esther Rubinstein.

of the complete Hebrew woman. How sad that this great woman, overflowing with profound ideas, and destined to be the educator of her generation, was cut off before her time! The song of her service ended at mid-point.

Your spiritual image will never leave us. Not merely because we honor your memory, and not merely because you were great in spirit and accomplished in deed, but because you stood at the top of the mountain – to which we all lifted our eyes – and bore our strivings and hopes. Your name will remain our symbol, our symbol for the strivings of the soul.

● Rabbi Weinberg’s eulogy originally appeared in a 1926 memorial volume in honor of Esther Rubinstein. The eulogy was translated by Dr. Shnayer Z. Lyman in “Rabbi Yehiel Yaakov Weinberg: In Praise of Esther Rubinstein,” and published in *Tradition*, Fall 2007. It is reprinted here with permission.

JEW'S with VIEWS

We asked five accomplished Jews from around the world: Which of the 15 parts of the Seder is most personally meaningful to you?



Rachel Kraus

A foundational mainstay of the *Seder*, and Pesach in general, is the principle of *vihigadeta l'vincha*, “tell this story to your children.” The design and goal of the *Seder* is to experientially – through props, song and a bit of live theater – induce curiosity, stimulate the senses and delve into the art and immersive space of storytelling.

I am the grandchild of four Holocaust survivors. It is an identity of strength and profound significance that I carry with me every single day and one that has added importance on Pesach. In the liminal space between the 13th and 14th steps, *Barech* and *Hallel*, when we open the door and invite in *Eliyahu HaNavi*, my paternal grandfather had a family tradition that he initiated in the years following the war to recite a special prayer, an ode to the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto. My grandfather chanted aloud this sweeping and moving reading about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and about the decimation of our people by a modern-day Egypt and Pharaoh. His powerful voice was unwavering, and, as he approached the end, would sing in his bellowing baritone voice, *Ani Ma'amin*, “I believe.” The room shook. Time stood still. No one could move or even swallow. This is a tradition we still carry on, now an ode to my grandfather.

Of the 15 steps, it's the white space between the steps where we tell our story, where we personalize and ritualize what this story truly is, what my story truly is.

Rachel Kraus is a marketing executive and Managing Director/Partner at DoAble, a brand strategy and marketing collective. She is also the Director of Community Education at Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun in Manhattan where she serves as part of the spiritual leadership of the community.



Rabbi Dov Lipman

The act of breaking the middle of the three *matzot* and hiding the larger piece for the *afikoman* mimics the behavior of impoverished people who tend to hoard food due to their uncertainty about future sustenance. *Yachatz* helps us internalize what our forefathers experienced in Egypt while also transmitting the essential Jewish value of feeling the pain of others.

Moshe “went out to his brethren and saw their suffering” (*Shemot* 2:11). Rashi explains that Moshe “placed his eyes and heart to feel pain for them,” while the Midrash goes even further, saying “Moshe cried and said, ‘I am so pained for them’... Moshe then offered his own shoulders and helped as many Jews as he could with their work” (*Shemot Rabbah* 1:27). Moshe could have enjoyed his comfortable life in the palace without giving a second thought to the suffering of the Jewish people. Instead, Moshe felt their pain and took action.

In my work as CEO of Yad L'Olim, I meet people who are suffering every day. But I also see how caring for them and lending them a helping hand raises their spirits and literally saves lives.

As we perform *Yachatz* and our children begin to scheme to win their *afikoman* present, we should remember to explain the reason for setting aside the larger piece of *matzah* for later and commit to dedicating ourselves – as individuals and as families – to feel the pain of others and to act on their behalf.

Rabbi Dov Lipman was elected to the Knesset in 2013, making him the first American-born MK in 30 years. The author of 9 books about Judaism and Israel, and an international lecturer, Rabbi Lipman is the founder and CEO of Yad L'Olim, an NGO that assists olim from around the world.



Lani Eshel

For me, the most meaningful part of the Pesach Seder has always been *Nirtzah*. I have so many powerful memories from my childhood *Sedarim*. It was the part of the Seder that everyone was most enthusiastic about, and our song sheets of silly English Pesach songs were passed down from year to year, just like our *haggadot*.

As I've grown older, my appreciation of *Nirtzah* has deepened. *Nirtzah* is the last part of the Seder; by this point, most families have been sitting at the table for hours, the younger children have fallen asleep, everyone has finally eaten and, by and large, our *halachic* obligations have been fulfilled. But *Nirtzah* reminds us that although we may have eaten enough *matzah*, said "*Pesach, Matzah and Maror*," there is still more to be done. We must not stop with the *berachot* or with *Hallel*, but we must continue to express our joy over the incredible miracles performed by *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. We step out of bounds of traditional *tefillot* and sing silly, informal songs.

And finally, with *Nirtzah* we conclude our Seder with the most important message of all: לְשָׁנָה הַבְּאֵה בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם הַבְּנוּיָה, "Next year in the rebuilt Jerusalem!" – reminding us of the privilege we have to be part of the building of our holy city, and also of the journey that still lies ahead.

Lani Eshel is currently on shlichut in Manchester with Mizrachi UK and Bnei Akiva UK.



Rabbi Ari Rockoff

Personally, the *afikoman* is most meaningful to me – and no, it's not only because of fond childhood memories of hiding my father's *afikoman* and getting presents in exchange for retrieving it! It's because this part of the Seder conjures up memories of a special family *minhag* to take a piece of the *afikoman* and place it in a visible location in our home where it remains throughout the year.

I have vivid memories from my childhood of my grandmother carefully nibbling the *afikoman* into a perfectly round shape and placing it on top of our windowsill. Invariably, during the year this mini-*afikoman* would catch many a newcomer's eye and spur them to ask, "What's that doing there?"

Truthfully, our family is unsure about the exact origins of the custom. However, there are several sources for this custom, including the *Kaf HaChaim*, who writes that keeping a piece of the *afikoman* in one's home serves as *shmirah* (protection) for one's home throughout the year. Alternatively, Rabbi Yaakov Reischer writes in *Chok Ya'akov* that this practice serves as a fulfillment of *zechirat yetziat mitzrayim*, the *mitzvah* of remembering the Exodus. Others suggest that this practice is a *segula for parnassa*. Regardless of the origin, the custom resonates with me deeply. A tradition in our family for generations, it symbolizes our connection with the wisdom and experience of my ancestors.

This year, as we commemorate my grandmother's fourth *yahrzeit* shortly before Pesach, I will find comfort watching our children take their turn at nibbling the mini-*afikoman* that will adorn our home in the upcoming year. In so doing, they will continue to our family's tradition *midor l'dor*, from generation to generation.

Rabbi Ari Rockoff is the David Mitzner Community Dean for Values and Leadership at Yeshiva University.



Raizi Chechik

I personally connect deeply to the four sons, finding particular resonance in a reflection of Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneerson on the order of these sons in the *Haggadah*. They do not follow a hierarchy of righteousness, nor are they in a progression of dialogue with each other. Instead, the Rebbe views the four sons through the lens of Jewish history, as a metaphoric retelling of the story of the Jew arriving in exile, and particularly the story of the Jew arriving on American soil.

The first generation, the *chacham*, arrives in the new world deeply committed to the traditions of Torah and *mitzvot*. His child, the *rasha*, forcefully rejects the foreign customs of his immigrant father, aiming to integrate into his new country. The grandchild parallels the *tam*, who has fond memories of his beloved grandparent's traditions and customs. But the great-grandchild, raised without a Jewish education, becomes *she'eino yode'a lish'ol*, the cycle of assimilation complete.

Several years ago, after an exhaustive search, I located my great-grandfather's grave. A deeply religious immigrant, he lived through the pain of watching his children leave the path of observance he held so dear. None of his American-born grandchildren were raised in observant homes. Statistically, my cousins and I should have tragically been *she'eino yode'a lish'ol*.

But because there were rabbis and laypeople in our beautiful community who were committed to Jewish education and cared enough to reach out to others, my great-grandfather now has dozens of descendants who are learning, living, and teaching Torah. Each year when I read the story of the *arba banim*, I recall with gratitude, and obligation, our capacity to do the same.

Raizi Chechik, Community Scholar at the Jewish Center of Manhattan, is a veteran day school leader and serves as a mentor to new Principals and Heads of School.

Olim in their own words

FROM NEFESH B'NEFESH

Ariella Daniels

I can't believe I am finally here in Israel. Thank you, Hashem!

There were several phases of my *Aliyah* to Israel, and all were filled with the unexpected and the unpredictable. Years of wanting and yearning, months of feeling calm and collected, days of doubt and fear, hours of nerves and excitement – and it all culminated with my asking myself at Ben-Gurion Airport, “Is any of this real?”

Since I was a child, I've been dreaming of the day I would move to Israel. I feel like my entire life has been gearing up towards the moment I would get on a one-way flight from Toronto. The journey has played out in my thoughts and dreams for so long. It has been overwhelming to try and stay present and to take it all in with meaning.

Now, officially Israeli, I am faced with what comes next. It's difficult to wrap my head around being an *olah chadasha* (new immigrant) and to focus on the next stage of my life.

It is difficult to leave something good – my family, community, career, synagogue, mentors, spiritual leaders, comfort, stability, childhood home, great friends, and birthplace – to begin anew. It's a purely conscious and active decision to let go and move forward. Each “*lehitra'ot*” came with tears and emotion, because everything has been so good and so beautiful.

I had always put an unknown end-date on my time living in Canada. Every life decision I ever made factored in ‘the move to Israel.’ Now I am here, fully open to receive what comes next. *Baruch Hashem.*”



נפש
נפש Nefesh
ב'נפש B'Nefesh

Michael and Shuli Sohn

Michael and Shuli Sohn always dreamed of making *Aliyah*. They knew that it was something that was going to happen, the question was only a matter of when.

“Israel provides an all-around sense of comfort and belonging,” Michael said. The Sohns moved from New York to Israel in 2014, just after they had their first child. They decided to live in Ramat Beit Shemesh and later moved into a new neighborhood called ‘Mishkafayim.’

Shuli says that it has been a dream watching the neighborhood grow over the last seven years. At first it was nothing more than a construction zone and today it is a huge blossoming community. Neither one of them have parents that live in Israel and the community that they live in really is a community where you are able to feel that your neighbors are your family. Shuli beams, “It just feels like you have family everywhere here – it is so special.”

Now a family of six, the Sohns could not imagine their life anywhere but here. Michael is the Executive Director of Yeshivat Ashreinu and Shuli works as a social worker. Having fulfilled their dream, and answered the question of when, they are thrilled to pursue new dreams from within the Land of Israel.



נפש
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SPECIAL IN ISRAEL

RABBI SHMUEL JABLON

The *Haggadah* speaks of four types of children, to each of whom we are obligated to teach the story of the Exodus. The final example is the לֹא שָׁאֵל יוֹדֵעַ לְשׂאֵל, the child who does not know how to ask. Typically, we think of this child as one who is too young to ask even the most basic of questions. Others say that this is a child who does not care to ask. Perhaps, though, the *Haggadah* is describing a very different child – a child who, due to his disability, is *unable* to ask. The *Haggadah* reminds us that we also have an obligation to do all that we can to educate this precious child.

Eight months before making *Aliyah*, we were blessed with our fifth child – Yehuda Yair – who brought much light to our family. For the first five years of his life he was a typical child. But then everything changed almost overnight. He almost completely stopped talking, forgot almost all he had ever learned, and had a complete behavioral regression, requiring 24/7 supervision. Like any good parent, we did our best to try to find out what had happened and how to help him. He was diagnosed with PANS/PANDAS, autoimmune encephalitis and an additional diagnosis of late onset autism. All of these are quite rare, particularly for someone who was a normally developing child for five years. Meanwhile, he has undergone many medical treatments, all with the hope of regaining at least some of his prior function. Hoping, working and praying for a miracle, we gave him a third name – Nissim. Sadly, there has been only slight improvement. For reasons only He knows, Hashem has decided that Yehuda Yair Nissim will remain a low functioning autistic child.

One of the many blessings of living in Israel is that we live in a country that takes seriously the need to educate *all* children, including those with special

needs, as well as the need to assist their families. Currently, we receive support in several ways:

- In Israel, all children are entitled to education, and children in special education are served until age 21. Yehuda attends a religious school in Jerusalem for children with autism, where there are typically three staff members with six children. School is year-round, other than a two-week break at the end of the summer.
- As a parent of a disabled child, we receive a monthly allowance from National Insurance that helps pay for additional services and compensates us for my wife's inability to work outside the home.
- Our oldest son is a paratrooper in the IDF, yet the army grants him extra days off so that he can come home and help care for his younger brother.
- It's not easy having a nine-year-old who needs 24/7 supervision. Shabbat is a particular challenge. In Efrat, an incredible group of teenage volunteers take special needs children like Yehuda every Shabbat for a 90-minute program – providing both children and parents a needed respite. Many other communities provide similar opportunities for special children and their families.
- In Israel, parents of autistic children are entitled to at least 15 “vacation days” where their child can spend a day and night with another family or at a special program (like Shalva). The idea is to give parents a break. In our case, it is hard to take advantage of this as Yehuda is an anxious child unlikely to cooperate with going away for a sleepover. We decided to request special permission to bring

someone to our home for some Shabbatot to help take care of Yehuda, which would allow us to experience a more normal Shabbat. Permission was granted.

In Israel, the State cares for people with special needs for their entire lives. We know Yehuda's older siblings will do all they can to help him, while caring for their own families. Hopefully, Yehuda will progress to the point where he will be able to live semi-independently in a group home. But regardless of the extent of his needs, we know there is funding and a framework to help him throughout his life.

Nothing is perfect. We wish there was even more funding and support for special needs. And no amount of support can change the difficult reality with which parents of profoundly disabled children must live. Still, we are blessed to live in Israel, where even the children who cannot ask have a place at the table – and a nation to care for them.



Rabbi Shmuel Jablon
is the Executive Director of Shapell's /
Darche Noam and Midreshet Rachel
v'Chaya in Jerusalem. He and his
wife were recently blessed with
their third sabra grandchild.



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My Grandfather's Exodus from Egypt

Nachshon Meir Spiegelman

If you would ask my Saba “What was your *Yetziat Mitzrayim* (Exodus)?” (a question worth asking any person, especially a grandparent), you’ll receive the following answer – his visit to Israel almost seventy years ago!

“During this journey, which I will never forget, I found a country and I found a wife,” says Saba – the two things that redeem a person from loneliness and wandering. Although it’s still unclear to me who made the first move during their two-week sail from New York to Israel, meeting your spouse on a ship to Israel is pretty romantic!

“Already then, at our young age, Savta and I decided: we would return to this place, for this is where we belong. We never asked ourselves *if* we should immigrate to Israel, but only *when*. Although it took us another forty years until we actually arrived – forty years of anticipation and preparation – in the end, we came home.”

During my grandparents’ incredible visit, they met David Ben-Gurion and Shai Agnon, volunteered at an immigrant and refugee absorption camp outside of Jerusalem and traveled all over the country. But there was one place they did not get to visit, a place Saba never thought he would reach in his lifetime – the *Kotel*. He remembers standing at the Tower of David when the guide turned the group’s attention to the Jordanian snipers who were standing on the other side. From a distance, he could see part of that holy place; but he could not reach it, like Moshe on *Har Nevo*.

Incredibly, the Six Day War broke out, miracles happened and Jerusalem was united, now and forever. Within a few months, my Saba was on his way – this time by plane – to the Land of Israel.

Today, my Saba does not overly sanctify or obsess over the *Kotel*, for he considers the walls of the heart (קירות הלב) to be the *ikkar*, the main thing, not the walls of stone. But when he came that first time to this holy and sacred place, he touched the wall and began to weep. His heart



Nachshon's grandparents on their way to Eilat in 1954.

opened when he touched those stones, stones he never imagined he would feel with his own hands. Unprepared for the experience, he didn’t know how to react or what he should do. He thought for a moment, took out a book of *Tehillim*, and began to read them with a passion and focus he had never before experienced.

Saba is our family’s storyteller, and particularly for us, his grandchildren, who were born in the Land. We, the generation born into a world of miracles that are too easy to take for granted, who have only known a rebuilt and united Jerusalem, must learn the story of the journey, from the generation that left Egypt.

“And it shall be, when you come to the Land which Hashem your G-d has given you for an inheritance... And you shall speak and say before Hashem your G-d: ‘A wandering Aramean was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there... And Hashem brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm... And He has brought us into this place, and has given us this Land, a Land flowing with milk and honey’” (Devarim 26:1, 5, 8–9).



Nachshon's grandparents' 60th wedding anniversary in 2016.



Nachshon Meir Spiegelman

is a high school educator, certified tour guide and the author of “Storky’s Journey Home”, a children’s book about the many birds who migrate over Israel, a parable for the symbiotic and constant relationship between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel. The book can be purchased on Amazon.



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Brothers in Life, Brothers in Death

On Sunday, February 26, Hallel (21) and Yagel (19) Yaniv were murdered by Arab terrorists as they drove through the town of Huwara, adjacent to their yishuv of Har Bracha. Tal Weisel paid a shiva call to their parents, Esti and Shalom.

“Those who knew the boys knew that they were different from each other, but they complemented each other,” says Shalom Yaniv, who was bereaved of his two sons, Hallel and Yagel, may their blood be avenged, who were murdered last month in an attack in Huwara. “They did not always agree with one another, but there was something calm and settled about this stage in lives, over the last few years, as each one came to the end of their maturation process and found the right places for themselves, one in Yeshivat Kiryat Shemonah and one in Yeshivat Givat Olga.

“The truth is, we had a lot of *nachat*, not because everything went smoothly, but because everyone was in a place that was good for them. Last Shabbat, as Esti said, we had a kind of *Shabbat Preidah*, a goodbye Shabbat. We were lucky that there was a *Shabbat bar mitzvah* in the family, and we went.”

“There was an event on Friday,” Shalom says, and makes an effort to show the last family photo and pass it among the comforters. “To their credit, they usually refused to be photographed, but for some reason everyone agreed this time. When I received the magnet from the *bar mitzvah*,



Hallel and Yagel Yaniv, hy”d.

I said ‘wow, this is really a beautiful picture. Two shining children, כְּזֶהָר הַרְקִיעַ, מְזֻהָרִים, shining like the brightness of the firmament.”

The truth is, nothing at the Yaniv family *shiva* house should have surprised me. Not the glowing countenance of Esti, not the warm atmosphere, not the genuine and candid conversations, nor the pure and complete faith that was evidently present between the comforting words and hugs. From all the photos, obituaries, statements, and images that were circulated to the public the day before Hallel and Yagel’s funeral it was apparent that this family is a special one – one whose faith flows in their veins and whose consistent kindness and altruistic concern for others had made them public figures.

And yet the *chessed*, pervading every corner of the house, did not need to be spoken in order to be understood. Yigal’s room is littered with numerous tools that belong to the tool *gemach* he ran, while the yard of the house is home to boxes filled with costumes from the costume *gemach* that Esti meticulously maintains every year. And despite the heavy mourning, sorrow and loss, Esti and Shalom made it a priority to put the comforters who came to visit them at ease...

“I am full of gratitude towards the Master of the world,” Shalom concluded in a hoarse voice. “Thank you for entrusting us with these two treasures. We took joy in them, we take joy in them, we will take joy in them. We will take all the good things they did, and all of their idealism and good character traits, and we will do everything we can to bring good to the entire nation.”

● Originally published in Hebrew in *Olam Katan*.

Bringing the Hills of Judea to Life

Commemorating the 80th Anniversary of Kfar Etzion

After two prior failed attempts to settle the Judean hills, a group of young and idealistic religious pioneers from HaPoel HaMizrachi and Bnei Akiva successfully established the new settlement of Kfar Etzion in April of 1943. At the very same time that brave Jewish fighters fought the Nazis in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, these young settlers overcame a severe shortage of water, the rocky nature of the terrain and hostile Arab neighbors to create a Jewish foothold in Gush Etzion.

Among those pioneers was Shalom Karniel hy”d, a national leader of Bnei Akiva who was later killed when his convoy from Jerusalem to Kfar Etzion was attacked on December 11, 1947. A few months later, on May 13, 1948, the Arab Legion overran and destroyed Kfar Etzion, killing 129 Jewish defenders, including 15 Jews who had surrendered. The settlement was reestablished after the Six Day War by Rav Chanan Porat and other children of Kfar Etzion’s original founders.

On February 20, 1944, Karniel wrote a letter in which he reflected on the new settlement of Kfar Etzion. It is translated here for the first time.

Be”H, Kevutzat Avraham – Kfar Etzion, 26 Shevat, 5704

On the 26th of Shevat, 5704, in the fifth year of the Second World War, upon the completion of the first year of our *Aliyah* to Kfar Etzion, we, the members of Kevutzat Avraham of HaPoel HaMizrachi, are about to plant fruit and forest trees in Kfar Etzion, to fulfill the Torah’s commandment, “And you shall come to the land and plant every tree...” (Vayikra 19:23), “He created it not as a waste, but formed it for habitation” (Yishayahu 45:18).

At a time when streams of our martyred brothers’ blood are spilled like water and the world is basking in their blood, we have come here to build, plant and strike deep roots in the hills of Judea, for these plantings are a new opening for our redemption and the redemption of our souls. We were detached in exile; our uprootedness was the terrible disease of our people. We need to attach ourselves to our roots and take firm hold of our homeland. This is the work we are doing here.

The trees we plant today will be a symbol for us, a symbol of our way as pioneers of the nation and a sign of our covenant with our homeland – “For man is a tree of the field” (Devarim 20:19). The deep roots of the trees will remind us of our duty to be attached to the world of action – through building, planting and working. The high branches that will rise up to the sky will arouse us to look upwards, to know our Creator and strive always for moral perfection and holiness. This was the way of our ancestors, and this is our path as pioneers of *Torah v’Avodah*.

Two thousand years ago, the surrounding mountains were full of trees and the joy of life. Today they stand bald in their desolation. Upon our *Aliyah* to Kfar Etzion we vowed: we will not rest nor be silent until we have removed the shame of desolation from the face of these mountains, until we have covered them with a mantle of fruit trees and forest trees that will sing the song of resurrection. To fulfill what was said: “But you, mountains of Israel, shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to My people Israel, for they are soon to come... and they shall be tilled and sown, and I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, and the cities shall be inhabited, and the devastated places shall be built again” (Yechezkel 36:8–10).

Blessed are we to have reached such a time as this!

Shalom Karniel hy”d



I Count Everything

Sholom Feldheim

I count everything. I've dropped off my daughter Elka at Bais Yaakov 212 times, left her off at Jewish day camps 147 times, brought her to the homes of Jewish friends 89 times, and to Jewish/Israel events 71 times. So you can understand that I wasn't shocked when I dropped off Elka (for the 519th time) with her husband and baby at the ElAl Terminal for a one-way flight to the Holy Land. Yes, they made *Aliyah*.

People ask me, "Are you worried for their safety?" No, I feel less secure living in

Miami. "Are you disappointed that they didn't stay in Florida?" Nah, I'm proud of their *Aliyah*. "Are you going to miss your grandson?" Um, yeah. If I wanted to see my six-month-old grandson before he and his parents made *Aliyah*, I walked down a twelve-foot-long hallway. Now, I have to fly for twelve hours - that's a heckuva long haul (or hall!).

Ironically, I did not understand Judaism or have an attachment to the Promised Land growing up in a rural part of New Jersey with more cows than *kohanim*. I only knew that the country had loads of stones and sand and yet produced big, delectable oranges. Phylacteries? I thought they were braces a dentist used to soothe cavities. It wasn't until becoming observant in my 20s that I learned about Israel, *tefillin*, and tuition.

I understand that Jews in America and Israel are divided not only by an ocean but also by the notion that one might have to give up a safe thing in exchange for something holy and miraculous.

My daughter and son-in-law already knew this. They could've stayed in Miami and settled on making ends meet, juggling schedules, and car-pooling. But instead, they are engaged in a thrilling, honorable enterprise - the Jewish Homeland.

They aren't my first family members to make *Aliyah*. On an earlier trip to Israel, Elka discovered a photograph of my great-great-grandfather hanging in a museum with a blurb beneath the photo saying, 'First Koydanover Colonist in Israel [1910]'.

Interestingly, my son-in-law shares the same first name as my great-great-grandfather. So we know the power of a name.

These anecdotes, like leaves, fall and scatter around the trunk of my family tree, nourishing it and bringing life to my offspring, particularly my grandchildren.

Aliyah is my grandson Ari's movie. It's a grand film. I rejoice when I envision a teenage Ari on a hillside wielding a hoe, bantering to friends as they clear a plot of land for a park, his *peyot* flying. Or, I see him in a *beit midrash* discussing in Hebrew the finer points of a Gemara. I have a clear mental picture of Ari going off to his army base with his assault rifle in his hands and a *siddur* in his backpack. Later, I imagine him laughing with friends in a cafe, drinking beer, and strumming guitars until the early morning.

Ari is oblivious to my 'visions'. He is more interested in flipping over in his crib than history or *hashgacha pratit*, Divine Providence. But, someday, he will learn about his ancestry and appreciate the meaning of his parents' sacrifice. And, on that day, Ari's life will fulfill the verse: "They shall dwell in the land... They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever." (Yechezkel 37:25)

Until then, I'm proud of my 'fam' and feel everything is going as planned. And, yes, I intend to visit them. You can count on it.



Sholom Feldheim

has had his anecdotes published in *ESRA* and *Mishpacha* magazine. His story "A Tale of Two Kisses" aired on National Public Radio's Miami affiliate, *The Public Storyteller*. He is currently at work on a screenplay. Mr. Feldheim lives in Miami with his wife and family. You can contact him at legacywriter999@gmail.com.

The Armon of Ezra Street

Ruchama Alter

Standing prominently on Ezra Street in the Bukharim Quarter of Jerusalem, the *Armon*, the “Palace”, still retains some of its former glory. The house, constructed in the early 20th century, is the largest and most impressive home in the neighborhood built by Bukhari *olim* from Uzbekistan in the late 1800s. The Bukharim established a luxurious neighborhood, planned by the architect Conrad Schick, who also designed Meah Shearim. The stone homes, tree-lined streets and grid design created a beautiful atmosphere.

The *Armon*, built by the Yehudayoff and Hefetz families, was the largest home in the neighborhood, boasting 30 beautifully decorated rooms, a synagogue, a *mikveh* and a *sukkah* with an advanced retractable roof. It was intended to host the *Mashiach* when he would arrive in Jerusalem!

After the Bolshevik takeover of Russia, the Bukhari community became impoverished. As a result, some of the houses were abandoned and the *Armon* was turned into a Turkish headquarters. When the British conquered the area in 1917, the World Zionist Organization hosted an elaborate *Seder* for hundreds of Jewish British soldiers at

the *Armon*. In 1921, the election of Rav Kook as the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of the Mandate also took place here.

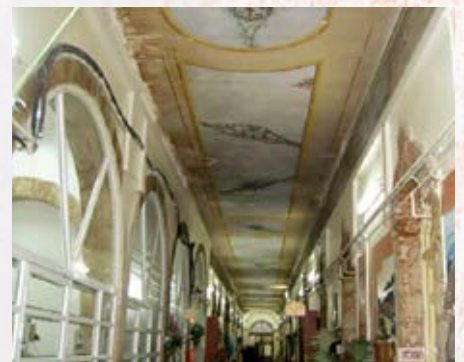
In 1928, Chana Schpitzer established a religious girls’ school in the building. Chana was a member of the Rivlin clan, whose ancestors were students of the Vilna Gaon and who were active in establishing Jewish neighborhoods outside of the walls of the Old City. Chana was educated by private tutors and received an unusually well-rounded Jewish education, preparing her for a leadership and pedagogical role.

While raising her own small children, Chana began to teach reading and writing to girls in the neighborhood, ultimately developing a plan for a Jewish girls’ school. Because the school was planned for girls and because Chana intended to make Hebrew the school’s language of instruction, Agudat Yisrael denied her funding requests (this was before the establishment of the Bais Yaakov schools in Poland by Sarah Schenirer in 1917). Chana Schpitzer then turned to Mizrahi, which agreed to fund the school. In 1919, the school became an official institution of the Mizrahi Education Department.

Chana’s educational vision was broad and included commercial courses to aid the girls in productive employment after graduation. At the same time, in addition to standard classes in Hebrew and in Tanach, the school taught Talmud – a revolutionary step at the time. Beginning with 70 girls, the school flourished and eventually expanded to several branches, including elementary and high schools.

While serving as a girls’ school, the *Armon* was also used by Chana’s son-in-law, David Raziell, one of the founders of the Etzel underground fighters. Secret meetings were held in the basement of the school, and a secret *slik*, an arms cache, was maintained in the building.

Today the building is home to two Charedi girls’ schools. Unfortunately, the interior of the building has sadly deteriorated, and much of its original decor has been



damaged. But while the *Armon* could certainly use a physical upgrade, it is comforting to know that young Jewish women continue to learn Torah inside its walls. The candle lit by Chana Schpitzer continues to shine!



Ruchama Alter

is a tour guide and lecturer in Jerusalem and abroad. She completed her graduate studies in Bible and Jewish Studies at the University of Toronto.



ALIYAH DIARIES

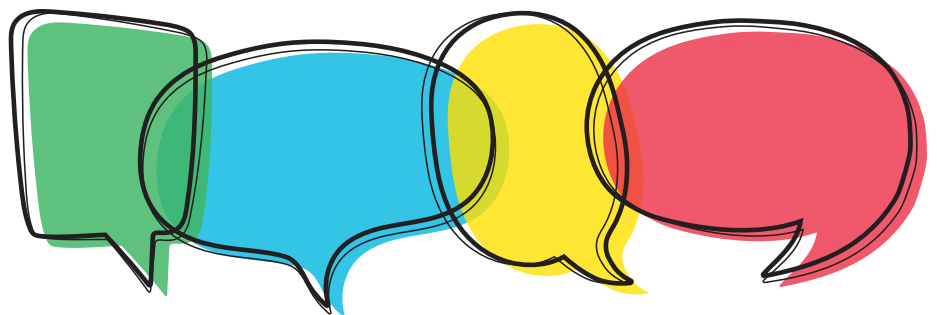
I AM MORE THAN THE SUM OF MY HEBREW MISTAKES

KALLY KISLOWICZ

I'll always be an immigrant, but as long as I keep talking, even telling jokes, I can hope for the day I stop confusing the words for 'snack' and 'kidnapping.'

I started a new position at work a few months ago. In addition to my old responsibilities, I now have another job in a different office where I must interact with a brand new set of Israeli coworkers. And if all this newness wasn't enough to send an under-confident, change averse, native English speaker back under her bed (and it most certainly was!), I took the opportunity to issue myself the following challenge:

I will engage in spontaneous conversation with this new group of colleagues. I will speak even when the situation does not require it. I will ask questions when I don't understand, instead of using my well practiced smile-and-nod. I will not be shy. I will demonstrate once and for all that I



am more than the sum of my grammar mistakes.

I bravely accepted the challenge. Or rather, after trying to weasel out of the challenge, I promised myself sushi should I honestly attempt this daunting task. This was a boss move, as I know full well that I never back down when sushi is on the line.

And so began the great experiment. It started slowly with 'How was your weekend?' and 'That's a beautiful picture of

your family.' And over time it has evolved into 'Want to hear about the crazy thing that happened to me over Shabbat?' And, 'Look at this new shirt I bought for 15 shekels at that cute second hand store!'

And while I have clearly made progress, it hasn't been easy.

The phrase 'marbles in my mouth' most accurately describes how I feel as I try to think of and articulate words on the spot. My anecdotes are often clumsy, but

my coworkers are patient and kind. They laugh in the right places so I know they understand me... though it's also possible that they too have perfected the smile-and-nod. They gently correct me, and they ask me to clarify when I tell them a whole story about being annoying (מְעַצְצָנָה) when I was actually describing an interaction I had with an interior designer (מְעַצֵּבָה). They encourage me not to get frustrated because my mistakes are adorable. I was already adorable in my second hand shirt.

Being even more adorable is exhausting.

I mentioned my failures and successes to a friend of mine who was visiting from the States. 'You've been here for years now, do you really still feel like an immigrant?', she asked. Another visitor asked me, 'Why are you trying so hard? Why is it so important to you to be more Israeli?'

The first question is easy – yes, I still feel like an immigrant when I have to work harder than everyone else in the room to simply follow a conversation, when it takes several moments of heart palpitations and cold sweat for me to discern if an unidentified caller is a telemarketer or an actual representative from my bank with important information, and most acutely when, despite having rehearsed the correct word numerous times, I inevitably ask the optometrist to refill my order of lentils (לְעִשִּׂים) instead of contact lenses (לְעִשִּׂי).

The second question is more difficult. Why am I trying so hard? I will never be a native, so why not just set the bar lower and aim to simply get by? And then I remember that once upon a time I was an expert in my own life. I knew how to navigate unexpected situations, how to explain what I needed, and how not to unfortunately mistake the word snack (רֵטְסֵי) with the word for kidnapping (רֵטְסֵיָה). Increasing my fluency and becoming more Israeli will help me to feel more confident and less anxious. It will allow me to remember that random conversations are not (only) minefields of potential embarrassments, but opportunities for friendship and connection.

I am trying because that's what immigrants do. We work hard. We allow our children to see us struggle, fall, and get back up. They watch as we try to keep our sense of humor when simple interactions take so much more effort than they should. And they notice when we slowly overcome the obstacles one by one. While they are rewriting the note I wrote to their teacher to make it sound like it was written by a grown up human and not an undereducated piece of lettuce, they are also noticing and internalizing my resilience and can-do spirit. Right?

I try so hard because as the years go by and the marbles in my mouth become fewer, I

feel unparalleled satisfaction. Words that once eluded me now sit on the tip of my tongue, patiently waiting their turn to be adorably misconjugated.

There will always be marbles. I will always be an immigrant. But I am closer than I was last year to once again being an expert in my own life. I know how far I've come. My coworkers are starting to see it, and my kids do too, though making them say it would make me as annoying as that interior designer.

And while I have not yet mastered fluid conversation, I do recognize that I have successfully completed this challenge. Excuse me while I spit out these marbles for a bit, I'm off to kidnap some sushi and lentils.



Kally Kislowicz
made Aliyah from Cleveland, Ohio,
to Efrat in 2016.



HALLEL and SHAMMAI

A Mizrahi Pesach Activity



What are some things that our family is doing in the first picture to make Seder night different from all other nights?

Can you name all of the days of the year that we say full Hallel? When do we say only half-Hallel? Which days are there more of?

What does your family do to make this night different and special from all other nights?



Spot the similarities! What are some things that my family does in this picture at our Pesach Seder that yours does too?

How many differences can you spot between these two pictures?

In addition to Seder night, what else do we sing Hallel? How many Hallel day references can you spot in this picture?





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ד-ה אייר תשפ"ג April 24–26, 2023

Commemorate YOM HAZIKARON

MONDAY EVENING, APRIL 24

Moving Yom HaZikaron evening tekes (ceremony),
featuring prominent mothers of fallen soldiers
and victims of terror

TUESDAY, APRIL 25

Guided Yom HaZikaron tours
at Har Herzl

Special visits to bereaved families



MIRIAM PERETZ



RABBANIT
RACHELLE FRAENKEL



IDF CHIEF CANTOR
SHAI ABRAMSON

ISHAY RIBO

Celebrate YOM HA'ATZMAUT

TUESDAY EVENING, APRIL 25

Yom HaAtzmaut Tefillah with
Rabbi Shlomo Katz (joint with OU Israel)

A special Yom HaAtzmaut extravaganza with
Ishay Ribo, IDF Chief Cantor Shai Abramson
with the IDF Rabbinical Choir

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26

Yom HaAtzmaut festive Shacharit
Exhibition of Israeli innovation and
Celebratory BBQ Lunch



צילום: ריבובי הרצל ריזלר

**FOLLOWED BY THE WORLD ORTHODOX ISRAEL CONGRESS —
SEE PAGES 7–9 FOR MORE DETAILS!**