



AUSTRALIAN EDITION
VOL 6 • NO 5
SUKKOT &
SIMCHAT TORAH 5784

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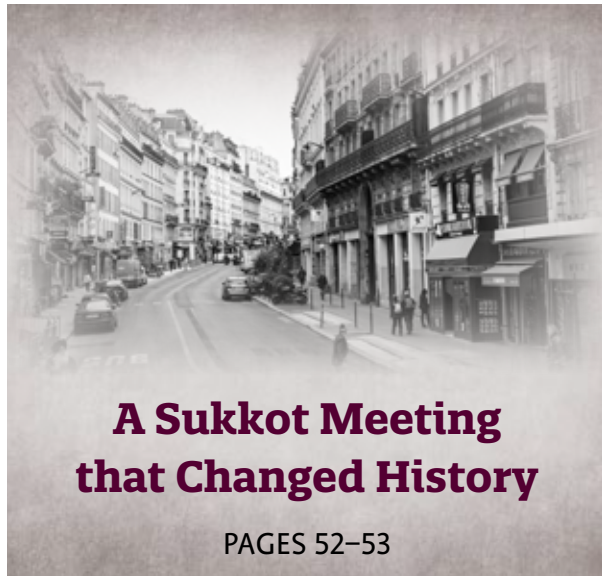


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HAMIZRACHI

PUBLISHED BY WORLD MIZRACHI IN JERUSALEM

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FROM THE

Editor

A Time for Vision and Hope

It was an era of disappointment.

The return to the Land began with so much excitement. In the first year of his reign, Cyrus the Great granted permission to the Judean exiles to return home. Zerubavel and Yehoshua the *Kohen Gadol* led the first *olim* from Babylonia back to their homeland. And on that first Sukkot, the pioneers set up an altar in Jerusalem and brought sacrifices to G-d.

But a painful reality soon overwhelmed the first returnees. The task of rebuilding the *Beit HaMikdash* was overwhelming. The people lacked resources, and the Samaritans did everything in their power to undermine the process. Worst of all, the people themselves seemed spiritually unworthy of the task at hand. Most rabbis and scholars chose to remain in exile, and many of the pioneers who returned were intermarried and lax in their Torah observance. Unsurprisingly, the process of rebuilding the *Beit HaMikdash* was delayed for many years, and the people despaired.

Eighteen years after Cyrus' dramatic declaration, the "new *Yishuv*" was floundering and the rebuilding had ground to a halt. At this critical moment, the prophet Chaggai began to prophesy. "In the seventh month, on the 21st day" – on Hoshanah Rabbah – Chaggai directly addressed the elephant in the room: "Who among you is left, who saw this house in its former glory? And as you see it now, is it not as nothing in your eyes?" (Chaggai 2:3). Those who still remembered the glory of the first *Beit HaMikdash*, filled with "pure gold and precious stones" (Abarbanel), could only feel depressed and disappointed by the small scale of the current construction. Even if they succeeded in rebuilding the

Beit HaMikdash, it would be a pale reflection of its predecessor. This was not the glorious return they yearned for in Babylonia!

Chaggai acknowledges the disappointment – but then exhorts the leaders of Judah: "Be strong, O Zerubavel... be strong, all you people of the Land... and act! *For I am with you* – says the G-d of Hosts" (Chaggai 2:4). You may not see it, but G-d is with you, just as He was when He took you out of Egypt. There may be no nature-defying miracles or seas that split, but G-d dwells among you! "My spirit is still in your midst. Fear not!" (2:5). Those enemies that plague you? The day will come when they will pay for their evil. "And I will shake up all the nations" (2:5). "In just a little while longer I will shake the heavens and the earth." Great days are coming soon! Do not allow the frustrations of the moment to bring you to despair, for G-d "will fill this House with glory" (2:9).

We, too, are living in an age of disappointment. As we devolve into infighting, our enemies grow ever bolder. Those of us who live in Israel's biblical heartland are afraid to drive on local roads and highways, where Arab terrorists regularly murder our neighbors at will. Those who remember the glorious days after the Six-Day War, when Jews fearlessly walked the streets of Beit Lechem and Chevron with their heads held high, can only sigh in bitter disappointment. Meanwhile, millions of Jews remain in exile, with no plans to return home. Most of all, 56 years after "*Har HaBayit B'Yadeinu*," most Jews have all but forgotten our ultimate goal of rebuilding the *Beit HaMikdash*. Where is our pride, our strength, our belief in ourselves?

During times like these, we must remember Chaggai's Hoshanah Rabbah prophecy. Though we may not realize it, G-d is with

us. Great days are coming, "in just a little while longer," when G-d will "shake the heavens and earth," when we will merit the rebuilding of the Temple on *Har HaBayit* and the descendant of David and Zerubavel will lead us to a time of glory even "greater than the first one."

But why did Chaggai share this message on Hoshanah Rabbah, of all days? Hoshanah Rabbah is the day of the beating of the *aravot*, the humble willows that represent the condition of *Am Yisrael* in our time. Without water – without faith in our people and the vision of redemption – the willow tree will wither away. But if the elders of Israel bring "water" to the people and inspire them with G-d's awesome vision for the future, the nation will burst forth with awesome vitality, like a flourishing willow alongside a river.

Now is not the time for despair, for depressing comparisons of our current moment with the destruction of the *Beit HaMikdash*. It is a time for strength and hope, for the vision of Chaggai. For "the glory of this last House shall be greater than the first one... And in this place I will grant peace, says the L-rd of Hosts" (2:9).

Elie Mischel



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The Fragility of Life:

Israel, Sukkot and the Yom Kippur War

Rabbi Doron Perez

Perhaps the greatest inescapable truth of life is just how fragile and unpredictable it is. This vulnerability is present at every twist and turn.

No one believed that Israel could fall from the heights of the breathtaking victory of the Six-Day War to the horrific valley of tears in the Yom Kippur War. Only six short years after the daring miracles of the skies of arguably the greatest air force victory in history, Israel came within an inch of its destruction. The Israeli military stunned the enemy and the entire world in a preemptive surprise attack of biblical proportions in the Six-Day War and yet somehow were themselves totally stunned by a surprise attack from the very same nations so soon thereafter. Only 25 years after Israel's remarkable founding and only six years after its greatest military victory, the country was on the brink of destruction.

Life can be so frail and fragile. There are the thinnest of lines between victory and defeat, life and death, the permanent and temporary and between triumph and tragedy. Everything that seems so permanent can change in an instant.

No festival embraces this vulnerability of life more than Sukkot. Both the *sukkah* itself and the four species, the two *mitzvot* of the festival, are an ongoing testament to this fragility. The *sukkah* is a transient abode whose whole essence is temporary. This is evident first and foremost in the main part of the *sukkah* – the roof known as the *sechach* (from whence the *sukkah* gets its name. Normally the roof of a structure is strong, offering maximum protection from the elements. Yet in the case of the *sukkah* it is exactly the opposite. The *sechach* must be made from species of plants that were severed from the ground – hardly maximal protection. While the walls of the *sukkah* can be solid and stable



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like a building, the roof can only offer minimal protection. Although the meaning of the root word סָכַח is “cover” or “shield,” it offers only the most basic protection.

If this is true regarding the *sukkah*, it is equally true regarding the four species. All are plant species that, like the *sechach*, must be severed from their source, which means each will eventually run out of water, wither and wilt away.¹ In fact, the *arava* (willow), the centerpiece of Hoshanah Rabbah, is the most vulnerable of all, and wilts and dies the quickest. All species are fully dependent on the unpredictable rain patterns and weather conditions and all reflect the flimsiness of life.

The *sukkah* and Israel – providence in action

Rambam believes that the greatest miracle of biblical times was not the Exodus from Egypt nor the revelation at Sinai, but the remarkable 40-year sojourn in the desert.² During the 40 years in one of the hottest desert regions in the world and distant from all civil life, how could millions of men, women and children survive without food, water, or protection from merciless heat? How were they spared from serpents and scorpions?

It is this miraculous existence in the desert, opines the Ramban, that the festival of Sukkot commemorates.³ “For it was in *sukkot* that I placed you when I brought you out of Egypt” (Vayikra 23:43).

Whether it represents the desert huts or the miraculous clouds of glory, the *sukkah* is an eternal symbol of the miraculous divine protection and providence that accompanied the Jewish people on their arduous 40-year journey to the promised Land. Had this miracle not transpired, the people would have died in the desert and the remarkable miracles of the ten plagues, the splitting of the sea and the revelation at Sinai would have amounted to naught. The flimsy *sukkah* represents divine providence and protection against the vulnerability of the external elements, be they natural or human threats.

Similarly, the Land of Israel is an ongoing testament to Hashem's divine providence. This is explicit in the verses of the Torah about the uniqueness of the Land of Israel, in contrast to Egypt. The Torah juxtaposes Israel to the land of Egypt – its water source is guaranteed by the abundant waters of the Nile as opposed to Israel which has no great rivers and is dependent on rainwater, which varies greatly

from season to season. Israel is eternally dependent on unpredictable weather and rainfall patterns and therefore on divine providence. “It is a land which Hashem your G-d looks after, on which Hashem your G-d always keeps His eye, from year’s beginning to year’s end” (Devarim 11:12).

One of the smallest of all lands, *Eretz Yisrael* is situated at the nexus of Africa, Asia and Europe. Throughout the generations, many empires and armies crossed through it and conquered it, regularly exposing it to human caprice. Yet, like the *sukkah*, its strength lies not in its defenses and structure but in the hands of providence, *hashgacha*, the divine supervision of Hashem who always cares for the survival and destiny of the Jewish people.

The sukkah and Israel – all in

The connection between the *sukkah* and Israel runs even deeper. They are the only two *mitzvot* in the entire Torah where you fulfill the *mitzvah* by living somewhere, with your entire body.

Regarding the *sukkah* the verse states “בַּסֻּכּוֹת תֵּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים, You shall dwell in a *sukkah* for seven days” (Vayikra 23:42). Famously, the Talmud (Sukkah 28b) says תֵּשְׁבוּ כְּעֵין תְּדוּרוֹ – the word תֵּשְׁבוּ means “to live,” which means to leave our houses and live as much as possible in our *sukkot*, eating, sleeping and spending time in the *sukkah* as if it is our home. The same terminology applies to living in Israel. “וְהוֹרַשְׁתֶּם אֶת הָאָרֶץ, וְיִשְׁבַּתְּם בָּהּ, You should conquer and inherit the land and dwell in it” (Bamidbar 33:53). The verse talks about two separate *mitzvot* – to conquer the Land and exercise sovereignty over it, and to settle and live in the Land. The Gaon of Vilna points out the connection between these two *mitzvot*. Just as a *sukkah* must be proactively constructed by having the *sechach* – the main part of the *sukkah* which bears its name – placed on it at the end to complete the building,⁴ so too will be the future redemption of the rebuilding of Israel. It was the Vilna Gaon who sent his students to Israel in the early 1800s and played a major role in building the foundations of what became the Old Yishuv. His students were the first to build suburbs outside of the Old City. The Vilna Gaon believed in proactively settling the land.

The Sukkot war

It is most meaningful that the tide of the Yom Kippur War turned on Sukkot. Israel gained the upper hand on the first day of Sukkot against the Syrians in the north and on Chol HaMoed Sukkot against the



(PHOTO: IDF & DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENT ARCHIVES)

Egyptians in the south. Although the war became known as the Yom Kippur War, it could also have been appropriately named the “Sukkot War.” On the festival of providence and joy, the Heavens began to smile on Israel and the battles shifted on both fronts from desperate defense to successful offense.

Perhaps this is the eternal lesson of the *sukkah* in our private lives and of Israel in our collective lives. They are a celebration of the vulnerability of life, because life itself is fully dependent on providence, Hashem’s *hashgacha*. Yes, we must actively build our *sukkot* to ensure that we are able to live in it for seven days. And yes, we must proactively build our country and become an influential nation among the peoples of the world. Life, however, is fraught with fragility and we are always susceptible, no matter what we do, to natural and human factors beyond our control.⁵

It is here that faith in G-d has a critical part to play.

Shadow of faith

In mystical writings, the *sukkah* is referred to as צֶלֶם דְּמִתְקַיְמוֹתָא, “the shadow of faith.”

Nothing is more temporal and transient than a shadow. It has no existence of its own and can disappear in a moment. Such is the nature of life and such is the reality of the human condition. Yet, with faith in Hashem, the Creator and Sustainer of life, and notwithstanding the unpredictability of life, we live in G-d’s world, not ours. In His world, nothing is happenstance and somehow all that transpires is for the best and part of Hashem’s providential plan.

When we center our lives on our relationship with Hashem, the Source of permanence and providence, both the flimsy *sukkah* and the tiny Land of Israel are more than secure. They are our spiritual “Iron Dome” of Jewish fate and destiny.

1. Just as the four species are fully dependent on water for their survival, so are we for our sustenance, underscoring a sense of dependence and vulnerability (Ta’anit 2b).
2. Guide to the Perplexed, Section 3, chapter 50.
3. Ramban, Vayikra 23:43.
4. A *sukkah* must be תְּעָשָׂה וְלֹא מִן הַקָּשׁוּי, proactively created (Sukkah 11b).
5. A further connection between Sukkot and the Land of Israel is made by the Abarbanel (Commentary to Devarim 16). He states that while Pesach is focused on the creation of *Am Yisrael* and Shavuot is focused on the Torah and the revelation at Sinai, Sukkot is about *Eretz Yisrael*. He states that the festival is seven days long because it reflects the seven species of the Land. Many have the custom of having the seven species in the *sukkah*.



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Sukkot: The Culmination of the Festivals

Rabbi Dr. Alan Kimche

The Mishnah teaches that the annual sequence of the *chagim* begins with Pesach in Nissan: “On the first of Nissan is the New Year regarding festivals” (Rosh Hashanah 1:1). In this context, Sukkot is the completion of the annual cycle of the *shalosh regalim*, the three primary holidays of the Jewish year. I’d like to suggest three ways of understanding the meaning of Sukkot as the culmination of the holidays.

The *Chag HaAviv* (holiday of Spring) of Pesach represent the beginning of the Land coming to life, the *Chag HaKatzir* (holiday of harvesting) of Shavuot is the harvesting of the produce, while on Sukkot, the *Chag HaAsif* (holiday of gathering), the year’s produce is gathered into our storehouses. Sukkot is the culmination of the holidays, for one can only gather in crops after having planted and harvested.

However, it is clear from the Torah that the agricultural cycle is only one dimension of these holy days. For instance, *aliyah l’regel*, the three annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem, were a vital annual spiritual regeneration of *Klal Yisrael* unconnected to cultivating the Land.

The Midrash links the three *chagim* to our forefathers (see Tur O.H. 417). According to the Midrash, the three angels visited Avraham and prophesied the birth of Yitzchak on Pesach (Rashi, Bereishit 18:10). In addition, the essence of Avraham’s life’s message was the rejection of paganism and a commitment to faith in Hashem. This was also the core issue expressed by the taking of the Egyptian sacred lamb and making it into a sacrifice to Hashem.

The Midrash links Yitzchak to Shavuot through the mystical teaching that the sound of the *shofar* at Sinai originated from the horn of the ram of *akeidat*

Yitzchak (Rashi, Shemot 19:13). This represented Yitzchak’s total self-sacrifice in the service of Hashem, a service to Hashem expressed by the entire nation on Mount Sinai.

Yaakov is the first person to build *sukkot* after his final confrontation with Eisav (Bereishit 13:17). This expressed his belief in the transient nature of material wealth, which like the *sukkah* is a *dirat arai*, a transient dwelling (Malbim, Vayikra 23:42) and a rejection of the materialist creed of Eisav.

Each of the three forefathers bequeathed a unique blessing to all future generations of the Jewish people, expressed both materially in the produce of the land and spiritually in the inspiration it provided from personal example.

A third perspective comes from the writings of Rabbi Abraham Sabba (1440–1508), a prominent Spanish Torah scholar who endured the extreme hardships of both the Spanish expulsion and later the expulsion from Portugal to where he had fled. Eventually he found refuge in Fez in Morocco, but only after he suffered greatly, lost several members of his family, and had his manuscripts destroyed. One of the *sefarim* that was not destroyed is the *Tzeror Hamor*, a beautiful commentary on the Torah based largely on the teachings of the Zohar.

Rabbi Sabba developed an original view of the underlying continuity of the three *chagim*. Citing the Zohar, he explains that the festival cycle follows the stages of the personal development of every Jew.

Our first life stage is birth, when baby boys are circumcised. This stage is represented through Pesach, when the nation of Israel was born. The blood placed by the people of Israel on their doorposts was a

mixture of the blood of Paschal lamb and the blood of the circumcision required of every male before eating the sacrificial meat on the first *seder* night in Egypt (Rashi, Shemot 12:6).

The second religiously significant milestone for a Jewish individual is the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the acceptance of the obligation of *mitzvot*, which corresponds to the moment of *na’aseh v’nishma*, “we will do and we will hear,” when the people of Israel accepted the Torah on Shavuot.

Finally, the Sukkah represents the wedding chuppah canopy, under which we live together with the *shechinah* during Sukkot. This corresponds to building the family unit and thereby completing the personal development of the individual.

These three perspectives on the annual cycle of the festivals show how, for all future generations, the blessings of our ancestors, combined with the personal development of each individual, and the fertility and produce of the Land of Israel, are all part of one integrated reality – the foundation of the eternity of the Jewish People.



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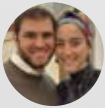
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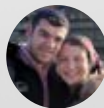
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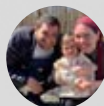
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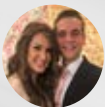
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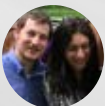
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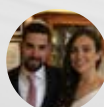
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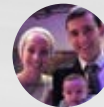
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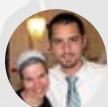
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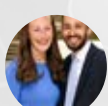
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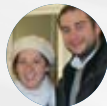
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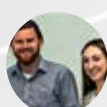
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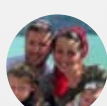
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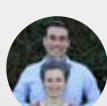
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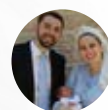
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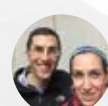
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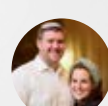
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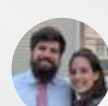
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A New Chapter in Binyan HaAretz

Rabbi Aron White

“Did you hear about the new project in Carmei Gat?” “I hear there’s a new Anglo *shul* opening in Neve Shamir.” “There’s a group of families trying to start a new community in the north.”

For anyone living or visiting Israel in the last few years, these snippets of conversation about new construction and new communities will be familiar. While there have long been established Anglo communities in Yerushalayim, Beit Shemesh, Gush Etzion, Modi’in, Ra’anana and more, it seems that there are no end of new projects, opportunities and Anglo communities taking root across the country.

Each of these new Anglo communities is only one sentence in the new chapter of Israel’s development, and one needs to take a step back to see the larger picture. Israel is engaging in a remarkable construction spree that is quite literally reshaping the country. Israel is constructing homes at a rate that may be unparalleled in the Western world; one out of every six homes in Israel today was constructed since the year 2012. The main driver of this construction is Israel’s remarkable demographics. Israel’s fertility rate of 3 is almost double that of the OECD average of 1.6. Combined with consistent *Aliyah* from around the world, this means Israel’s population continues to grow, and Israel needs to construct between 50,000 and 60,000 homes a year until 2040 just to keep up. These are remarkable figures, equivalent to building a new Ra’anana, Modi’in and Efrat every year for the next 20 years! Israel’s population is about to reach ten

million, and it is forecast to reach fifteen million by the time Israel turns 100, and building must keep pace.

This sustained building spree is creating fertile ground for new opportunities, and it is against this backdrop that many of the new Anglo communities are developing in new cities, new neighborhoods, and renewed cities.

New cities

Israel is a young country, and it is still establishing entirely new cities and towns. Even cities like Modi’in that are now well established are less than 30 years old! In recent years, two new locales that have developed Anglo communities are Harish and Givot Eden.

Harish is a new city in northern Israel, located next to Israel’s central Highway 6. The aim of the new city is to help spread Israel’s population more broadly away from the center of the country. Despite being only ten years old,¹ there are already 35,000 residents living there, with all the developing aspects of a city – schools, malls, parks and even government approval this year for a hospital. In construction terms, it was the fastest growing city in Israel in 2022, and is likely to continue growing over the coming years.

On the other end of the spectrum, Givot Eden (Eden Hills) is a new *yishuv* 15 minutes from Beit Shemesh in the hills of Judea. Initially planned in the 1990s, it is now under construction, and the first families will move there this summer. There will ultimately be 400 families on the *yishuv*, many of whom are Anglos.

These two developments also tell another story through their contrasts. Harish will be a city with tens of thousands of homes, the majority of which will be in apartment buildings, and due to the larger supply the housing prices are relatively low. Givot Eden will be a town with a few hundred mostly private homes, and due to the lower supply, prices are very high. This is the story of recent Israeli construction where in the past few years the construction of private homes has dropped as a percentage of homes being built. Due to Israel’s need to construct so many homes in so little time in a small country, the policy preference is undoubtedly for more apartments, making private homes less common today.

The development of new cities and *yishuvim* is what we most associate with Israeli history. From the building of the *kibbutzim* before the foundation of the State to the 1950s development towns, the story of Israel has been the story of new towns and cities being built by pioneers. There are plans for more of these in the future, including new *yishuvim* and a major city called Kasif in the Negev. Long-term, however, there are not likely to be many more new cities and *moshavim* built from scratch. Israel already has well over 1,000 towns and cities, and as a small country, protecting empty land is very important. For this reason, other forms of development are now becoming more common.

New neighborhoods

Israel is also building more homes by expanding existing cities through new neighborhoods, which can rely on the city’s pre-existing infrastructure. One of





the most successful examples of this model is the city of Beit Shemesh. In 1995, the city had 25,000 residents, but since then has built a successive list of new neighborhoods. Ramat Beit Shemesh Aleph, Ramat Beit Shemesh Bet and Ramat Beit Shemesh Gimel have already been developed, each with their own flavor, as the city has expanded dramatically to 160,000 residents. In recent years, the Mishkafayim area of Ramat Beit Shemesh Aleph and Neve Shamir (Ramah Heh) have become popular locations for Anglo *olim*, with new Anglo developments in Ramat Avraham as well. Just like the now veteran neighborhoods of Ramat Beit Shemesh, each of these new neighborhoods have hundreds of Anglo families, with *shuls* and developing institutions.

These types of new neighborhoods are a good policy choice for many reasons. The

existing town has infrastructure, from transport to medical to commercial services, and so it is not necessary to build all of this from scratch for the new neighborhood. This can also be a way of strengthening older towns that are in need of an influx of young people and investment. The list of existing cities building new neighborhoods is almost endless, from Netanya to Ashdod to Kfar Saba. Many cities popular with Anglos have recently built or are currently building new neighborhoods, including the Tamar and Dagan neighborhoods in Efrat, Nofim and Moreshet in Modi'in, Ir Yamim in Netanya and Neve Zamir in Ra'anana, and of course Beit Shemesh.

Some of these new developments are mega-neighborhoods, with construction planned on a huge scale. Carmei Gat is one such new mega-neighborhood that

has become very popular with Anglos. An extension of the existing town of Kiryat Gat, over 7,000 apartments have been built in the neighborhood, with another 10,000 due to be built in the coming years. Hundreds of young Anglo couples have recently moved to Carmei Gat, with new malls and train stations due to open in the coming years. Carmei Gat is particularly attractive because of the traditionally lower housing prices in Kiryat Gat, making it affordable for young families. It's possible to buy a brand new apartment in a new neighborhood more cheaply than in many older parts of the country.

There are likely to be many more of these types of communities developing in the coming years. A more *yeshivish* Anglo community is developing in the Rova Yizrael neighborhood of Afula, and many Anglos

have also bought on paper in Carmay HaNadiv, a new neighborhood of Kiryat Malachi.²

Renewed cities

A third type of development that is becoming increasingly popular is urban renewal, which means reimagining and redesigning existing cities. This usually involves knocking down old buildings to build newer ones. This type of development is particularly popular in Israel's two largest cities, Yerushalayim and Tel Aviv. These two bustling, cultural hearts of Israel have very little empty land to develop and so the only way to develop them is to rebuild. Urban redevelopers are replacing older run down buildings with new, structurally sounder, larger buildings, with amenities such as elevators, underground parking and central air conditioning as well as more modern apartments. As Israel matures, these types of projects have become more common. 31% of all apartments approved last year were in urban renewal projects, and this number is likely to rise.

These projects are changing the skylines of Yerushalayim and Tel Aviv. For the first time, Yerushalayim is building office and residential buildings that will be 30 or 40 stories high, and there are now parts of Tel Aviv and Ramat Gan that resemble Manhattan, with many 70 and 80 story buildings already built. The urban glue that binds the cities together is also being remade as they shift from public transport to mass transit systems. Both Yerushalayim and Tel Aviv now have their first light-rail lines; Yerushalayim plans to build seven more light-rail lines, and the Tel Aviv metropolitan area is planning two more light-rail lines and three metro lines. Thus there will continue to be many opportunities for Anglos in Yerushalayim, but the available housing will likely be different. Rather than small apartment buildings, there will be more tower buildings connected by the light-rail network. Neighborhoods like Arnona and Kiryat HaYovel in Yerushalayim both have developing Anglo communities in some of these renewed developments.

Continuous opportunities

We are living in times of unprecedented *binyan ha'aretz*, creating many new housing options for Anglo Jews. Wherever in the world we live, there is an exciting opportunity to participate and take an active role in this remarkable moment. Might there be an apartment that fits your financial needs, a community that is right for your family's future *Aliyah*, or the perfect plot of land waiting to be developed for your dream community? With so many investment options, this could be the perfect time to make a long-term investment in Israel. In the unfolding tapestry of the development of Israel, is there the opportunity for you to take part?

1. Technically, a *kibbutz* had existed in Harish, but it had basically been abandoned and had only a few residents before the more recent plan to turn it into a full city.
2. Full disclosure - the author is involved in the Carmay HaNadiv project, and serves as an agent for it.



Rabbi Aron White

is the Managing Editor of HaMizrachi magazine.

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Beit Shemesh is Paving the Way to a Smooth Aliyah

In the 1990s, Beit Shemesh underwent an incredible transformation, evolving from a small town into a bustling city that has become a magnet for Anglos. At the heart of this population explosion stands Yigal Realty, a pioneering force that has played a pivotal role in this growth.

Meir Dombey, a key figure at Yigal Realty, reflects on their journey, stating, "We were there from the very inception of the first new neighborhoods 25 years ago." Nestled strategically between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, Beit Shemesh became a beacon of opportunity, attracting religious and Anglo populations in the 90s. Today, Beit Shemesh leads in providing educational opportunities for Olim families, offering a smooth transition into the Israeli school system. Vibrant synagogues, enlightening lectures, and excellent Ulpan programs are readily available for families settling here. In recent years, the English-speaking senior population has also seen remarkable growth, with various benefits and social events tailored to their needs.

Yigal Realty's influence and involvement have been widespread, particularly in the development of Ramat Beit Shemesh Aleph, expanding to include Ramat Shilo and Mishkafayim. Their passion and dedication continue to shine as they embark on exciting new building projects – Neve Amim, Rotshtein Heights, and Eucalyptus.



Neve Amim, situated in the enchanting Neve Shamir, (on the Eastern side of Neve Shamir, opposite the Mishkafayim neighborhood) offers its unique charm with a country club, parks, playgrounds, bike trails that connect the neighborhood to RBS A, shops, and thriving schools. Residents have already started forming close-knit communities. Yigal Realty collaborates with architects to create residences catering to the American market's tastes, including spacious bedrooms, garden apartments, penthouses, and exquisite finishes. See the facing page for more info.

The Rotshtein Heights project, adjacent to Ramat Shilo, is distinguished by its commitment to fostering a tight-knit community centered around a shul and Rabbinic leadership from day one – a rarity in Israel. As Rabbi Rothwachs, one of the spiritual leaders beautifully articulates, "Our vision for Meromei Shemesh community within the Rotshtein Heights project, transcends bricks and mortar; it's about nurturing growth. This is not just about geographical ascent through Aliyah; it is a journey deeply rooted in Torah values, blending American Jewish warmth, social vitality, and rich educational opportunities with the blessing of residing in Eretz Yisrael."

See contact information for Meromei Shemesh on the back cover.



In Nofei HaShemesh, the Eucalyptus project is taking shape, offering peaceful living next to a sprawling eucalyptus grove. It is an extension of Rabbi Shalom Rosner's flourishing American community. This project stands out in Beit Shemesh's current construction scene, offering semi-detached homes and charming small buildings accommodating only four apartments. Rabbi Rosner passionately states, "Every day, as I witness this construction, I am reminded of the words of the Ramban, who declared that every community in our homeland fulfills the sacred mitzvah of Yishuv Eretz Yisrael." Rabbi Rosner emphasizes their community's pillars of Torah, Chesed, Ahavat Eretz Yisrael, and Ahavat Yisrael. See page 10 for more info.

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The Future of Aliyah

An Interview With
Minister Ofir Sofer

Since the State of Israel was established just 75 years ago, the country has absorbed over 3 million olim. Ofir Sofer, Israel's Minister of Aliyah and Absorption, works every day to welcome and assist olim from Moscow to Miami.

Rabbi Aron White met with Minister Sofer to hear about his plans, his trips to the USA and France, and to discuss the future of communal Aliyah to Israel.

Minister Sofer, thank you for meeting with us. You became the Minister of Aliyah in December of last year. What are your goals for the ministry?

As a religious Jew, I am deeply inspired by the mission of *shivat Tzion*, of helping the Jewish people to return home to their Land. Historically, most of the waves of mass *Aliyah* have been driven by crises like antisemitism, war or economic challenges. That exists today too, but we also want to do everything for those who are making *Aliyah* for more ideological and inspired reasons. There are countless practical things that we do, from running *ulpanim*, to receiving *olim* from all over the world to providing financial assistance to *olim* already in the country, so we can do everything possible to help Jews move and integrate in their homeland.

Let's start with today's biggest Aliyah story. Last year, 75,000 people made Aliyah, the highest number in a year since 1999. Most of these olim came from the former Soviet Union because of the war between Russia and Ukraine. Is this the new normal? Are we in the middle of another wave of mass Aliyah?

In the first few months of the war there was a spike of *olim* from Ukraine, followed by an increase from Russia, and recently we are specifically seeing large numbers coming from Moscow. We have to be realistic – most people do not expect that the war will end tomorrow, so we have to continue to be ready for this.

When I became the Minister, the Ministry was actually operating under crisis mode, as it had been overwhelmed by this sudden increase in *olim*. Much of my initial months were spent restoring regularity in how we operated.

As much as each country has its own needs, the increase in *Aliyah* from one place does affect *olim* from everywhere. Our *ulpan* programs were overflowing, and we had to open new programs to be able to cater for the demand.

Since you have become Minister, you have visited the two largest Diaspora communities, the USA and France. What did you learn from meeting these communities?

I had many conversations and heard a broad range of views – from people who are very comfortable in their communities, to parents who want their kids to move, and increasing fears of antisemitism. I also learned that many people don't know the remarkable things that Israel has to offer *olim*. For example, young people who make *Aliyah* are able to study for a degree in Israel for free. This is an incredible benefit, and so many people don't know this!

I also have met with Anglo communities in Israel, in places like Carmei Gat. There is no question that having strong communities is a huge part of successful *Aliyah*. As much as the government can give and help, there are forms of support that only communities can provide to individuals and families making *Aliyah*.

For many religious people, there is this dream of what I would call the “Rabbi Riskin model,” in which a successful Diaspora community builds a new community in Israel in their own image. Is this vision still alive and possible, 40 years after Rabbi Riskin did it?

It definitely is alive and possible! However, there are a number of challenges to making something like this work. First, it requires a certain number of pioneers willing to leave their comfort zone to start something new. But we also have to be realistic because of the rise of property prices in Israel. We are fighting to try and keep prices down, but it is a tough battle – the continuing growth of the population means demand is high, making it harder for prices to drop. This creates a challenge for creating new communities. To create new communities in places that are affordable means sending people to outlying areas of the country. It is hard to ask *olim*, who are already making the sacrifice of leaving their home countries, to sacrifice again by moving to outlying parts of the country.

I recently sat with the head of the Israel Land Authority to explore the possibility of earmarking certain neighborhoods currently being developed for *olim*. However, the types of places that were given as options were Yerucham and Teveria. In the 1950s, the Israeli government sent recent *olim* to far flung areas to help settle the land, but that isn't our policy now. It is hard to find places that can be affordable for a whole community that also are in central locations with good job opportunities.

In one of your first interviews in your role, you said you want to improve the profile of Aliyah within Israeli society. What do you mean by that?

I want *olim* to feel valued and respected for their decision to make *Aliyah* by the broader Israeli society. For many years I have advocated for reservists' rights in the country. When a child goes to a shop in Israel, and tells the shopkeeper that his father is serving in *miluim* (reserve duty), the shopkeeper will often say “*Kol Hakavod!*” I want *olim* families to feel that same level of respect in Israeli society. For this reason, we have launched programs like *Aliyah Week*, in which children in the education system learn about *olim* and the sacrifices they have made.

One of my first exposures to *olim* and the sacrifices they make occurred when I was an officer in the IDF and got to know the lone soldiers from the Diaspora in my unit. It still moves me to tears when I think about their remarkable commitment to Israel and the Jewish people. We introduced a program to pair up lone soldiers with an Israeli home to host them for the *chagim*. For the soldiers, it means they don't have to spend the holiday on their own, and for the families it allows them to meet an *oleh* who has chosen to leave their home country to move to Israel and to fight to defend it.

We also try to highlight how *olim* are helping Israel face some of its strategic challenges. *Aliyah* is a value in and of itself, but we also want to celebrate the ways *olim* assist Israel. When 1,000 doctors and medical professionals make *Aliyah*, this has a huge impact. We also have programs together with Nefesh B'Nefesh and other government ministries to support *olim* who are moving to the Negev and the Galil.

As someone who is from the Religious Zionist community, I think there is much that our community in Israel can do or has room to improve on. Of the seventy plus *Hesder Yeshivot*, there are maybe 5 or 6 that have students from overseas. I know that not every *yeshiva* is right for Diaspora students, but I believe there should be more programs for Jews from around the world. Religious



Minister Sofer at the shlichut fair organized by The Center for Zionist Shlichut to the Diaspora, January 2023.



Minister Sofer, together with Rabbi Yehoshua Fass of Nefesh B'Nefesh, visiting Katz Hillel day school in Boca Raton, FL.



Minister Sofer speaking to community leaders at Mizrahi's World Orthodox Israel Congress, April 2023.

Zionist youth groups get involved in all sorts of social causes, from *chesed* to settling the land and more, but how many are involved in helping *olim* integrate?

What are the new programs you are currently working on?

We are focusing a lot of effort on helping young people and students make *Aliyah*. It is easier on many levels for people to move when they are not yet married with families, and they can integrate more easily into society through the army or through their studies and starting their career here. We support free university studies for *olim* in different languages – English at Bar-Ilan University, Russian at Ariel University and now in French at Ben-Gurion University. These are very significant programs that we want to expand.

We are also working on increasing the amount of rental support we give to families who make *Aliyah*, as well as expanding the range of options for *ulpan*. The *Aliyah* and absorption process really has many elements to it, and we hope to be there for *olim* every step of the way! ■



Opening a World of Opportunities in Israel



"Many individuals seeking real estate opportunities often explore only 10% of the potential available to them. Our commitment lies in assisting individuals in accessing the remaining 90%."

Menachem Mendel (Meny) Greenbaum, a 37-year-old resident of Modiin, Israel, stands as a trailblazer in the country's real estate sector. Real estate has deep roots within his family, influenced significantly by his American, Canadian-born parents. However, it is his great-grandfather, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Kasher, who serves as Meny's primary source of inspiration. Rabbi Kasher was a distinguished figure, renowned for his prolific writings, business acumen, staunch Zionism, and affiliation

with the Ger Hasidic community. He first came to Israel in the 1920s, relocating to Gush Etzion and beginning land acquisitions in the area long before development commenced. Menachem Mendel takes great pride in carrying forward his great-grandfather's legacy by contributing to the construction of communities in Israel today and continuing his scholarly work, particularly his seminal work on Tora Sheleima.

In his capacity as a real estate developer, Menachem Mendel, often referred to as Meny, has played a pivotal role in numerous real estate transactions. His latest venture, Meny Group, has successfully closed hundreds of deals in just the past two years. He finds particular satisfaction in the fact that 70% of their current deals involve returning clients who recognize the excellence of their investments and take pride in being part of their growing community.

Meny Group specializes in various investment opportunities, extending beyond the conventional practice of selling apartments under construction. According to Meny, the most substantial profit potential lies in the earlier stages of development, starting from land improvement and neighborhood planning. Consequently, the group participates in projects from their inception, including land acquisition during the planning phase.

This comprehensive involvement allows investors to engage with Meny Group with investments starting as low as \$100,000, all the way up to large-scale investors acquiring projects valued at hundreds of millions of dollars. John Garcia, the VP General Manager of Meny Group, emphasizes that each project possesses its unique characteristics, just as each investor has distinct preferences and goals. As Menachem Mendel himself puts it, "Before introducing you to a specific project, we take the time to understand you as a client, considering your objectives, budget, and more. We have a diverse portfolio of projects at various stages, and our aim is to present options that align with your needs. Moreover, we view ourselves as genuine partners in these ventures, as we only offer projects that we've personally invested in, which aligns with our guiding values. We are always the first investor in any project and the last one to take any money out of it. We want our clients to experience the same peace of mind that we seek for ourselves."

In addition to catering to individual investors, Meny Group has expanded its scope to collaborate with communities. They have partnered with several rabbis who approach them with aspirations of facilitating group Aliyah (immigration to Israel) for their congregations. In specific projects, such as the Hashmonaim development, where they oversee the entire neighborhood's construction, they allocate spaces for synagogues and other public facilities to support the community.

Despite fluctuations in the market, it remains evident that Israel continues to offer robust real estate investment opportunities. According to Meny, several factors contribute to this resilience. "Firstly, besides the fact that real estate is generally considered a good investment all over the world, in Israel specifically, the attraction is even greater due to the high and increasing demand resulting from population growth through births and Aliyah, while at the same time, the supply is low and getting lower. Secondly, the devaluation of the shekel makes investments from abroad more favorable," he explains. "Moreover, I've heard from one of my investors that there is no instance of property purchased in Israel from 1948 to the present day that has not appreciated in value. At Meny Group, we firmly believe that Israel is our homeland, a place imbued with unique blessings, and we are committed to helping all our clients partake in this journey."

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Mizrachi and Young Israel Launch Exciting New Initiative

Rabbi Yossi Goldin

One of the most exciting stories in *Medinat Yisrael* today is the phenomenon of *kibbutz galuyot* – as more and more Jews choose to make the move to *Eretz Yisrael*. Through the help of Nefesh B’Nefesh and other wonderful organizations, it is easier than ever to make *Aliyah* – and each year, more families heed the “call of the generation” and return home. Statistics show that in the years 2021 and 2022, there was a significant increase of *olim* from the USA and Canada, with 2021 almost doubling the numbers from the previous year.

As more and more Anglo families make *Aliyah*, existing *olim* communities continue to grow exponentially – and new *olim* communities are being established across the country. With the exceptional rise in these numbers, the needs of these communities continue to grow as well.

In order to assist these communities, World Mizrachi and Young Israel in Israel are partnering together to establish the Mizrachi-Young Israel Shuls Network. Launched at World Mizrachi’s World Orthodox Israel Congress in April 2023, this network brings together *olim* communities from across Israel, enabling the communities to connect and support each other through the sharing of experiences, programs, and ideas. Dedicated WhatsApp/email groups for rabbis, rebbetzins, and *shul* lay leaders have been created to enable conversation and provide crucial support regarding common areas of challenge and achievement. These platforms also serve as vehicles for Mizrachi and Young Israel to develop and share programs and initiatives for the benefit of these communities. Planned future programs include *yemei iyun* and training programs for religious and lay leadership of the communities, as well as joint community programming aimed at connecting communities with each other. Additionally, the network allows for the creation of a large, united,

communal front to better address the needs of *olim*.

Rabbi Aharon Herskovitz, Rav of a growing community in the Kiryat HaSharon region of Netanya, Kehillat Shevet Achim, is excited by the creation of this *shul* network:

“One of the hardest challenges for *olim* is the feeling of being different, which can overlap with a sense of being alone: here without extended family, in an unfamiliar culture and social framework. Community helps provide a lot of framework that people are missing, but it can sometimes feel like these communities exist as an island unto themselves. A connection with other communities would greatly strengthen the feeling of belonging among our community members.”

These sentiments are shared by Rabbi Yehoshua Felberg, Rav of another rapidly growing community in Harish:

“Together, we can do more, by giving *olim* a collective voice and support structure and by ensuring those who come up to the Land have a successful *Aliyah*, spiritually and physically. The network will help *olim* to strike deep roots and realize their goal – building a secure future for them and their families in the homeland of the Jewish people, Israel.”

One of the first initiatives undertaken by the Shuls Network is an exciting partnership with Habayta, an organization founded in 2009 whose goal is to support the building of successful *olim* communities in Israel. Their “Kehilot Mechabrot” program currently works with over 30 *olim* communities across the country – consisting of *olim* mostly from France, South America, Russia, and Ukraine – providing guidance, support, programming, and financial assistance to enable these communities to have a smooth and successful integration into Israeli society.

Through their partnership with the Mizrachi-Young Israel Shuls Network, Habayta will welcome four Anglo *olim* communities to their program – Kehillat Hashiveinu in Ramot, Kehillat Ahavat Shalom in Caesarea, Kehillat Mishkan Shilo in Ramat Beit Shemesh, and Kehillat Carmei Tzion in Carmei Gat – beginning September 2023. This pilot program will provide these communities with much needed guidance and support, while also offering crucial funding that will enable the *shuls* to increase the programming and services provided to their members. Following this initial phase, the plan is to then expand this wonderful opportunity to many more Anglo *olim* communities in 2024 and beyond.

“We are thrilled that Kehillat Ahavat Shalom has been selected to join the exciting Mizrachi-Young Israel Habayta initiative to engage and support *olim* in our region,” exclaims Dvora Corn, a founding member of Kehillat Ahavat Shalom. “We believe that our relationship with Mizrachi-Young Israel and Habayta will strengthen Ahavat Shalom to enable us to reach out beyond our *kehillah*, and also strengthen the cohesion of the growing Ahavat Shalom community.”



Rabbi Yossi Goldin

is Director of Young Israel in Israel, Branch Coordinator for NCYI, and heads the Shuls Department at World Mizrachi. He is also Israel Immersion Coordinator and Placement Advisor for YU/RIETS in Israel.



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Mizrachi Canada

Building a Communal Future in Israel

Throughout Mizrachi's long history, it has always been involved in helping to build communities in Israel. Today, Mizrachi Canada is at the forefront of helping a group of Canadian Jews buy property together in Israel. Rabbi Aron White spoke with Rabbi Elan Mazer, Director of Mizrachi Canada, about his exciting vision and building a future for the Canadian Jewish community in Israel.

How did this exciting initiative begin?

I began as the head of Mizrachi Canada in 2017, and the birth of this idea came very soon afterwards. Rabbi Korobkin, the rabbi of the BAYT *shul* in Toronto, gave a *derasha* on *Parashat Behar* that provided a new framework for thinking about communal *Aliyah*. In many communities, *Aliyah* is seen as a mixed blessing – something exciting for the individual family, but a net loss to the community. Rabbi Korobkin provided a new framework: as community members, we are always looking to build a strong future for our community, and we have to recognize that in the long-term, the future of all our communities is in Israel. In this framework, a Torontonian moving to Israel is not leaving the community, but rather helping to build a future for the community – in Israel! I found this approach very healthy, and it sparked many ideas and discussions about gathering a group of Canadian Jews interested in setting down roots in Israel – together.

That is an exciting idea. How do you translate this from a vision into a reality?

It certainly takes a long time, and the details are more difficult than having the vision! I started by simply having conversations with community members, which helped us develop the criteria of the type of Israeli community we were looking for. We wanted somewhere where we could build a community that is built around a *shul* and rabbi, as people in *chutz la'aretz* are used to. Since many community members have relatives in places like Efrat, Modi'in and Beit Shemesh, we wanted it to be somewhere close by or commutable to those places, and ideally somewhere where we also could make an impact on the surrounding community by coming there. We wanted a place with lots of greenery, and we also wanted it to be available to as wide a group as possible in terms of price. So as you see, not an easy list!

Where does the project stand today?

We identified a potential project in a neighborhood called Carmay HaNadiv, thanks to lawyers at Givati Law who have been our representatives on the ground. This community had many of the things we were looking for. However, one of the great challenges with a project like this is a cultural gap – the pace at which Israeli



Rabbi Elan Mazer, CEO of Mizrachi Canada, together with Canadian rabbinic leaders meeting with the developers of Carmay HaNadiv

real estate moves is very different from what people from *chutz la'aretz* are used to. The developer said to us that they could set aside a whole building for our community, but we needed to confirm that we would be taking it – in two weeks! It's almost impossible for a community or large group of people to make a decision in this time frame, so we chose to wait for a future round of construction. We are also open to other communities. We've certainly galvanized a lot of interest from the community, and are hopeful that it will bear fruit.

What are the biggest lessons you have learned from your efforts?

First, you definitely need to have representatives on the ground, as we had with our lawyers, as things move fast and you need someone informed who can find the best opportunity in the right time frame.

I also think that if the government made more projects specifically for *olim* it could be a big help. If we could slow down the decision process, it would allow communities to make informed decisions and enable more of these projects to succeed. We are hopeful that our project will bear fruit, even if it takes time! ■



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An Aliyah Roundtable Conversation

When making Aliyah, olim must make many significant life choices. We spoke with Rabbi David Fine of Modi'in, Rabbi Eitan and Rabbanit Etta Bendavid of Ra'anana, and Rabbi David and Rabbanit Ilana Gottlieb of Ramat Beit Shemesh to hear their perspectives on some of the burning issues surrounding integration, communities and successful Aliyah.



For many people from Diaspora communities, shul-based communities are a critical part of their Jewish life, and something that they find hard to find in Israel. What has your shul done to help foster a sense of community?

Rabbi Fine: The very fact that we have built and developed a synagogue in the North American model and have hired a rabbi who, for all intents and purposes, is full-time has made all the difference in fostering a sense of community. There are many *shuls* in our community, but ours is the only one that operates

on a Diaspora model. I think our members take great pride in being a model in our neighborhood for how to build community.

Rabbi Bendavid: For many of our members, *Shivtei Yisrael* is the family we choose. So much of what we do centers around building community. I very intentionally speak about community-building on a regular basis from the pulpit. We have a *chessed* group with over 250 volunteer members. Anytime anyone needs something – a meal, help, support, whatever it may be – there are people ready to help.

Rabbanit Bendavid: Our youth programs are perfect examples of the ways we help foster community. When you make *Aliyah* as a kid or teen, it takes time to feel a sense of belonging because of the language barrier, which hinders their access to their emotional language. In our programs, participants (and their families) connect to others who are journeying through the *Aliyah* process. Our programs are primarily in English and this creates a sense of belonging and familiarity, while fostering a foundation of support to grow into new schools with new friends.

Rabbanit Gottlieb: Men have *minyán* where they can naturally connect and create a sense of community. This is much more of a challenge for women, especially if they still have young children, and particularly in Israel where Shabbat morning *davening* typically ends much earlier than in the Diaspora. As such, we have emphasized women's programming, be it regular *shiurim* or social programs. Every year we have a social event in Elul to reconnect and meet new women who have recently moved into the community.

Olim must balance the desire for familiarity provided by living near other olim with integrating into broader Israeli society, which requires breaking out of their comfort zone. How do you guide congregants in how to strike this balance?

Rabbi Fine: It is almost impossible to answer this question generally because it is so different for each individual. Some consider it a value to become integrated while others do not. They feel they have made *Aliyah*, which in some ways is a sacrifice, and as long as they are making that sacrifice they want to live in Israel in ways that are as socially comfortable for them as possible. In our circles, there is often a lot of judgment surrounding this issue, but I think everyone must do what is best for themselves and their family and that there isn't one response that is right for everyone. Personally, I believe that integrating as much as possible is mutually enriching for all involved. We Anglos have much that we can contribute to Israeli society. Many of the great things that Diaspora communities provide have not yet been experienced by most Israelis. We can also gain so much, personally and communally, by leaving our comfort zones and integrating. Although my primary social circles remain Anglo, I make every attempt to cross the so-called divide to the extent that I can. I believe my life and my family's lives are better and more enriched because of it.

Rabbi Bendavid: As the Anglo community in Ra'anana has increased in numbers and in strength, we are seeing that even second-generation *olim* are more culturally Anglo than they were in the past. We encourage everyone to take *ulpan*, to explore Israel as much as possible through *tiyulim*, and to break out of their social comfort zones. We run events that give people more exposure to what is happening around them. For example, every Tisha B'Av evening, we participate in a program called *הַלְיָלָה לֹא לְיִשְׂרָאֵל*, in which Israeli intellectuals and media personalities from across the political and religious spectrum come together to discuss how we can fix the divisions within *Am Yisrael*. At the same time, we support people and let them know that it's okay to hold on to things that give us comfort. Mental and emotional stability is more important than "becoming Israeli" on day one of *Aliyah*. It's a process.

Rabbi Gottlieb: This is a complex issue which depends on multiple factors, such as personality, Hebrew fluency, age of children, and more. Speaking in broad-strokes, I would say that while there is a value to integration, it is not the only, or even the most important, value. The same values that hopefully guided us before *Aliyah* – *menschlichkeit*, commitment to Torah, etc. – should guide our lifestyle and parenting decisions in Israel as well. In

our case, living in Ramat Beit Shemesh with a high percentage of English speakers has been a true blessing which facilitated our successful *Aliyah*. As the children grew older, their experiences in school, *yeshiva*, seminary, army and *sherut leumi* have allowed them to integrate more fully. For us, and many others in our community, this has been a successful formula.

For many people, there is a religious culture shock of arriving in Israel, where terms like "Modern Orthodox" aren't as common and there are different religious questions and categorizations. How do you help people navigate the new religious landscape when they arrive in Israel?

Rabbi Fine: Many Anglos live in "bubble communities" where they don't need to navigate new religious landscapes because they have succeeded in replicating the landscape from which they came. For people who want to explore beyond their comfort zone, my advice is similar to the advice I try to follow whenever I enter into new territory or a new situation: do a lot of listening and try to learn as much as possible. Many of the foundational beliefs about Judaism upon which we were raised in the Diaspora are viewed differently here. Speaking with a rabbi who is well-versed in guiding people or someone who has been here for longer can be helpful.

Rabbi Bendavid: There are many shocks for people when they come. Many of our members do not fit into the typical religious categories that exist in Israel, though one of the beautiful things about living in Ra'anana is that the typical political and religious categories don't hold as much weight in this wonderfully diverse city.

The first shock comes when people realize that the school system here offers the bare-minimum in terms of *limnudei kodesh*. This means that parents need to take a lot more responsibility for their child's *chinuch* than in *chutz la'aretz*, where you could "outsource" your child's education to the Jewish school system.

Another big shock, particularly for South Africans, is the freedom of Israeli society. Many people conform to their community's religious standards when living in the Diaspora but ironically, once they arrive in Israel, feel freer to establish their own identity and sometimes to lower their standards of religious observance.

The third challenge is that Israel is a complicated place. It's both very religious as well as very secular. This is confusing for adults and especially youth who want to connect to other Jews out of a sense of national solidarity who may not be *shomer Shabbat*, even if they are very Zionist or traditional. Sometimes we joke that it's much easier to raise youth to be Orthodox Jews in the Diaspora where you have non-Jews who can serve as a contrast to our religious values. It's much more confusing in Israel.

Rabbi Gottlieb: The religious and social categories we are familiar with in the Diaspora are not fully replicated in Israel. Modern Orthodox is not the same as Religious Zionist, and *yeshivish* is not the same as *Charedi*. I emphasize this point with families even before their *Aliyah*. When asked for advice, I help the family clarify which issues and values are truly important to them and how they want to raise their children. Then I try to guide them on which communities and schools will most closely align with their priorities.

For families making Aliyah, there is a natural generational gap, in which the parents are more Anglo while the kids are growing up Israeli. What can parents do to alleviate this gap?

Rabbi Fine: One of the biggest challenges is when children take very different paths than their parents, decisions they may not

have made had they stayed in the Diaspora. When I see a child of friends who has decided not to remain religiously observant, I sometimes say to my wife that, while no-one can ever know, I believe this child would have stayed religious had this family remained in the Diaspora. This sometimes happens because children in Israel see a different model of how to remain a serious and identified Jew without necessarily being observant. This model doesn't really exist outside of Israel. Children who become more ensconced in Israeli life are exposed to Israelis who are committed to Israel through their army service, the Land, Hebrew, and the rhythm of the Hebrew calendar – but are not necessarily observant. We can't prevent our children from seeing this model as a viable one. As with all parenting issues, we must create positive communication and do our best to behave as positive role models in order to convey our values. We must trust our children and believe in them. We also need to realize that they can be our teachers and that we have to learn from them. I think we need to be realistic and realize that our kids may not necessarily choose our path.

Rabbi Bendavid: From my standpoint, the generational gap occurs because it is the parents, not the children, who choose to make *Aliyah*. Everyone has an *Aliyah* story of how and why they came. Often, this desire to make *Aliyah* is animated by a very strong sense of the arc of Jewish history, the *Shoah* and the miracle of *Medinat Yisrael*. Our children take these things for granted. How could they not?! Israel is a fact for them. They don't know of any other reality. In the spirit of *Parashat Ki Tavo* and *Seder* night, I strongly encourage parents to share their personal *Aliyah* stories and how they chose to become observant Jews. Our kids need to know the struggles we faced, the choices we made, and the values that inspired us to come here in the first place.

Rabbanit Bendavid: It is critical to maintain a sense of humility and humor, which teaches our children how to adapt and cope even in times of transition. We may not always be able to help our kids with their homework, just like we may not always have an answer to their philosophical questions.

Rabbanit Gottlieb: Wow, this is a big one! First of all, we must accept that this is a reality and that there is not much we can do to fundamentally change it. Going out of your way to show “how Israeli” you've become rarely works; when you talk in Hebrew in front of their friends – especially using slang – all you do is embarrass yourself (and them). Second, we have to learn to forgive ourselves and laugh about our mistakes. There are aspects of their experience which we do not fully understand and that's OK. Third, parents need to adjust their expectations – for example,

dress in Israel is more casual than we may be used to. At the same time, you are still the parent and if you see something that truly diverges from your values you shouldn't be afraid to push back. All children – including *olim* – need parental guidance and we cannot abdicate that responsibility.

As rabbinic leaders, you have guided countless individuals and families through their *Aliyah*. What is the most important advice you can give people making *Aliyah*?

Rabbi Fine: Take advantage of the amazing learning and *chessed* opportunities available to us here that are simply unavailable elsewhere. I don't just mean traditional book learning, but any opportunity which enriches us as Jews. Many of us have what we call “only in Israel” moments. Treasure those moments and take one minute every day to reflect on what we are doing here and why we came. Remember that we are not just living our own private lives but also helping to build a Jewish nation that needs all of our talents and contributions. This keeps us even keeled and helps us weather the inevitable challenges that often come with living in Israel.

I also suggest that people planning to make *Aliyah* spend as much time learning Hebrew as possible. Learning patience is also essential when dealing with Israeli life, especially at the beginning.

Rabbi Bendavid: Come to Israel to give, not to take. Israel is the greatest miracle of the last 2,000 years, but it is still a work-in-progress and we need your help to make Israel the best it can be. Come to sacrifice, give of yourself, and to build the Jewish nation. With this mindset, you will never be disappointed when things don't go exactly as expected.

Rabbi Gottlieb: I am often contacted by rabbis and educators considering *Aliyah*. One issue I am sensitive to because it was a struggle for me in my own *Aliyah* is finding “*sipuk hanefesh*,” fulfillment and emotional satisfaction, from your work. Much attention is focused on the finances of *Aliyah*, but not enough thought is given to the very different and often less prominent role people will have in the community. How does someone who was a successful congregational rabbi measure his self-worth if he no longer serves in that capacity? How does an educator who was an administrator or department head see herself if she now has to cobble together multiple part-time jobs in numerous seminaries? More important to the answers to these questions is the need to think deeply about them before making *Aliyah*. ■

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Carmay HaNadiv An Exciting New Anglo Community!

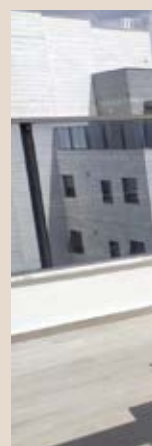
150 Anglo families have bought apartments in a new community – and developer Shalom Wasserteil shares the story of this new opportunity.

Nestled in between Yerushalayim, Tel Aviv and Be'er Sheva – Carmay HaNadiv, a new neighborhood in Kiryat Malachi, is now developing an Anglo community built by Tzifha, led by CEO Shalom Wasserteil and Rothstein Companies, who are planning every aspect of the community.

"In Carmay HaNadiv, we don't have only high-quality buildings, but offer a full package of a rich communal life, with many excellent educational institutions nearby and close links to job opportunities. Apart from building high-quality apartments, we are in charge of planning the whole neighborhood: *shuls* and *batei midrash*, communal aspects like youth groups. We are creating here a strong, tight-knit community, with emphasis on supporting *Aliyah* and creating a strong Anglo community."

Carmay HaNadiv is fulfilling the vision of the "Nadiv," Baron Rothschild, who purchased the land in 1887, serving for many years as vineyards for the nearby *moshavim*.

Already over 800 families are living in this new exciting project and ultimately will have over 3,000 apartments. "The principle when you buy an apartment: *location, location, location*. 35–40 minutes away from Yerushalayim, Tel Aviv and Be'er Sheva, with excellent roads and close to the train station. As well as being close to the station, near the central Highway 6, and a few minutes drive to some of Israel's beautiful beaches, such as Nitzanim, Ashdod and Ashkelon."





As of today, close to 150 American and Anglo families have purchased an apartment in this wonderful community – brought to Carmay Hanadiv by Rav Moshe Marcus, a Ra"m from Yeshivat Reishit in Beit Shemesh. Rav Moshe helped bring to fruition the developers long-time dream of creating a *kibbutz galuyos* community, together with Tanya in the sales office who gives everyone exceptional service.

"As well as the *shuls* that we already have in the neighborhood, there will be land allocated for an American *shul*."

Public services have also recently been opened in Carmay Hanadiv: a supermarket, Hanadiv bakery, Maccabi and Clalit medical clinics, a new soccer field, and the local elementary school called Talmud Torah Etzion. This is a Mamlachti Dati Torani school, with high-level education in religious and secular studies. The students have 13–15 hours of *limudei kodesh* a week, as well as advanced secular studies, including optional *chugim* like Robotics, AI and Financial Education for 5th and 6th graders.

There is also a fantastic new Country Club a few minutes walk from the neighborhood, with an indoor and outdoor pool and gym (with separate hours for men and women).

One of the other attractions is the prices. Compared to other American communities like Beit Shemesh, prices in Carmay HaNadiv are significantly lower.

Carmay HaNadiv already has an excellent reputation as a high-quality community, and the prices are likely to continue rising – in short, as well as being a great community, we believe that it is also a great investment.

The construction is built to fit a community of *shomrei Torah u'mitzvot*. The buildings are built in consultation with Machon Tzomet, ensuring modern technology: Shabbat elevators, water, lighting and camera systems are all in accordance with *halacha*.

The entrepreneurs are also actively involved in creating the feeling of a warm community. "We set up a dedicated organization called '*Madregot*' which has a budget to run communal activities, from *shuirim* to social events and ensuring that the community is tight-knit and dynamic."

Building a very special, affordable and unique community in the heart of Israel, with new development every month, we believe that this is an exciting time to purchase an apartment in Carmay HaNadiv!

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How Should I Choose a Community in Israel?

Rabbi Reuven Taragin

The decision

Congratulations on your decision to make *Aliyah*!

Though you are realizing a dream, it is important to do so with your eyes wide open. Proper preparation and planning will help your *Aliyah* be the best it can be.

One of the most significant decisions you need to make is where to live. On the one hand, moving to a “real” Israeli community can facilitate a quicker and more thorough integration. On the other hand, moving to an English-speaking or even Anglo community makes the transition easier.

An Israeli community

Moving to a standard, “fully” Israeli community has much to offer. First off, it is the best way to learn about Israelis and Israeli culture and mannerisms. Each country has its culture and customs. Living and building relationships with native Israelis is the best way to familiarize yourself with Israel.

These relationships also widen and deepen our perspective of Jewish life and ourselves. The *Mishnah* defines the wise man as “the one who learns from all people” (*Avot* 4:1). When we surround ourselves only with those who share our exact *hashkafa* and background, we limit our exposure to what we already know and miss a significant growth opportunity.

When we settle in the same country we were raised in, we generally continue with the same cultural milieu and perspective of our *avodat Hashem*. Moving to a Jewish

community in a new country offers the unique opportunity to expose oneself to a different environment and to people with a different understanding of *avodat Hashem* – one that can enrich the perspective we grew up with.

Moving to Israel, in particular, offers an added opportunity – the ability to learn from people who grew up in a Jewish state, in the holy land of *Eretz Yisrael*. Many of those who grew up this way (especially those less connected to the global village culture) offer a fresh, more natural approach to *avodat Hashem* that can only be developed when our people are living in Hashem’s Land.

We should aim for our *Aliyah* to emulate that of the first Jew, *Avraham Avinu*, whose move to *Eretz Yisrael* included his discovery of his true self (*Likutei Halachot, Hilchot Shabbat* 7). We too should seek to connect with *Eretz Yisrael* and its people in a way that helps us discover a more profound, more authentic version of ourselves.

Moving to a fully Israeli community offers unique opportunities, but these opportunities come with greater challenges and higher risks. Settling in a Hebrew-speaking community is a major change in lifestyle. Many only realize the importance of their accustomed cultural norms once they make such a move.

One example of these norms is the sense of community. As a minority living in a foreign country, Orthodox Jews worldwide form Jewish communities around *shuls* and schools. These institutions serve as more than just locations for *tefillah* and education. They are community centers

around which the lives of community members revolve and by which members identify themselves.

This is generally not the case in Israeli communities – especially within cities. A *shul* is a place to *daven* that may also arrange *shuirim*. It generally does not run social events and is not the focus of its members’ lives. Many of those who take the fully Israeli path miss the sense of community they had in *chutz la’aretz*.

Moving to a fully Israeli community is like jumping into the deep end. One who knows how to swim or is a quick learner will manage to swim and ultimately master swimming. Those not ready for the deep dive can find the experience overwhelming and their *Aliyah*, *chas v’shalom*, unsuccessful.

An Anglo community

Settling in a community of “landsmen” (those who originate from the same country) makes the transition technically easier and softens *Aliyah*’s cultural shift. Though people have moved countries, the religious and cultural mannerisms remain, to a large extent, the same. They miss their communities abroad but become part of a community at home in Israel. Understandably, those who settle in Anglo communities usually – at least initially – find their *Aliyah* easier and are generally more successful at making a smooth religious and social transition.

The downside is that those who live in these communities interface less with other types of Israelis, and therefore have less exposure to Israeli society as a whole. This makes integration harder for adults

and particularly for children who often feel that they are “neither here nor there.” They are not truly Anglos and live in Israel, but they also feel different from native-born Israelis.

Though making *Aliyah* does not need to include changing one’s religious identity and perspective, one needs to learn how to manage the Israeli system and should ideally feel connected to the rest of the Jewish people living in Israel. You don’t need to “become Israeli,” but you *should* be an Israeli. We play a part in Hashem’s *geulah* process not just by returning to and inhabiting His Land, but also by reconnecting with His people there.

Which way is better?

Should you take the course easier in the short-term or the one that may be harder in the short-term yet offers more in the long-term?

The answer depends upon many factors, the most important of which being your background, and the age and stage of your *Aliyah*. The cultural shift of moving to a fully Israeli community is significantly easier for people making *Aliyah* at a young age, while still single or newly-married or with very young children and with a strong Hebrew and understanding of Israel. Those making *Aliyah* under other circumstances should probably choose the safer path.

The third way – the middle path

There is also a middle path worth considering. Many communities in Israel have a healthy mix of Israeli-born Hebrew speakers and English-speaking *olim*. Settling in such a community allows one to benefit from the best of both worlds.

Obviously, building such a community is more challenging than either of the two homogenous models. Ideally, one should choose a community that successfully integrates the two groups and has a coherent religious-cultural identity.

To maximize the benefits of moving to such a community, one should consciously connect to both types of residents. Make sure to seek relationships with Hebrew-speaking Israelis as well as Anglos, especially for one’s children.

A community that suits you and your children

Although *Aliyah* should logically lead to heightened levels of spirituality, unfortunately this is not always the case. Any move to a new country and culture, even a holier one, can be disruptive to one’s natural religious growth. Like when moving anywhere else, it is imperative to choose a community that emphasizes and inculcates Torah values in a way that is similar to the community one is making *Aliyah* from, especially if one is making *Aliyah* with older children. This will help you make a smoother religious transition.

It is important to add that, when choosing a community, you should carefully consider the suitability of the community for *olim* children and your children in particular. Clarify how successful the community has been in helping *olim* children grow as *bnei* and *bnot* Torah. It is also important to carefully consider the community’s educational options and determine how suitable they are for your family and children. A *yeshiva* or school may seem similar to what you are used to, but, in reality, be very different. This difference can create a dissonance between school and family that can be very confusing and frustrating.

Additionally, not every Anglo or mixed neighborhood or *shul* emphasizes the value of community to the same extent or in the same way. In general, *yishuvim* or defined communities emphasize community-building more than cities and large towns. Moving to such a community makes it easier to feel a sense of belonging.

Do your research

Choosing a community is a significant decision that is hard to make from a distance. It definitely pays to speak with many residents and ideally visit and spend Shabbatot in the different communities one is considering before deciding. Research for *Aliyah* should extend beyond Googling for information. It is important to speak to people personally and feel things on the ground first-hand.

If one is unable to visit beforehand, consider using some Shabbatot during the first year to visit different communities before deciding where to settle permanently, especially if you are making *Aliyah* without older children. That being said,

it is important not to travel for too many Shabbatot in order to allow for a consistent stable first year in Israel.

Seek help

If possible, it is also important to look for a community where you know people, like family and friends, who can offer help. Speak to *Aliyah* coordinators beforehand to understand the different educational options and to know which tutors to hire.

People from *chutz la’aretz* are often predisposed to refusing help because they feel uncomfortable asking or even accepting. But *Aliyah* is too difficult to do on your own; you must not be embarrassed to seek help and accept the help offered by others. There will, *iy”H*, be many people offering it. This is the time in your life to accept it.

May Hashem assist your due diligence and bless you and your family with a smooth *Aliyah* process that helps you and your family feel at home in Israel for generations to come.



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Rabbi Reuven Taragin

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Fixing Israeli Misconceptions: An Interview with Roi Abecassis



Roi Abecassis has spent a lifetime working with Diaspora Jewry. His journey has taken him around the world and back again to his current role as Head of the Center for Religious Affairs in the Diaspora at the World Zionist Organization. Rabbi Aron White spoke with Roi to learn more about his work with Diaspora Jewry.

Roi, thank you for speaking with us. You are Israeli born and bred, but have dedicated most of your adult life to working with Jews from the Diaspora. What inspired you to take this path?

I grew up in Kedumim in a family of mixed Moroccan and Yemenite heritage. My parents had served as Bnei Akiva *shlichim* in Sydney before I was born, but when I began my studies at Yeshivat Har Etzion, I had never stepped foot outside of Israel. In my later years in *yeshiva*, one of my friends told me they were going to run a Bnei Akiva camp in Ukraine, which seemed, to me, like an oxymoron – I couldn’t wrap my head around what that even meant! But my interest was piqued, and I joined the camp as a *madrich*. I will never

forget how moving it was to do *mifkad* and hear hundreds of *chanichim* sing their Russian-accented *Hatikvah*.

After *yeshiva*, I got more involved; I worked at World Bnei Akiva running the Hachshara programs in Israel, as well as camps in Belgium, France and Italy. After a few years, I thought my time at Bnei Akiva was finished – I got married, took the bar exam and was looking for work as a lawyer. But then I got a call offering us the chance to be *shlichim* in Scandinavia, based in Malmo, Sweden. We accepted, and it was a life changing experience. When you live in a small community like that, you realize that movements like Bnei Akiva are all that people have to hold onto their Jewish identity. You are helping a community that is fighting to survive.



After returning to Israel, I was the *Sgan Mazkal* of World Bnei Akiva before becoming *Mazkal* from 2015–2021. During that time, we expanded our work in communities like Germany and Argentina, created a pre-army *mechina* in Israel with 50% Israeli and 50% Diaspora students, and began building the new *Beit Bnei Akiva*, which is due to open soon. Two years ago, I became Mizrachi's representative to Israel's National Institutions, and I now serve as the Head of the Center for Religious Affairs in the Diaspora at the World Zionist Organizations. A few months ago I also became the deputy chairman of KKL.

As a native Israeli who has lived abroad, what do you think Israelis misunderstand about Diaspora communities?

The first thing is simple: the numbers. Many Israelis grow up thinking that almost all Jews live in Israel and there are a few left in *chutz la'aretz*. They don't realize that the majority of the Jewish people live outside of Israel! Growing up in a Jewish country, this misconception is understandable, but it is a big problem that they don't grasp the scope and depth of Diaspora communities. Once you understand Diaspora communities properly, it also makes you realize that you cannot just tell people, "Make *Aliyah*" – it simply will not be effective.

Let's start with your role as the head of the Center for Religious Affairs in the Diaspora. What does this involve?

The World Zionist Organization is the official vehicle of the Zionist movement founded by Theodor Herzl in 1897. In the past, this department was there to cater to Religious Zionist communities around the world. For example, for many years this department has organized conferences for rabbinic and lay leadership of small communities in Europe and South America to strengthen their connection to Israel and Zionism. We also run regional conferences for *shlichim* and community leaders to better work together; we ran conferences in Argentina in 2022, in Amsterdam in 2023, and G-d willing we'll have the next conference in Mexico in 2024.

We also began working with *yeshiva* and seminary students through our Flying the Flag program. This program has so far engaged 4,000 *yeshiva* and seminary students with *tiyulim*, events and Shabbatonim, connecting them to Israel during their time living in the land. We have also been able to restore funding for *yeshivot* and seminary programs – through our Masa funding and Causematch campaigns we have raised 88 million shekels for *yeshivot* and seminaries since 2020.

You mentioned that you are now also the deputy chairman of KKL. What does that involve?

KKL is an immensely important organization, with a massive budget that makes a huge difference to causes both in Israel and around the world. KKL basically does two things – developing land, forests, and water sources in Israel, and Zionist education around the world. Through Mizrachi's representatives at KKL, we ensure funding is provided for the Orthodox Union's Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus (JLIC) in the United States. We also aim to increase the number of *shlichim* being sent to Diaspora communities, and to strengthen Zionist education in global communities. This December, I am excited to be bringing a bipartisan group of Members of Knesset to South Africa, to expose them to the work of *shlichim* and help them understand the critical role they play for global Jewry today.

We also help the Religious Zionist community navigate a world that is often extreme, when so many issues are presented as black and white, and nuance and complexity are lost. This past March, we held a conference for Religious Zionist organizations to discuss the *se'if haNeched*, the rule that allows the grandchildren of Jews the automatic right to make *Aliyah*. This has become a hot button issue, and we discussed the issue with leading rabbis, academics and activists to form our approach to the matter. We had to fight just to be able to have conversations about this in the National Institutions; these days, being a centrist and trying to bring different sides together is out of fashion and requires a lot of effort. This is one of the major pillars of Mizrachi activity in the National Institutions – to be a voice that reduces divisiveness, and to try and find common ground rather than exacerbating tensions.

I am privileged to spend my days working for Diaspora Jews around the world – and then I return home to Modi'in and get to witness the miracle of the ingathering of the exiles to our homeland. On Shabbat in the park, I see Jews who are American, French, British, Israeli-born and more, all with our own communities and networks here in Israel. We are living in remarkable times, and it is something I am thankful to be part of. ■





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Locally, RZC supports Bnei Akiva, Camp Moshava (Wild Rose) and Moshava Ba'ir (day camp), conducts streaming and in-person *shuirim* and lectures (which can be viewed at rzc.us), runs social and Israel advocacy programs, and presents community-wide events. Its recent Yom Yerushalayim celebration attended by over 400, featured Mrs. Miriam Peretz, who, in the course of her 3-day visit, connected with and made a lasting impression on nearly 900 men, women and children.

Branching out beyond its historic activities, RZC's weekly e-newsletter, *Kol Shabbat*, reaches subscribers in Chicago, the USA, and Israel. A delegation of 40 Chicagoans attended World Mizrachi's Israel75 program and the inaugural World Orthodox Israel Congress. RZC supports educational and *chesed* programs in Israel, and of course, strongly promotes *Aliyah*. There is hardly a single community in Israel where *ChicagOlim* (named coined at RZC's 2017 mega-reunion in Yerushalayim) cannot be found, often in leadership roles in *chinuch*, academia, the sciences, medicine, *rabbanut*, hi-tech, agriculture, and the list goes on.

This past summer, RZC formally dedicated the Chicago Mizrachi Pina Chama (rest station) in Itamar which has served 20,000 soldiers since it began operations three years ago (at the pandemic's start). Then, with music, singing and dancing, RZC presented a restored *sefer Torah*, for a military base in the Shomron. Both projects are in honor of the scores of *chayalim bodedim* (IDF lone soldiers) from Chicago.

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A Beautiful Etrog or a New Dress?

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Throughout the Torah there is a law of *hiddur mitzvah*, beautifying the *mitzvah*. Don't just perform the *mitzvah* by rote. Make the effort to make your *sukkah* beautiful, your *lulav* beautiful, your *shofar*, candlesticks and *Sefer Torah* beautiful.

However, there is a special *hiddur* with regards to Sukkot. According to Rashi (Sukkah 29), a dry *lulav* is invalid for use on Sukkot because it is not beautiful. Tosafot (ibid.) disagree and gives another explanation: there is a special instruction to acquire a beautiful set of the *arba'a minim*, the four species. Beautification does not usually impair the performance of a *mitzvah*, but in this case it does. And indeed, unlike any other *mitzvah*, the widespread custom is to search out a particularly beautiful set of *arba'a minim*. Why?

Firstly, the Torah commands us to take a "*pri eitz hadar*, the fruit of goodly trees" (Vayikra 23:40). Chazal explain that this refers to an *etrog*. The Meiri thinks that the obligation to beautify the *mitzvah* is solely referring to the *etrog*. We cannot deduce an obligation to beautify other *mitzvot* because the word "*hadar*" is not an adjective but a noun. The Ramban, however, argues that the *etrog* is the most beautiful fruit, and so we must take the most beautiful and "pleasing to look at" of each of the species.

It is possible that the need for beauty is connected not only to the *arba'a minim* but to the entire festival of Sukkot. This is based on the idea that the more economic abundance we enjoy, the more we need to beautify our *mitzvot*. *Chag HaAsif*, the harvest holiday – another name for Sukkot – expresses economic abundance. The Torah even stresses the joy of the festival as a result of this abundance, from bringing

your harvest into the house (Devarim 16:13–14). On the other hand, too much economic comfort can lead to us forgetting G-d. Chazal tell us that a person only rebels as a result of satiation (*Sifrei*, Eikev 43).

For this reason, the obligation of *hiddur mitzvah* is most pressing on Sukkot when, after the harvest, our economic wealth is most prominent. And just as we beautify other *mitzvot*, this too transforms our physical wealth into part of our *avodat Hashem*, our spiritual wealth.

Can we pray for money?

Is it proper to pray for money if you have enough money to pay for your basic needs? Rabbi Nachman of Breslov says that praying for one's personal and seemingly mundane needs is a great thing (*Sichot HaRan* 233). Why?

Even if we attain the thing we are praying for without prayer – such as money, food, success on a test, etc. – we should still pray for it. Without prayer, the attainment or achievement is disconnected from G-d. With prayer, however, it rises a level and becomes connected to something bigger than us. We link the physical with the spiritual and uplift our physical belongings to a much higher and more admirable plane.

Beautifying the mitzvot between each other

The Gemara learns the obligation to beautify the *mitzvot* from the verse "זה א-לי ואני אהבתי", This is my G-d and I shall beautify Him" (Shemot 15:2). The Gemara then adds an important point: "Abba Shaul says, ואני אהבתי – be like Him. Just as He is compassionate and merciful, so should you be compassionate and merciful."

Hiddur mitzvah is not just about spending more money on a nicer pair of

tefillin or a bigger *chanukiah*. It's also about beautifying the *mitzvot* between us and our fellow human beings, for through them we become G-d-like. This means offering a good word whenever we can, always smiling at people, being respectful of other opinions, listening intently and sincerely to what others have to say, and so on.

A man once came to Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef and said: "Rabbi, this is the *etrog* I bought this year." "How much did you pay for it?" asked the Rav. "\$100."

The Rav knew that the man couldn't afford such a price and that he could have bought a very good *etrog* for \$20. He asked him: "And did you buy your wife a new dress for Sukkot?" "No," said the man. "*Hiddur mitzvah* is very admirable, but observing '*V'samachta b'chagecha*, And you shall rejoice on your festival,' by buying your wife a new dress is much more important!"

Beautifying the *mitzvot* means beautifying all aspects of our lives, inside our homes and outside, because it indicates our love for His *mitzvot*, which will then bring us closer to Him.



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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Avinoam Inbar serves as the viticulturist for Anava Wineries, and having served as an viticulturist for some of the leading wineries in Israel, he is bringing a wealth of experience to the role. "Viticulture is the study of everything to do with the grapes and the vineyards that will eventually produce the wine. I studied at Hebrew University, and have worked for Flam, Tzuba, Castel and Agur, among other labels. When I look at a cluster of grapes, I am looking at the wine that they will produce – I can say "this cluster will be good for rosé, and this will be better for a fuller wine."

After meeting with Anava founder Nadav Jesselson, Avinoam joined the dream team working on the new project. "I am very excited to be part of such a unique project," said Avinoam. "Winemaking is something totally unique – it's not something you can do by yourself, as it requires years of training and experience. Anava is bringing winemaking to a new group of people – we are providing the framework and support so clients can experience the joys of winemaking in their own vineyard."



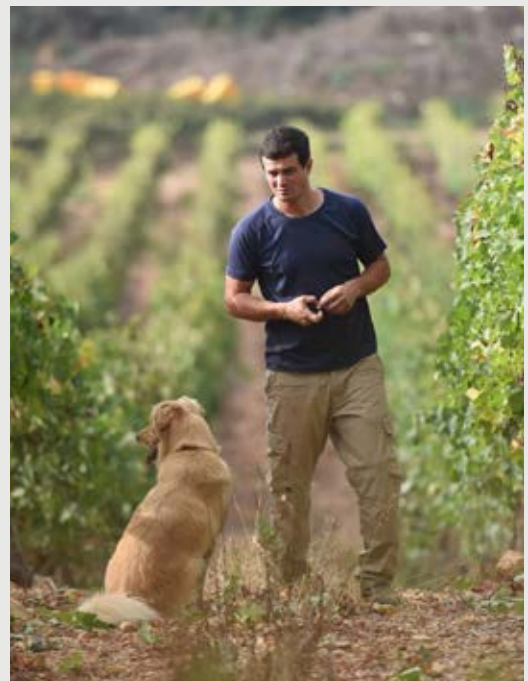
The level of attention to detail at Anava vineyards is also something totally unique. "When I worked for large, commercial vineyards, you are dealing with major quantities. Here, with each client having their plot, it allows us to hone in on every detail of the winemaking process."

What also makes the process at Anava unique is how each customer brings their own story and passions to the process. "There are some clients who already have lots of knowledge about winemaking, whereas others are more attracted to the Zionist aspects of owning a vineyard in Israel. For everyone, in the end winemaking is about expressing the story that you want to tell."

"One can grow wine in about 60 or 70% of Israel – it is not for nothing the Torah talks about the Shivat HaMinim, and so much about the agriculture of this land. We selected a piece of land in the Judean foothills, in the Ella Valley, and out of the 4,000 species of grapes in the world then had to choose the ones that will grow the best here. This wine region produces fantastic wines, and we are excited to provide that for our clients. We will be planting the specific grapes the clients choose, as well as a general section with many species, allowing us to blend and adapt based on changing tastes, the variable annual climate etc.

Underlying all of the technical and detailed aspects of the job, there is a bedrock of connection to the land at the heart of Avinoam's work. "For me, everything to do with agriculture in Israel is not only about producing an end product, but forming a deep, personal and tangible connection to the land. One can talk in theoretical and conceptual terms about their connection to Israel – but there is something indescribable in actually touching the land, working the land, feeling the land, and ultimately, producing something beautiful from it.

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Sukkot: Reliving Aliyah

Rabbanit Shani Taragin

Though Pesach was always my favorite of the three *regalim* growing up in the Diaspora, since moving to *Eretz Yisrael*, Sukkot has taken its place. It seems natural that Sukkot should have always been the celebratory “winner,” as *simcha* is mentioned three times in its context. In addition to perfect weather conditions for sitting outside, Sukkot simultaneously marks the completion of our historical commemoration from *Yetziat Mitzrayim-Har Sinai* to *Eretz Yisrael* and our annual agricultural cycle of the three festivals (barley-wheat-fruit). We are commanded to sit in huts to remember our historical journey from Egypt to the Land of Israel in the hut-ridden wilderness, and to celebrate with our agricultural fruits and branches – *etrog*, *lulav*, *hadassim* and *aravot*. The happiness of Sukkot is amplified through this dual “closure” and offers us an opportunity to pause, remember and reflect on our national and personal journeys of *Aliyah* to *Eretz Yisrael*.

Interestingly, both *mitzvot* of Sukkot express our agricultural and historical dependence on G-d’s supervision as we transitioned from our transient state in the desert to our permanent homes in *Eretz Yisrael*. The *sukkot* (huts) remind us of the shelter provided by Hashem throughout our journey in the wilderness, and of the practical means of dwelling in the fields during harvest season in the Land. The *Ba’al HaRokeach* teaches that the *sukkot* are reminiscent of the military huts we camped in during our years of siege and conquest of *Eretz Yisrael*, recalling the final stage of our journey as we entered the Land and fought for sovereignty. Rashbam explains that the *sukkot* remind us of our nomadic years bereft of a Land, preventing us from feeling too smug and arrogant as we recall our homeless past and appreciate our Homeland and homesteads anew. The *sukkot* are reflective of our stages of *Aliyah* as demonstrated during the time of

Shivat Tzion. “The whole community that returned from the captivity made booths and dwelt in the booths – the Israelites had not done so from the days of Joshua son of Nun to that day – and there was very great rejoicing” (*Nechemia* 8:17). Professor Yehuda Felix notes that “not since the days of Joshua the son of Nun had the country enjoyed such an ample supply of building timber for the construction of the booths in fulfillment of the biblical injunction” (*Nature & Man in the Bible*).

The four species also express our stages of national transition from exile to *Aliyah*, akin to when we bring our *bikkurim* fruits and recount our journey from nomads to Israeli citizens. The *lulav* represents our first stage in the wilderness when we dwelled in palm-covered huts for shelter (שִׁכּוֹת תְּמָר). The *aravot* remind us of the Jordan River crossing (עֲרָבוֹת יְרִיחוֹ), abundant with willows along the border to *Eretz Yisrael*. The *hadassim* are reminiscent of the Land’s wild flora before the conquest and settlement. And the *etrog*? Just like the fruits accompanying the recital of *mikra bikkurim*, the *etrog* is the culmination of our historical process – the expression of our G-d granted fruit harvest (Nogah HaReuveni, *Nature in our Biblical Heritage*)!

The four species also symbolize the continued settlement of the land, reflecting the stages of agricultural growth and development from the “*lulav*” (bark of a tree) to the branches of the “*hadassim*,” further developing leaves of the “*arava*” and finally the fruit of the “*etrog*.” Rambam notes that these species encompass universal blessings – the trees, leaves, herbs and fruit – a historical reminder of leaving the barren wilderness bereft of water resources and fruit trees for the abundance of the Land of Israel (*Moreh Nevuchim* 3:43).

Lastly, these species reflect different communities throughout *Eretz Yisrael*. The *lulav* represents the areas of deserts and valleys (e.g. Mitzpe Yericho, Ma’aleh Adumim); the *hadassim* grow primarily in the mountains

(e.g. Gush Etzion, Golan); the *arava* by river banks (e.g. Beit Shemesh); and the *etrog* in irrigated fields (e.g. Rechovot, Ra’anana).

Each day of Sukkot we circle the *mizbe’ach* or *bima* while holding the four species, leading up to seven rotations on Hoshanah Rabbah. Some explain that we do this to remember Israel’s miraculous victory after circling the walls of Yericho in a similar manner (Yerushalmi, *Sukkah* ch.4). Rav Yaakov Ettliger (*Aruch LaNer, Sukkah* 45b) explains that this is the basis of our happiness and gratitude expressed on Sukkot through a complete Hallel. Although we are grateful on Pesach and Shavuot as we recount the miracles of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* and *Ma’amad Har Sinai*, the primary praise we offer G-d is for the miracles performed in *Eretz Yisrael*, beginning with the victory of Yericho. We take our agricultural species and relive our historical journey as we celebrate entering *Eretz Yisrael* and choosing communities blessed with different resources – then and now!



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Sukkot for our Time

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ל"צ"ל

Of all the festivals, Sukkot is surely the one that speaks most powerfully to our time. Kohelet could almost have been written in the twenty-first century. Here is the picture of ultimate success, the man who has it all – the houses, the cars, the clothes, the adoring women, the envy of others – he has pursued everything this world can offer from pleasure to possessions to power to wisdom and yet, surveying the totality of his life, he can only say, in effect, “Meaningless, meaningless, everything is meaningless.”

Kohelet's failure to find meaning is directly related to his obsession with the “I” and the “Me”: “I built for myself. I gathered for myself. I acquired for myself.” The more he pursues his desires, the emptier his life becomes. There is no more powerful critique of the consumer society, whose idol is the self, whose icon is the “selfie” and whose moral code is “Whatever works for you.” This is the society that achieved unprecedented affluence, giving people more choices than they have ever known, and yet at same time saw an unprecedented rise in alcohol and drug abuse, eating disorders, stress-related syndromes, depression, attempted suicide and actual suicide. A society of tourists, not pilgrims, is not one that will yield the sense of a life worth living. Of

all things people have chosen to worship, the self is the least fulfilling. A culture of narcissism quickly gives way to loneliness and despair.

Kohelet was also, of course, a cosmopolitan: a man at home everywhere and therefore nowhere. This is the man who had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines but in the end could only say, “More bitter than death is the woman.” It should be clear to anyone who reads this in the context of the life of King Solomon, the author of the book, that Kohelet is not really talking about women but about himself.

In the end Kohelet finds meaning in simple things. “Sweet is the sleep of a laboring man.” “Enjoy life with the woman you love.” “Eat, drink and enjoy the sun.” That, ultimately, is the meaning of Sukkot as a whole. It is a festival of simple things. It is, Jewishly, the time we come closer to nature than any other, sitting in a hut with only leaves for a roof, and taking in our hands the unprocessed fruits and foliage of the palm branch, the citron, twigs of myrtle and leaves of willow. It is a time when we briefly liberate ourselves from the sophisticated pleasures of the city and the processed artifacts of a technological age, where we take time



to recapture some of the innocence we had when we were young, when the world still had the radiance of wonder.

The power of Sukkot is that it takes us back to the most elemental roots of our being. You don't need to live in a palace to be surrounded by Clouds of Glory. You don't need to be gloriously wealthy to buy yourself the same leaves and fruit that a billionaire uses in worshipping G-d. Living in the *sukkah* and inviting guests to your meal, you discover that the people who have come to visit you are none other than Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their wives (such is the premise of *ushpizin*, the mystical guests). What makes a hut more beautiful than a home is that when it comes to Sukkot there is no difference between the richest of the rich and the poorest of the poor. We are all strangers on earth, temporary residents in G-d's almost eternal universe. And whether or not we are capable of pleasure, whether or not we have found happiness, nonetheless we can all feel joy.

Sukkot is the time we ask the most profound question of what makes a life worth living. Having prayed on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to be written in the Book of Life, Kohelet forces us to remember how brief life actually is, and how vulnerable. "Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom." What matters is not how long we live, but how intensely we feel that life is a gift we repay by giving to others. Joy, the overwhelming theme of the festival, is what we feel when we know that it is a privilege simply to be alive, inhaling the intoxicating beauty of this moment amidst the profusion of nature, the teeming diversity of life and the sense of communion with those many others who share our history and our hope.

Most majestically of all, Sukkot is the festival of insecurity. It is the candid acknowledgement that there is no life without risk, yet we can face the future without fear when we know we are not alone. G-d is with us, in the rain that

brings blessings to the earth, in the love that brought the universe and us into being, and in the resilience of spirit that allowed a small and vulnerable people to outlive the greatest empires the world has ever known. Sukkot reminds us that G-d's glory was present in the small, portable Tabernacle Moses and the Israelites built in the desert even more emphatically than in Solomon's Temple with all its grandeur. A Temple can be destroyed. But a *sukkah*, even if broken, can be rebuilt tomorrow. Security is not something we can achieve physically but it is something we can acquire mentally, psychologically, spiritually. All it needs is the courage and willingness to sit under the shadow of G-d's sheltering wings.



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Wintering with Kohelet

Dr. Erica Brown

Traditionally, we read Kohelet on Sukkot when the air is crisp, the harvest is done, and the leaves are falling. But in my mind, Kohelet will always be a decidedly wintry book. Giving biblical books a season provides a different kind of framing. Like winter, the day in Kohelet is short. The night is long and falls quickly. Sometimes there is never light:

“Though it [the stillborn] comes into futility and departs into darkness, and its very name is covered with darkness, though it has never seen or experienced the sun, it is better off than he – yes, even if the other lived a thousand years twice over but never had his fill of enjoyment! For are not both of them bound for the same place?” (Kohelet 6:4–6).

In chapter twelve, the author, in his twilight years, looks back with longing as the sights and sounds of everyday activities dim: “And the doors to the street are shut – with the noise of the hand mill growing fainter, and the song of the bird feebler, and all the strains of music dying down” (12:4). A funeral procession passes by on the street: “...Man sets out for his eternal abode, with mourners all around in the street” (12:5). Scholars call the metaphor “the ruined estate.” You could also call it winter.

Soon the night will be permanent: “So appreciate your vigor in the days of your youth, before those days of sorrow come and those years arrive of which you will say, ‘I have no pleasure in them;’ before sun and light and moon and stars grow dark, and the clouds come back again after the rain” (12:1–2). The sunshine is quickly eclipsed. If Kohelet were a color, it might be the color of storm clouds in February.

A few years ago, trying to make my own peace with the winter months, I read *Wintering* by the English writer Katherine May. “In our relentlessly busy contemporary world,” May wrote, “we are forever trying to defer the onset of winter.” But examining countries and cultures that are better prepared for the season so she could embrace it, May resolved to open her mind to winter’s many gifts. “A sharp wintering,” she writes, “would do us good.”

By this, May means that, “If happiness is a skill, then sadness is, too.” That’s a skill Kohelet teaches with his disillusioned critique of the vanities of the world: work, money, and even wisdom. Rather than avoid pain, he leans into it with boyish curiosity and occasional cynicism. His voice is canonized because it is authentic to the unvarnished human experience.

Kohelet’s sharpness makes his many verses praising happiness all the sweeter. These verses appear throughout the book like little intentional epaulets that break the misery of the book’s existential cloak. As the Solomonic old preacher famously says, there is a season for everything, and, “A time for every experience under heaven.” Even in the depths of winter, there are glimpses of summer. There is a thaw that makes the darkness tolerable.

The momentary relief of food and drink is repeated in isolated verses and, for the last time, appears in chapter nine: “Go, eat your bread in gladness, and drink your wine in joy; for your action was long ago approved by G-d” (9:7). Give yourself permission to detest life at times and to enjoy life because its transitory pain should not be ignored and because transitory joy should not be devalued. Temporal enjoyment is a respite *because* it is so short-lived, like bright sunlight reflected on a field of frost. Spring will be here soon enough.

Mature students of Kohelet appreciate that the book is read in the fall because, on some level, it is the book that best prepares us for life’s winters. Eric Wilson in *Against Happiness: In Praise of Melancholy*, warns of the dangers of shallow happiness: “To desire only happiness in a world undoubtedly tragic is to become inauthentic.”

The capacity to see beauty in the winter of life, the kind Kohelet offers, is to render the entire range of human experience worthwhile: “Then the L-rd your G-d will open up your heart and the hearts of your offspring to love Hashem your G-d with all your heart and soul, in order *that you may live*” (Devarim 30:6). It is the circumcised heart – the one that is imperfect, vulnerable, and broken – that truly enables us to live.



Dr. Erica Brown

is the Vice Provost for Values and Leadership at Yeshiva University and the founding director of its Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks/Herstein Center for Values and Leadership. She has written or co-authored 15 books on the Hebrew Bible, spirituality, and leadership and has been published in many popular newspapers and journals. Her latest book is *Kohelet and the Search for Meaning* (Maggid, 2023). She currently serves as a community scholar for Congregation Etz Chaim in Livingston, New Jersey.

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THE HIDDEN LAYER OF SUKKOT'S BEAUTY

RABBI JOSH HARRIS

Maintaining the high we reach on Yom Kippur can be very difficult. Just hours after *Ne'ilah*, we're back to the mundane routines of our daily lives. I'd like to suggest a framework in which Sukkot is the starting point for taking the spiritual elevation of Yom Kippur and transferring it to the rest of the year.

Let's use the first Yom Kippur in history as a blueprint. After sinning with the Golden Calf, *Am Yisrael* were granted atonement on Yom Kippur and then immediately commanded to build the *Mishkan*. Rashi explains that the root of the word *kapparah*, atonement, also means "wiping away" or "removal" (Bereishit 32:21). Similarly, the Siftei Chaim translates the word *viduy* (commonly translated to 'confession') as "throwing." On Yom Kippur, we totally rid ourselves of all our sins

and negative traits and come out of the day as a completely new person. That's the awesome power of Yom Kippur. Using the blueprint of the first Yom Kippur, our immediate command as a "new person" is to build ourselves a *Mishkan*. How do we do that?

The Sha'arei Teshuva writes that there is a custom to increase the giving of charity on Erev Sukkot. What's the connection between giving charity and Sukkot?

After the splitting of the Red Sea, *Am Yisrael* sang the words "זָה אֱ-לֹהֵי וְאֶנְוָהוּ, This is my G-d, and I will adorn Him." The Gemara (Shabbat 133b) offers two possible meanings for these words. One is that we must adorn ourselves before Hashem by beautifying His *mitzvot* – by building a beautiful *sukkah*, acquiring a beautiful *lulav* and *etrog*, and writing a beautiful *sefer Torah*. The second approach interprets the passage as "This is my G-d and I will be like Him." The Gemara explains that a person can be like G-d by imitating His attributes (Sotah 14b). Just as He is gracious and compassionate, so too should we be gracious and compassionate.

Immediately after concluding Yom Kippur, we dive into the *mitzvot* of Sukkot. We build a *sukkah* and decorate it so that it is truly a sight to behold. We spend time selecting a beautiful *etrog*, looking for a fruit with a beautiful shade of yellow, with no blemishes and perfect symmetry. We search through collections of *lulavim*, hoping to find one as straight as an arrow, meeting all of the *halachic* stringencies. We do all of this in order to adorn and glorify the name of Hashem through beautifying His *mitzvot*. However, this is

not the only aspect in our relationship with Hashem. We also must beautify our actions towards our fellow man. We do that by emulating Hashem. Yes, we can have a beautiful *etrog*. Yes, we can have a magnificent *sukkah*. But if we do not treat our fellow man in a way that emulates G-d, we have not fulfilled the entire meaning of the verse 'This is my G-d and I will adorn Him.' Sukkot is therefore the most opportune time to give charity. On Erev Sukkot, having invested so much time and money in beautifying Hashem's *mitzvot*, we ensure that we also beautify our behavior towards our fellow man. We can have a beautiful *etrog*, but not at the expense of our brothers and sisters in need.

The Nefesh HaChaim explains that each person is a microcosm of the *Mishkan* – that each of us is tasked with making ourselves into a mini-*Mishkan*. This is our goal once Yom Kippur is over. We stand in *shul* after *Ne'ilah* as new people. At that moment, we take on the commandment to make ourselves into a *Mishkan*, to become vessels for revealing Hashem in this world. That revelation can only happen if we beautify our actions towards our fellow man as much as we beautify the *mitzvot* between us and G-d. Sukkot is the perfect festival to set this in motion.



Rabbi Josh Harris

is the Community Rabbi at Finchley United Synagogue, London. He completed his Semicha with the Mizrahi Musmachim Program and is a graduate of the Mizrahi UK Fellowship Program. Josh and his wife Tali are also graduates of Mizrahi's Shalhevet Leadership Program.

Why is Kohelet Read on Sukkot?

David Curwin

Common to the stories of both Adam and Shlomo is the descent from great potential to disgrace. They became obsessed with acquiring the few things forbidden to them, and their prosperity caused their downfall.

The dangers of abundance don't apply only to those like Adam and Shlomo. A passage in Devarim shows that everyone is at risk: "Beware not to forget Hashem... Otherwise, when you've eaten and been satisfied, built good houses and lived in them, when your herds and flocks have multiplied, your silver and gold have multiplied, and all that you own has multiplied, your heart will grow haughty, and you'll forget the L-rd your G-d who brought you out of the land of Egypt... who led you through the wilderness... You'll say to yourselves, 'My power, the strength of my hand, brought me this great wealth'" (Devarim 8:11-17).

These verses recall the laws of kings (Devarim 17:14-20). The phrase, "your heart will grow haughty," appears in the Torah only here and in the laws of the king: "to not act haughtily above his brothers." Additionally, "multiply" appears here three times, as well as when prohibiting the king from amassing horses, wives, and "gold and silver." These parallels show that like the king, ordinary citizens may forget G-d when things go well.

Devarim 8 includes another sign of prosperity not mentioned in the laws of kings: building houses. The king isn't prohibited from building houses, and with one exception, there's no mention in the Tanach of anyone building houses until David and Shlomo. The stability of their monarchy and permanent dwellings exemplifies a level of comfort that can lead to the neglect of G-d – a risk the Torah seeks to mitigate.

After David built his house, he wanted to build a House for G-d. Nathan told David that G-d never asked for a permanent House and was satisfied with a temporary Tabernacle. But just as the people asked

for a monarchy (a "house" of kingship), if they ask for a House for G-d, they'll get it – along with the risk of no longer feeling vulnerable and dependent on G-d (Shmuel II 7:1-16).

David's son Shlomo was tasked with building G-d's House, and building is a focus of his reign (see also Kohelet 2:4). Yet in Devarim 8, the danger inherent in building and dwelling in "good houses" is applied to all Jews, not only the king. The antidote is remembering that G-d "brought you out of the land of Egypt," and "led you through the wilderness." Those miracles were unmistakable. But G-d was no less involved in our success once we entered Israel, built our houses, and acquired possessions.

While this lesson is important all year long, it's particularly emphasized on Sukkot. Sukkot occurs at harvest, when we're likely to rejoice in abundance and potentially forget G-d, and so we leave our houses and recreate the *sukkot* of the wilderness to remember G-d's role in our achievements. If we would remain secure in our houses during our harvest celebration, we'd risk forgetting where our blessings came from.

But gratitude to G-d isn't sufficient to prevent that hazardous haughtiness. Just as the king is warned against "acting haughtily above his brothers," so is every Jew commanded to include his brothers in his harvest celebration. Sukkot includes the instruction: "Rejoice in your festival... the migrants, orphans, and widows" (Devarim 16:13-15). Including the disadvantaged in the celebration demonstrates that the harvest bounty doesn't belong to the landowner alone.

Cultivating dependence on G-d is the goal of Sukkot. Transitioning from established houses to the temporary *sukkot* mirrors the move from the wilderness, with full reliance on G-d, to *Eretz Yisrael*, where it might seem we're no longer dependent upon Him.

Both Adam and Shlomo had to learn this lesson. Adam left the Garden, where G-d provided everything, for a life of toil. But even in this new life, he needed to understand he was still dependent on G-d, and therefore must remain obedient to G-d's will.

Shlomo lived a life of houses. He built his own house and the House of God. Inside those structures, his success appeared invulnerable, and his legacy permanent. But he, too, discovered how dependent he was on G-d. According to Kohelet, Shlomo ultimately understood that life is both futile and overwhelming when our relationship with G-d is shattered. Ultimately, Shlomo's houses weren't stable. Life's temporality couldn't be averted in houses of stone.

There's no difference between a temporary booth in the wilderness and a majestic palace in the capital. This, ultimately, is the message of both Kohelet and Sukkot.

● Adapted from David Curwin's new book, *Kohelet – A Map to Eden* (Maggid, 2023), which demonstrates how Kohelet compares the lives of Adam and Shlomo.



David Curwin

is a writer and independent scholar living in Efrat. He writes about Hebrew language issues on his site balashon.com and has published widely on Tanakh and Jewish philosophy. He is a regular contributor to HaMizrachi Parsha Weekly.

JEWSS with VIEWS

We asked five accomplished Jews from around the world: Which figure would you invite to your sukkah?



Rabbi A.Z. Thau

When analyzing the annals of history, there are many great personalities that I would like to meet. It is not possible to choose one person to be my guest that might be why there are seven already! If I were to have a special meal in my *sukkah* I would invite my grandfathers Dr. Barry Altman and Dr. Edwin C. Thau. The Torah tells us in Devarim 32:7 **שאל את הוריתך ואת הוריתך**, Ask your parent, who will inform you, Your elders, who will tell you.” There are many things that I would like to ask and speak with my grandfathers about. We see in the Torah in several locations the significance of asking one’s parents and even grandparents (Masechet Kid-dushin 30a). Both from the emotional side as well as from the intellectual side, having them around would be an opportunity to never pass up.

There is one other great Jewish leader whom I would love to host: Yehoshua. Tasked with bringing *Am Yisrael* into *Eretz Yisrael* and being the leader after they had experienced Moshe *Rabbeinu* for 40 years must have been a daunting task. Hearing his story would be worthwhile.

Rabbi Avraham Zvi (A.Z.) Thau is a native of West Hempstead, New York. He studied at Yeshivat Hakotel for 10 years, during which he made Aliyah, completed the Hesder program in the IDF Shiryon (Tank Corps) unit, served in several positions for the overseas students, and worked as Jerusalem Chapter Director of NCSY Israel. Rabbi Thau received his B.A. in Business and Management from Jerusalem College of Technology and his rabbinical ordination from World Mizrahi. He and his family are beginning their third year of shlichut in Toronto where he serves as the Rosh Beit Midrash for Mizrahi Canada and a Ra”m in Yeshivat Or Chaim.



Efrat Metzler-Porat

This year, more than ever I would like to invite Miriam to my *sukkah*. The truth is, I’m not the first one to consider Miriam as one of the seven *Ushpizin*. The Zohar (Parashat Emor) brings that perhaps all three siblings, Moshe, Aharon and Miriam should be included due to three gifts *Am Yisrael* received in their merit: The Manna – from Moshe, the Clouds of Glory – from Aharon, and the well of water – from Miriam.

The Zohar further mentions Miriam among the *tzaddikim* that will sit at the Great Seuda of the future and even sing there! For various reasons however, (both mystical and *halachic*) Miriam was not included in the final seven, rather *Yosef HaTzaddik* received this honor.

Sukkot’s central theme revolves around water, symbolized by the water libations we offer to invoke divine kindness and mercy. Miriam’s association with water, and her role as the protective older sister standing behind her brother’s Ark, whispering reassuring words, resonates deeply this year especially.

As Israel confronts challenges and disputes, my wish is for Miriam to visit our *sukkah*, gently whispering, “everything is going to be alright,” offering us comfort and confidence.

Efrat Metzler-Porat became the first female Deputy Director of World Bnei Akiva in 2021. She previously served as Director of World Bnei Akiva’s Bogrim Department and as Head of its European Desk.



Rabbi Jesse Horn

As a committed student of the *Rishonim* (earlier commentaries on Gemara) and *Achronim* (later commentaries), I am both humbled and inspired by *iyun* (in-depth learning of) Gemara. A piercingly deep explanation of Rav Chaim Brisker dissecting a machloket (halachic debate) between the Rambam and Ra'avad breaking down the opinions to their basic elementary components, a powerful penetrating question of Rabbi Akiva Eiger, or taking apart and reconstructing a Tosa-fot – these continue to fuel my passion for Torah.

But when I read the *derashot* (exegesis) of Chazal (rabbis of the Talmud) found in the Gemara, I find myself lost. Our ability to *darshan* (make *derashot*), as I have heard from my *rabbeim*, is lost and along with that is a profound lack of understanding of their methodology. Despite my study of the creative interpretations found in the Torah Temimah, Malbim and others, I struggle to find the same level of clarity and understanding as I do in the *Rishonim* and *Achronim*.

I deeply yearn to observe Chazal decipher and unravel depth in the *pesukim* (verses), drawing out the *halachic* conclusions recorded in the Gemara. As a devoted student of both Gemara and Tanach, I curiously thirst for a better perspective of how Chazal interpreted and deduced *halacha* from the Tanach.

It would be a dream fulfilled to host any of the *Tanna'im* or *Amora'im* (rabbis of the Talmud), into my *sukkah*. I would cherish the experience of watching their brilliance of textual analysis and penetration of the *pesukim*, to hear their questions and experience the wisdom in their answers and further connect to such a central part of the *mesorah* which lays the groundwork and builds foundations for the entire Torah *She'ba'al Peh* (Oral Law).

Rabbi Jesse Horn is a senior Ram at Yeshivat Hako-tel and runs Mizrachi's Mechanchim program.



Kyra Ashkanazy

My grandparents, Trudy and Sol Englander z"l would be the ultimate Sukkot guests. As survivors of the Shoah, they each had their own unique and powerful stories to share.

My grandpa survived the war after doing forced labor in a Hungarian labor camp. My grandma survived Auschwitz and was liberated from Mauthausen. They both came to Israel after the war to rebuild their lives after so much loss. My grandpa served in the Haganah underground army as an artillery engineer, and my grandma was involved in science research at Hebrew University. They were true pioneers of the State of Israel.

My grandparents met in Tel Aviv, got married in 1959, and then moved to New York for work opportunities. This was a difficult decision for them, but throughout their life together, they spent a great deal of time in Israel, supporting their family here, and giving back to the land. My dream of *Aliyah* was indeed sparked by their legacy.

Sitting in my *sukkah* with my grandparents in my home in Jerusalem, and celebrating the holiday with their first *sabra* great-grandchild, would be the truest form of *nechama*. They would witness their legacy being continued in the Jewish homeland.

Kyra Ashkanazy, along with her husband Shlomo, is the co-director of JLIC at Washington University in Saint Louis. Prior to this role, Kyra worked at the Jewish Agency for Israel as a Donor Missions Manager, creating and curating meaningful experiences for donors and groups visiting the Jewish Agency's programs throughout Israel. Passionate about Jewish communal work, Kyra participated in Mizrachi's Shalhevet leadership program, and received outstanding training and preparation for shlichut.



Rabbi Zach Frisch

Iwould invite Rav Kook to my *sukkah*. Rav Kook had a unique ability to connect with all types of Jews and to see the good in everyone. He interacted with religious and non-religious Jews, Zionist and anti-Zionists, and was able to see the value in many different views and bring people together. With the backdrop of what is going on in Israel, where there is so much tension in society, I would love to ask him for his *eitza*, his advice, for how to navigate this. There are also so many other big questions of our era – we have achieved so much in our country, with *kibbutz galuyot*, but now there are other questions – going up to *Har HaBayit*, building a *Beit HaMikdash*, wearing *techeilet* – I would love to hear his views on all of these issues.

Rabbi Zach Frisch is a graduate of the first class of Mizrachi's Shalhevet leadership program, Rebbe at Sha'alvim and SFW, and Camp Rabbi at Camp Mesorah. He lives in Sha'alvim with his wife Tovah and their two children.

How did Shemini Atzeret Become Simchat Torah?

Rabbanit Sally Mayer

The Torah describes Sukkot repeatedly as a seven-day holiday (Vayikra 23, Bamidbar 29, Devarim 16), but then adds that the eighth day will also be a festival. What is the nature of this eighth day? Three approaches toward the nature of Shemini Atzeret emerge from the Talmud and Midrashim. In *Pesikta deRav Kahana* (28), Rav Alexandri says that the verses hint to *Am Yisrael* to pray for rain. If Sukkot passes and we still have not taken the hint, Hashem gives us a whole day just to pray for rain. The special prayer for rain, *tefillat geshem*, is in fact recited on Shemini Atzeret. According to this view, Shemini Atzeret amplifies a theme that is latent during Sukkot, a theme that moves to center stage on the eighth day.

The Gemara (Sukkah 55b) provides a second perspective, based on the striking difference between the sacrifices brought throughout Sukkot and those offered on Shemini Atzeret. Though we offer a total of 70 bulls during the seven days of Sukkot, on Shemini Atzeret we offer just one. Rabbi Elazar explains that the seventy bulls of Sukkot correspond to the seventy nations of the world, while the one bull of Shemini Atzeret represents the Jewish people. Sukkot is a universal holiday; indeed, Zechariah (14:16-19) prophesies that one day, all the nations will celebrate Sukkot. Shemini Atzeret, however, is only for the Jewish people, a modest holiday dedicated to celebrating Hashem's special relationship with His beloved people.

Rashi offers a third approach. Hashem is like a king who invited his sons to a meal for a certain number of days. When the

time came to say goodbye, he asked his children, "Please stay with me one more day, *kasheh alai preidatchem*, your departure is difficult for me" (Rashi, Vayikra 23:36). According to this understanding, all of Sukkot is a holiday for Hashem to celebrate with His children, the Jewish people. Shemini Atzeret is neither an opportunity to emphasize a concept that was hidden during Sukkot nor a holiday with its own theme - it is simply a moving expression of Hashem's desire that we stay with Him and delay our departure.

These perspectives may underlie the Amoraic debate (Sukkah 47b) over whether to say the blessing of *shehecheyanu* on Shemini Atzeret. If its main theme is to pray for rain, which we should have done on Sukkot, it is debatable whether it warrants its own *shehecheyanu*. If, in line with the second approach, Shemini Atzeret is a "personal" holiday for the Jewish people after the universal holiday of Sukkot, one can well understand that it warrants its own blessing. If, however, as Rashi writes, Shemini Atzeret is an expression of G-d's yearning for us to stay a bit longer, it is hard to understand why it would be considered a new holiday. We normally would not consider staying one more day at the same vacation house to be a new vacation but rather an *extension* of our vacation. According to Rashi, why say *shehecheyanu* on Shemini Atzeret?

Perhaps the nature of Shemini Atzeret is exactly this. It celebrates our unique relationship with Hashem, that He loves us and does not want to see us go. It actually is a separate day - a day dedicated exclusively to celebrating our close bond with Hashem as His chosen, beloved people.

"*Kasheh alai preidatchem*, your departure is difficult for me," highlights a different quality of our relationship with Hashem, one not emphasized previously. And so Shemini Atzeret is not simply an extra day of Sukkot, but rather a unique day and one that deserves its own *shehecheyanu*.

This may be why Shemini Atzeret, the day of love, developed into Simchat Torah. We complete the public reading of the entire Torah, dance with the *sifrei Torah* and celebrate our bond with Hashem. Simchat Torah is not merely a completion of the Torah we have learned as a community each Shabbat throughout the year, but rather a celebration of Hashem's deep love for us, of His unique connection with us, expressed through the Torah. As we celebrate this year, may we feel this incredible bond, and use this day as a springboard into a year filled with Torah and connection to Hashem.



Rabbanit Sally Mayer

serves as Rosh Midrasha at Ohr Torah Stone's Midreshet Lindenbaum and teaches Talmud and Halacha. She lectures in communities around the world and served as an editor for the Koren translation of the Talmud.



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The Heart of the Torah

Rabbi Danny Mirvis

“**N**ever again has there arisen in Israel a prophet like Moshe, whom Hashem had known face to face. (As evident) by all the signs and the wonders that Hashem had sent him to perform in the Land of Egypt to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land. And by all the strong hand and by all the great power that Moshe performed before the eyes of all Israel” (Devarim 34:10-12).

With these words, which describe the supremacy of Moshe’s prophecy, we complete *V’zot HaBracha* and our annual Torah reading cycle. Whilst celebrating this milestone on Simchat Torah, we do not wait for the next Shabbat to recommence with the book of Bereishit, but straight away return to the very beginning of the Torah:

“In the beginning, G-d created heaven and earth” (Bereishit 1:1).

This immediate recommencement of the cycle comes to highlight the continuity of Torah, our love of Torah, and that however many times we may have completed the Torah, there is still more to learn.

Numerous explanations are given for the fact that the Torah begins with the letter

“bet” (of “*Bereishit*”) and finishes with the letter “lamed” (of “*Yisrael*”).

The Kli Yakar concludes his commentary of the Torah by explaining that *bet* and *lamed* are the only two letters of the Hebrew alphabet that form complete words when placed before the three letters that comprise Hashem’s four-letter name (“*yud*” followed by “*hay*” followed by “*vav*” followed by “*hay*”) i.e. *bet yud* (“*bi*” – in me), *bet vav* (“*bo*” – in him), *bet hay* (“*bah*” – in her), *lamed yud* (“*li*” – to me), *lamed vav* (“*lo*” – to him) and *lamed hay* (“*lah*” – to her) are all complete Hebrew words. *Bet* and *lamed* are therefore the two letters that represent the unity of Hashem’s name and come to teach us that everything begins and ends with Hashem.

Other commentators point out that the letters *lamed* and *bet* spell out the word “*lev*” (heart) i.e. the *heart* is the link between the completion of the Torah and its recommencement and the heart performs this linking role in numerous ways.

First, our Torah learning cannot be a purely academic or intellectual exercise. To ensure the continuity of Torah and to ensure the recommencement of our Torah reading year after year, we must be emotionally connected to Torah as well.

Second, the continuity of Torah goes hand in hand with the love of our fellow man. Torah study which is not accompanied by pleasant character traits and concern for others is flawed. Torah without a heart is not Torah. The love of our fellow man is not only essential to truly receiving Torah, but is particularly vital in passing it on as well.

Third, our devotion and commitment to Torah should be as constant as the beating of the heart. Whilst an emotional connection to the Torah is essential, emotion can be fickle and must be accompanied by commitment.

As we renew our Torah reading cycle, we should renew our passion and love for Torah, our commitment to Torah and our love for our fellow man.



Rabbi Danny Mirvis
is the Deputy CEO of World Mizrachi.


MIZRACHI


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A Prayer for After the Holidays

Sivan Rahav-Meir

The following prayer was composed by Rabbi Zevik Harel for after the holidays:

“Our Father, our King, gather all the divine sparks revealed in our holy actions throughout the holidays.

Take all the exhaustion tossed aside by old and young alike as they rose with devotion at midnight to recite *selichot*.

Take the millions of coins that were given for charity to the poor.

Gather the millions of *shofar* blasts that were heard in synagogues and outside of them, in all corners of the globe.

Collect all the good thoughts and plans of the nation of Israel that were inspired by the sounds of the *shofar*.

Accept the fasts of your people on the holy day of Yom Kippur – in cities, towns, villages, and *kibbutzim*.

Take the millions of resolutions to change that were made during the *ne'ilah* prayer at the close of Yom Kippur.

Take the extra efforts exerted to acquire the four species and to build *sukkot*.

Take the work of the children who with joyful excitement made decorations to beautify their *sukkot*.

Take the determination to be happy of those searching for a lifetime partner but not yet finding a match – whether single men and women, divorced men and women, or widowed men and women – who overlooked the empty place in their *sukkot* or in their hearts to find joy and be joyful on the holidays.

Take all the hospitality, opening of hearts, and love for one another displayed throughout the holidays.

Take all the laundry and the cooking, all the traffic jams, all the attempts to make peace between the kids in the back seat, and all the valiant efforts to organize family gatherings.

Take the millions of pairs of shoes that danced joyously with the Torah while making *hakafot* around the *bimah* on Simchat Torah.

Take all the twinges in the hearts of those with family members in the army and security forces, medical teams, and other essential service sectors who could not celebrate the holidays together with their families so that we could celebrate the holidays in security and peace.

And for all of this, please grant us a year of health, peace, prosperity, and joy.”

● Translated by Yehoshua Siskin.

”אבינו מלפנו, אָטף אַתְּ כָּל הַנִּיצוּצוֹת:

קח אַתְּ כָּל הַעֲיִפוֹת שֶׁזָּרְקוּ הַצֵּדָה צְעִירִים וְזָקֵנִים, כְּשֶׁקָּמוּ בְּמִסִּירוֹת נֶפֶשׁ
בְּחִצּוֹת לִילָה לְזִמְרַת סְלִיחוֹת,

קח אַתְּ מִלְיוֹנֵי הַמִּטְבָּעוֹת שֶׁנִּתְּנוּ לְצִדְקָה עֲבוּר עֲנִיִּים,

אָטף אַתְּ מִלְיוֹנֵי תְּקִיעוֹת הַשּׁוֹפָר שֶׁנִּשְׁמָעוּ בְּבֵתֵי הַכְּנֶסֶת וְגַם מֵחוּצָה לָהֶם,
בְּכָל רַחְבֵּי הָעוֹלָם,

וְאַתְּ כָּל הַמַּחְשְׁבוֹת הַטּוֹבוֹת שֶׁעָלוּ בְּעַם יִשְׂרָאֵל עִם כָּל קוֹלוֹת הַשּׁוֹפָר,

קְבֵל אַתְּ תְּעֻנֵּיּוֹת עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּיּוֹם הַקָּדוֹשׁ, יוֹם הַכַּפּוּרִים, בְּעָרִים, בְּיִשׁוּבֵים
וּבְקִבּוּצִים,

קח אַתְּ מִלְיוֹנֵי הַרְצוֹנוֹת הַטּוֹבִים שֶׁהִתְגַּלוּ בְּשַׁעַת תְּפִלַּת הַנְּעִילָה,

קח אַתְּ כָּל הַמַּאֲמָצִים לְהַשְׁגַּת אַרְבַּעַת הַמִּינִים וְלִבְנֵי־הַסִּכּוֹת,

קח אַתְּ מַעֲשֵׂי יְדֵיהֶם שֶׁל יְלָדִים שֶׁהִכִּינוּ בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְהִתְרַגְּשׁוֹת קִשׁוּטִים לְפָאֵר
אַתְּ הַסִּכָּה,

קח אַתְּ הַנְּסִיוֹנוֹת לְשִׂמְחָה אֲצִל כָּל אֵלֶּה הַמִּצְפִּים – אֲצִל הַרְנוּקִים וְהַרְנוּקוֹת,
הַגְּרוּשִׁים וְהַגְּרוּשׁוֹת, הָאֵלְמָנִים וְהָאֵלְמָנוֹת, אֲצִל כָּל אֵלֶּה שֶׁנִּשְׁכַּחְתָּ לָהֶם כֶּסֶף
רִיק בְּסִכָּה אוֹ בַּלֵּב, וּבְכָל זֶאת שֶׁמָּחוּ בְּשִׂמְחַת הַחַג,

קח אַתְּ כָּל הַכְּנֶסֶת הָאוֹרְחִים, הָאֵרֶת הַפְּנִים וְאֵהֶבֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמַהְלָךְ הַחֲגִים,

קח אַתְּ כָּל הַכְּבִיסוֹת וְהַבְּשׂוּלִים, הַעֲמִידָה בַּפְּקָקִים, הַכְּתָפִים הַכּוֹאֲבוֹת שֶׁל
הוֹרִים שֶׁהִרְקִיבוּ עֲלֵיהֶם יְלָדִים, הַנְּסִיוֹן הַמַּתִּישׁ לְאַרְגּוֹ מִפְּגַשׁ בְּנֵי דוֹדִים בְּזִמּוֹ
מִשְׁפָּחָתָנוּ,

קח אַתְּ מִלְיוֹנֵי זִגְזוּגוֹת הַנְּעִלִים שֶׁרָקְדוּ בְּשִׂמְחָה עִם הַתּוֹרָה בְּהַקְפּוֹת שֶׁל שִׂמְחַת
תּוֹרָה,

קח אַתְּ הַצְּבִיטָה בַּלֵּב אֲצִל כָּל מִשְׁפּוּחוֹת אֲנָשֵׁי כּוֹחוֹת הַבִּטְחוֹן, כּוֹחוֹת הַרְפוּאָה
וְשָׂאֵר שְׁלִיחֵי הַצְּבוּר שֶׁלֹּא חָגְגוּ עִם הַמִּשְׁפָּחָה כְּדֵי שֶׁאֲנַחְנוּ כֹּן נוּכַל לְחַגֵּג,

וְחוּ לְנוּ שְׁנַת בְּרִיאוֹת, שְׁלוֹם, פְּרֻסָּה, שְׂמֵחָה וְהַצְּלָחָה.”



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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Olim Giving Back to Israel

Daniel and Tzerel Goldschmiedt

My wife Tzerel and I recently moved to Israel, beginning a new chapter. Remarkably, both Israel and I celebrated our 75th birthdays. Our Jewish identity is fundamental, and Israel has deeply influenced us. Born in December 1947 in Queens, I felt a bond with Israel from childhood. I recall my 1966 trip when parts of Jerusalem were still unreachable, seeing it through binoculars.

As an architect, I later revisited for a conference, diving deeper into Jewish history. Thanks to an uncle's contact, I stood on the Temple Mount's southern steps during an excavation. After marrying Tzerel in 1971, we raised three children in Queens, always fostering a bond with Israel. We celebrated milestones, visited our kids studying in Israel, and stayed passionate about Zionism. With our daughter Dena relocating to Israel, we bought a nearby apartment. Soon, our daughter Aura moved as well, while our son Eli settled on Long Island. Our move to Israel was motivated by a bond with the nation and wanting proximity to family. Following the loss of our last parent, we made the move, settling in with assistance from Nefesh B'Nefesh. Now, I aim to achieve a personal aspiration. Passionate about calligraphy and having crafted *ketubot*, I intend to write my *megillah*, with the parchment ready on my desk for the upcoming Purim.

Even though I grew up in New York, my bond with Israel never waned. Living here now, I cherish the chance to be part of this extraordinary nation.



Kalman and Avital Weber

Our *Aliyah* journey has been a dream long discussed during Shabbat meals. With *kibbutz galuyot* unfolding and family relocating to Israel, we made the leap. Adapting meant understanding the banking, healthcare systems, and embracing apps like WhatsApp. Working remotely in Eastern Standard Time was another hurdle.

Yet, living in Israel has been fulfilling, enveloped by family and friends. Moments like a father in *shul* sharing his newborn with another man during *birkat kohanim* embody the heartwarming community here. The *Aliyah* process was smooth, wrapping up essential tasks within two weeks with Nefesh B'Nefesh's help. We secured our *teudat oleh*, *teudat zehut*, *kupat cholim*, bank account, *sal klita*, and driver's license conversion. The IDF enlistment and our F-15 await!

A poignant memory is descending on the plane, draped in *tallit* and *tefillin*, realizing our prayers came true. Walking on Teyelet Shlomo in Efrat felt surreal, like living a dream. Despite soaking in so much, there's still more to explore in Israel. We strive to deepen our bond with this land and its people amidst political and social challenges. Grateful for our journey, we eagerly anticipate making more memories here.



A Sukkot Meeting that Changed History

*When Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever met
Baron Edmond de Rothschild*

Odelia Glausiusz

From 1881 to 1882, pogroms raged through the Russian empire. Thousands of Jewish homes were destroyed, families were reduced to poverty and large numbers of men, women and children were badly injured. Exhausted from his efforts to help the tens of thousands of Jewish refugees who fled across the Russian border to Galicia, a weary, venerable rabbi arrived at Baron Edmund de Rothschild's magnificent Paris home. He gazed up at the imposing doors of Rothschild's residence and steeled himself to act.

Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever was born in 1824 in a village near Vilna, the intellectual center of Lithuanian Jews. A brilliant

student, he was ordained a rabbi at the age of eighteen, although he initially refused to practice this calling and worked as a flax merchant for five years. Eventually, he became rabbi of Radom in Poland, and was later elected to the more auspicious post of Bialystok. Moved to practical Zionist labor by the pogroms of 1881, he was instrumental in organizing the then-nascent *Chibbat Zion* movement in Warsaw – one of only a handful of rabbis involved in a movement dominated by secularists. Mohilever's involvement in this movement ran deeper than a need to find a safe haven for Jews. He wrote that the act of buying land in Israel “is considered by our sages to gain for the individual a share in the

world to come and the commandment to buy land even overrides a *shevut* (a form of rabbinic prohibition) on Shabbat.” In his eyes, resettling the land of Israel was not only needed to provide a safe haven for Jews, but a religious imperative. It was in this spirit that he made the journey to Baron Rothschild's door during Sukkot of 1882.

Rothschild was the third son of James Mayer de Rothschild, head of the Rothschild family branch in France. As a young adult, Edmond de Rothschild had a keen interest in subjects of the humanities and the arts. He was a member of the French Académie des Beaux-Arts and moved among intellectual circles. An art



aficionado, he assembled an important collection of drawings and engravings, eventually bequeathing it to the Louvre. Rabbi Mohilever's visit would convince Rothschild to refocus his considerable energy and passion to the cause of the Jewish people.

Rabbi Mohilever describes being daunted by Rothschild's courteous but cool demeanor. "For a brief moment," he wrote, "I was flabbergasted, but then I suddenly reminded myself of the great purpose for which I had come, and I ignored my weaknesses and fragile health." He pulled himself together, and said:

For years I was troubled by this vexing question: Why was Moses, of all people, chosen to lead the Jewish people out of Egypt when he suffered from such a debilitating speech impediment? As a political leader and representative, he had to speak to the king and to other government officials. The most basic requirement of a spokesperson is to be a good communicator. Exactly what Moses was not!

...I was perplexed by this question, but only [now], during my trip to see you do I - as an emissary performing a mitzvah - suddenly realize the answer. Moses was chosen to be not only the political leader of the Jewish people, but the giver of the Torah. G-d chose him not only for the exodus from Egypt, but to bring the Jews to Mount Sinai to receive the Torah. Had Moses been charismatic and eloquent, knowing how to influence people, the cynics would have claimed that the Torah had come not from G-d but from him, because he knew how to seize the moment and mesmerize people into believing. But if the Jews accepted the Torah from a stutterer, it would prove that G-d spoke through Moses - that he was the messenger, not the sender.

My lord Baron, before this very table come representatives of many countries - some quite powerful, with power of attorney on behalf of great financial institutions. They come with different proposals: about building railroads or canals, or colonizing desolate lands. They come armed with a wealth of information regarding the topic they want to discuss. With their eloquence, they can impress you, explaining why their projects would be so profitable to you and beneficial for mankind.

I also come to you with a proposal from my people, a proposal so important that the spirit of our nation depends on it - the settling of the Land of Israel. But I'm a man of heavy tongue and have great difficulty communicating to you how rewarding this project will be for you and for our people. If you accept my proposal and heed your people's request to revive this barren land, it is only because the lot of this ailing and oppressed nation has touched your



Rishon LeZion in the 1880s (PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)

heart. But if you dismiss my words and send me away empty-handed, I won't regret my difficult journey with all its aches and pains - because I have fulfilled the obligation placed upon me. I've carried out my mission.

Rabbi Mohilever's sincere words did indeed touch the Baron's heart. Together with Yechiel Brill, the editor and publisher of the Hebrew newspaper *HaLevanon*, Mohilever had developed a plan to set up an agricultural colony in *Eretz Yisrael*. This land was purchased with the help of a loan from the Baron. The settlement became Rishon LeZion, and Rothschild would go on to hire an agronomist to consult with the settlers, give the colony 30,000 German franks in aid (while requesting that they not announce his name publicly) and promise to extend additional support on the condition that they absorb 10-15 more families into the colony. During the years 1883-1889, Baron de Rothschild covered all the expenses of Rishon LeZion, Zichron Ya'akov, Rosh Pina and Ekron, and donated over 5 million pounds for other settlements. He paid to drain mosquito-filled swamps and for clinics to care for malaria victims. In 1924, he established the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association (PICA) which acquired more than 125,000 acres of land in Israel.

Rothschild also established synagogues and schools that encouraged the use of Hebrew. "I have heard many French poems in France," he said. "Here [in the Land of Israel] I will be delighted to hear Hebrew poetry." Rabbi Mohilever's stress on the importance of this mission to 'the spirit of our nation' made a deep impression on Rothschild. On one visit to Israel, he urged the members of Zichron Ya'akov not only to work diligently in developing the land,

but also to "observe the principles of our faith, which is good and beautiful, and the ethics of Judaism, and our language. Be loyal sons of our religion and our land so that you will be worthy of dwelling in our ancestral country." He understood it was not money and practical labor alone that would revive a dormant land, but the power of an idea. He once commented, "The Zionists could not have done what they did without my help... but I grew to understand that the Zionist idea worked in its spirit in the Land of Israel perhaps more than my money did." Rabbi Mohilever's simple but powerful message penetrated Baron Rothschild's heart. His humble words that afternoon in Paris would go on to not only foster the physical development of the land, but to nourish its spiritual core.



Odelia Gladiusz
recently moved to Jerusalem
where she works as a freelance
writer and content curator.

Sukkot Funny Fill-In

1. Gather your friends and family.
2. Without showing them the page, ask for words that match the parts of speech for each blank.
3. Fill in the blanks using their words.
4. Read the story. Be ready to laugh as it'll probably be silly!

IT WAS ALMOST TIME FOR SUKKOT. HALLEL AND SHAMMAI WERE FEELING RATHER _____ adjective

"ARE YOU THINKING WHAT I'M THINKING?" HALLEL ASKED HER BROTHER.

"THAT WE SHOULD _____ verb ACROSS _____ name of place AND EAT _____ number _____ food plural?!" SHAMMAI REPLIED.

"NO, SILLY," HALLEL SAID BACK. "LET'S GO ON A SUKKOT TIME MACHINE ADVENTURE!"

"GREAT IDEA," SHAMMAI AGREED (THOUGH HE SECRETLY KNEW HIS IDEA WAS WAY _____ adjective ending in -er).

SO THEY BOARDED THEIR _____ adjective TIME MACHINE WHICH HAPPENED TO BE SHAPED LIKE A/N _____ object IN HONOR OF SUKKOT. SHAMMAI SET THE LOCATION FOR _____ name of place in Israel AND HALLEL SET THE DATE FOR _____ number _____ month OF THE YEAR _____ 4 digits. THEY WERE SO _____ adjective FOR THEIR ADVENTURE! TOGETHER, THEY PRESSED THE _____ color BUTTON, AND WERE OFF THROUGH TIME!

IN THE BLINK OF A/N _____ body part, THE TIME MACHINE LANDED. HALLEL _____ adverb ending in -ly OPENED THE DOOR AND, TOGETHER, SHE STEPPED OUTSIDE WITH SHAMMAI. THEY COULDN'T BELIEVE THEIR _____ body part plural! THEY WERE SURROUNDED BY _____ adjective PEOPLE WHO LOOKED JUST LIKE _____ 1 of the Ushpizin. THEY WERE ALL BUSY BUILDING WHAT LOOKED LIKE _____ adjective SUKKOT! INSTEAD OF WALLS, THEY WERE USING STACKS OF _____ clothing plural. FOR THE SCHACH ROOF, THEY WERE USING _____ type of plant plural AND _____ 1 of the 4 species plural. AS SOON AS THEY SPOTTED HALLEL AND SHAMMAI, THEY PAUSED THEIR WORK AND GREETED THEM BY PLAYING _____ instrument plural AND _____ instrument plural. THEY PLACED _____ color FLOWERS ON HALLEL'S _____ part of the face AND SHAMMAI'S _____ another part of the face. IT WAS ABSOLUTELY _____ adjective to describe Sukkot! ALL OF THE CHILDREN THERE KEPT _____ verb ending in -ing AND OFFERING THEIR NEW FRIENDS _____ favorite snack. HALLEL AND SHAMMAI USED _____ school supply plural AND _____ object found in a science lab plural TO HELP THEIR NEW FRIENDS FINISH BUILDING THE SUKKOT. WHEN ALL OF THE SUKKOT WERE COMPLETE, THE LEADER OF THE GROUP HANDED SHAMMAI THE SPECIAL _____ noun TO HANG UP IN THE MAIN SUKKAH.

"WOW," EVERYONE EXCLAIMED, "THAT LOOKS ABSOLUTELY _____ adjective."

AS THE SUN BEGAN TO _____ verb IT WAS FINALLY TIME FOR HALLEL AND SHAMMAI TO HEAD BACK TO THEIR TIME. THEY THANKED THEIR NEW FRIENDS AND WISHED THEM A/N _____ adjective SUKKOT. ONCE AGAIN, THEY BOARDED THE TIME MACHINE (WHICH HAD NOW MORPHED INTO A NEW SHAPE - A/N _____ toy!) AND SET THE CONTROL PAD FOR THEIR OWN PLACE AND TIME. TOGETHER THEY PRESSED THE _____ color BUTTON AND BLASTED HOME.

"I DON'T THINK WE'LL EVER BE ABLE TO HAVE A SUKKOT MORE FUN THAN THIS ONE," HALLEL SAID TO HER BROTHER.

"I HAVE AN IDEA FOR AN EVEN BETTER SUKKOT," SHAMMAI REPLIED.

"YEAH?" HALLEL WONDERED. "WHAT IS IT?"

"TO SPEND IT WITH THE _____ your last name FAMILY!"

Chag Sameach!

Yael Harris Resnick



CREATE AN AVATAR OF YOURSELF AND/OR A SUKKAH GUEST IN THE STYLE OF HALLEL AND SHAMMAI!

Sukkot and Simchat Avatorah

1. With crayons or markers color in hair, clothing and objects in your own style! You can use extra paper to draw original designs!
2. Use scissors to cut out your avatar, clothing and objects.
3. Glue or tape items together and bring your new avatar into your sukkah!



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