

את שיבת ציון היינו כחולמים

Danny Myers Yom Haazmaut 5781



1. Introduction-The Rav on Israel (1958) Dr. Arnold Lustiger

The prayer recited after having partaken of a meal of bread, Birkat Hamazon, is an intricate series of four blessings. In Birkat Hamazon, we thank God for the food, for the land, and for the future rebuilding of Jerusalem, and we conclude with a blessing of gratitude. In the prayer for the land, mention is made of God's covenant of circumcision and the giving of the Torah. A unique aspect of the recitation of Birkat Hamazon is the obligation of Zimun, in which a designated leader introduces responsive statements of blessing to others who have eaten with him. The wording of the responsive statements varies depending on whether the number of participants is three or ten; the Mishnah in Berakhot goes further, detailing a series of variant wordings for one hundred, one thousand, or ten thousand participants, respectively. In contrast, after eating grapes, pomegranates, or figs, the fruits for which the Land of Israel is praised, only one much shorter blessing, the Berakhah Me'ein Shalosh, is recited. Although the themes of land and Jerusalem are also contained in the Berakhah Me'ein Shalosh, they appear in greatly abbreviated form. Allusions to circumcision and the giving of the Torah are entirely absent. The obligation for Zimun, the synchronicity associated with Birkat Hamazon, is also absent in the Berakhah Me'ein Shalosh.

a. Ezra-Man's Partnership with God

The halakhic reason for the difference between the blessings recited after the consumption of a meal consisting of bread on one hand and fruit on the other is clearly laid out in the Talmud. The Biblical prescription of "You will eat and you will be satisfied, and you will bless" (Deuteronomy 8:10) applies only to bread and not to other foods.

In the forming of fruit, man's participation is minimal. The fruit tree grows by itself, blossoms by itself, the fruit ripens by itself, and fruit can even fall off the tree unaided. All man has to do is pick up the fruit and eat it. Although he can facilitate the process by irrigating the tree, or by picking the fruit, man's involvement in the preparation of the fruit is still minimal. God provides this food in its complete and final form. There is no fundamental difference between the Manna that fell from heaven during the Israelites' forty-year sojourn in the desert, and fruit that appears on a tree. The same miracle occurs. Bread, in contrast, does not grow on trees. While fruit trees are perennial, to make bread one must first plant wheat. Then there are a host of other tasks involved in making a loaf of bread: cutting the wheat, winnowing, threshing, grinding, kneading, and baking. Because man is so integral to the process of making bread, he can be considered a partner with God in this enterprise.

The relative roles of God and man in the creation of fruit on one hand and bread on the other parallel two types of Divine intervention: Yeshuah (salvation) and Ezra (help). In Yeshuah, man plays no role; God acts alone.

In Ezra, on the other hand, man takes the initiative and Hashem becomes a partner in the enterprise. Colloquially, man can request Ezra of his fellow man, but cannot request Yeshuah, since the latter is an expression of intervention exclusively reserved for God. The creation of fruit is a miracle of Yeshuah - the fruit grows without man's participation. Bread, on the other hand, fits into the category of Ezra. The Creator helps man through the growth of wheat, but man must

perform those tasks associated with the transformation of God's creation into bread.

Although the Psalmist asserts: "If God will not build a house, the builder toils in vain, if God will not guard the city, in vain is the watchman's effort." (Psalms 127:1) there is clearly a

role for the builder and the watchman. Hashem's assistance to man in his efforts constitutes Ezrah.

Our gratitude is increased in the case of Ezrah, because we must bless God for the privilege of allowing us to be His partner.

This same idea underlies an interesting Halakhic/historical paradox. Jews today are prohibited from walking on Mount Moriah (D.M. The AZARA) upon which the Temple stood.

No power in the world can neutralize the holiness of this spot. Yet, there is no prohibition to climb Mount Sinai, upon which the Torah was given. Mount Sinai maintains no residual holiness. Why is there a difference in halakhic status between the two mountains? The answer is that Israel did not participate in the giving of the Torah. They slept on the night of Shavuot and Moses had to coax the people out of their tents to receive the Torah. Bnei Yisrael themselves did nothing to contribute to this seminal event. As a result, despite being the site of the greatest Divine revelation in human history, none of Mount Sinai's holiness endures. As soon as the revelation was over, as soon as His Presence departed, the holiness of the mountain vanished as well. The history at Mount Moriah was different. Hundreds of years prior to God resting His Presence there, our forefather Abraham prepared an altar on that mountain and placed his son Isaac upon it as a sacrifice. Abraham thus became a partner in the endowment of holiness permeating the Temple Mount. The role of man in the endowment of holiness is a central theme in Halakhah. It is Knesset Yisrael who sanctifies the festivals through the establishment of the new month. Whether sanctity is vested in physical matter or in time, we find few instances where man is not the active participant in the establishment of holiness.

b. Genuine Holiness

But in a sense this explanation begs the original question. Why are man's actions, and not God's, paramount in the establishment of holiness? The answer is that in the world holiness has one source: sacrifice. Holiness and sacrifice, both literally and figuratively, are fundamentally the same concept.

Holiness can only be created through self-sacrifice, pain, effort, and exertion. If a person does not anticipate and struggle, holiness cannot come into being. God's help, Ezrah, asserts itself only after man waits with anticipation and uncertainty for it to arrive. God desires the element of sacrifice in this act of waiting and His response is therefor not immediate.

Moses ascended Mount Sinai to receive the second set of tablets on Rosh Chodesh Elul and for many days he entreated God to forgive Israel. During this period, Moses was beset with uncertainty: Maybe I will be able to atone for Israel's sin. (Exodus 32:30). Moses was distressed that perhaps he would be incapable of reversing Hashem's terrible decree. He worried that perhaps his efforts would be insufficient to appease God and save the nation. Only after forty long days on Mount Sinai, on the day of Yom Kippur, did God finally reveal Himself. Moses' struggle sanctified both himself and Yom Kippur for all generations to come.

c. Suffering and Medinat Yisrael

Tonight, as we are on the eve of the 10th year of the establishment of the State of Israel, I would like to make a reckoning. One can view the State of Israel from two standpoints. One can view the State from an external standpoint, from a political-economic perspective, the perspective of the State Department and the British Foreign Office. But I do not wish to deal with this aspect tonight. This is a solemn moment. I wish to view the State of Israel from an internal standpoint.

That the existence of the State of Israel is a miracle is beyond doubt. Yet, at the same time, it is a miracle that came at great cost. At Israel's very inception, on the first night of the State of Israel's existence, bombs were dropped on Tel Aviv. Subsequently, in the ten years since it had come into being, the relationship of the State of Israel to world Jewry was like the relationship of a mother to her only son: saturated with trembling, fear, and insecurity. Insecurity because one is never sure if a passenger bus will be attacked. One is never certain if a small fishing vessel in the Gulf of Aqaba will not be fired upon. A mother whose son is stationed only a few miles from her home is never sure if he will not become the next victim of Arab snipers. Why is the suffering that has accompanied the entire history of the State of Israel necessary? Because the State of Israel involves holiness, and holiness only exists if man, through sacrifice, becomes a partner with God. The paradigm of this partnership is the mitzvah of circumcision, to which the prophet refers: "through your blood shall you live." (Ezekiel 16:6) The blood and the suffering allow us to merit the continued existence of Medinat Yisrael. We experience this uncertain period in our history because our very insecurity is a sign that Hashem indeed desires the State of Israel. If He did not, the birth and the subsequent building of the State would have proceeded smoothly. Jewish history is on a zig-zag trajectory. Abraham was repeatedly promised a child by God, and yet had to wait many long years Isaac's birth, ultimately to be commanded to sacrifice him.

d. The Mitzvah of Living in Israel

To assert that the Land of Israel is central to Halakhah is as obvious as stating that the Torah contains 613 commandments. Even if one were to maintain Maimonides' opinion, that Yishuv Haaretz is not one of the 613 Mitzvot, this does not render it less important. For example, Nachmanides does not count the first commandment "I am the Lord your God Who took you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage" as one of the 613 commandments, but he would never deny that it constitutes a central tenet of Judaism. Omission of a tenet from the list of Mitzvot does not imply anything regarding its centrality to Judaism. I have read opinions that living outside Israel was a better option for Orthodox Jews than living in Israel, because while Israel was allegedly rife with heretics, outside Israel one could create insular ghettos and eliminate such outside influences.

However, with all the ghettos that Jews have created, from Brooklyn to Johannesburg to Gateshead, none was holier than the Levite camp during the Israelites' forty-year desert sojourn, the camp where Moses himself lived. Yet, despite the sanctity of this encampment, Moses, the most preeminent of prophets, begged God: Please allow me to pass and see the Land, the good mountain, and Lebanon. (Deuteronomy 3:25) Moses knew that even the holiness of the Levite camp itself did not approach that of the Land of Israel. Furthermore, one cannot naively argue that the mitzvah of living in Israel can somehow be separated from the exercise of political sovereignty there. Nachmanides explicitly asserts that both aspects are integral to the mitzvah: "that we are commanded to inherit the land that God gave to our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that we should not leave it in the hands of the

nations, or leave it desolate." The Biblical phrase from which the mitzvah is derived "And you shall inherit the land and settle in it" (Numbers 33:53), contains dual imperatives; 'settle' means colonization of the land, while 'inherit' means governing and controlling the land. The Mitzvah of settling the land is not limited to colonization. It requires conquering and governing it as well- maintaining political power and sovereignty. Both aspects of the mitzvah are fulfilled through the State of Israel. However, even if one were to deny a political aspect to the Mitzvah and maintain that the Mitzvah only refers to colonization, today this distinction is entirely moot. Although in Nachmanides' time it may have been feasible to settle in the Land of Israel without conquering it, none of the contenders for sovereignty of the Land, whether Nasser or the British government, would allow such colonization of Israel by the Jews. If the Jews did not exercise political power in the Land of Israel, they could not settle there either.

e. The Lonely Man of Faith[2]:

The conquest of disease is the sacred duty ... and he must not shirk it ... the Halakhah remained steadfast in its loyalty to scientific medicine. It has never ceased to emphasize the duty of the sick person to consult a competent physician. The statement quoted in both the Tur and Karo's Shulchan Aruch שופך זה הרי עצמו מונע ואם

And if he refrains [from consulting a physician], it is as if he shed his own blood," which can be traced indirectly to a Talmudic passage, is a cornerstone of Halakhic thinking. Vide Yoma 82a, 82b, 83a; Kiddushin 82a; Rashi sub טוב ;Bava Kamma 85a, Tosafot sub שניתנה ; Tur Yoreh Deah 336; Bayit- Chadash sub תניא .See also Pesachim 56a, Rashi and Maimonides' Commentary.

The doctrine of faith in God's charity בטחון is not to be equated with the folly of the mystical doctrine of quietism, which in its extreme form exempts man from his duty of attending to his own needs and lets him wait in "holy" idleness and indifference for God's intervention. This kind of repose is wholly contrary to the repose which the Halakhah recommends: the one which follows human effort and remedial action. Man must first use his own skill and try to help himself as much as possible. Then, and only then, man may find repose and quietude in God and be confident that his effort and action will be crowned with success. The initiative, says the Halakhah, belongs to man; the successful realization, to God.

Certainly, "except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it," but if those who labor stop building, there will be no house. The Lord wants man to undertake the task which He, in His infinite grace, completes.

f. We must embrace the EZRA/partnership with God in ALL areas!! We WERE dreamers, now we must be DOERS!!! (This is one approach regarding Hishtadlut & Bitachon) However, there is a tendency towards the Yeshua approach:

-Yaakov left Israel and settled in Egypt.

-B'nai Yisrael pleaded with Moshe to return to Egypt.

-10 spies and the majority of B'nai Yisrael rejected Israel, choosing instead to remain in the desert.

-B'nai Yisrael remained content with the Mishkan-without a Mikdash-for 5 centuries.

-We were very comfortable in Bavel, and after only 70 years in exile after the first

Churban, only 42,000 Jews (mostly non-observant) returned to Israel to build the 2nd mikdash.

-Many of us were/are comfortable in exile after the Roman conquest, and have built-and continue to build- beautiful and permanent-looking communities there for 2,000 years, without any real plans to return Home.

- After conquering Jerusalem and the Har Habyit almost 2,000 years after losing it, we either passively stay away, actively demand of others to avoid the site, or actually gave it away to our sworn enemies!!!

Tragically, the embracement of the passive approach can even be a factor in causing many of our holy brothers to be blind when it comes to recognizing the Redemption unfolding in front of our eyes. But not all:

Three months after the establishment of Medinat Yisrael, Rav Dessler wrote that he who does not see the dramatic change and the complete reversal of the fate of the Jewish people, "min hakatzeh al Hakatzeh, "from one extreme of six million slaughtered to the other extreme of the settling of our people in their own medina in our Holy Land" is blind. "Woe to one who will come to the Day of Judgment still blind and not having been able to see something so real." (Michtav M'Eliyahu, Volume 3, page 352)

g. Rav Dessler wrote this at a time that the infant state was locked in a struggle for its very existence. No one then could predict the outcome, yet he rejoiced. V'techezna Ainainu-the ability to see the Redemption-is based on having the Ezra philosophy.

Jews have 2 memorial days: Yom Hazikaron to remind us of the cost of having Israel Yom Hashoah to remind us of the cost of not.

h. VacciNation-The Israeli spirit at its best!!!

Israel's critical boost was its offer to share the clinical data from the rollout of the vaccine. We were guaranteed a supply, and the world got to watch the largest medical trial in history.

Israel has evolved from Startup Nation to VacciNation, leading the world with a turbocharged coronavirus vaccine rollout that has administered more jabs per capita than any other country in the world.

The speed of the vaccination program is directly connected to Israel's emergence as a high-tech superpower. Israel has one of the best organized and most efficient health systems in the world, honed through our sad experience of national emergencies, buttressed by first-class medical research and training institutions. But Israel's critical boost was its offer to share the clinical data from the rollout of the vaccine. We were guaranteed a supply, and the world got to watch the largest medical trial in history.

We were able to do this because Israel's health system has been organized for decades to streamline the central collection of real-time clinical information from all its citizens, creating one of the world's deepest, richest and most valuable medical data sets.

- i. The system, which records the full and permanent medical history of every citizen from cradle to grave, was originally devised to provide excellent patient care. In 2018, the Israeli government decided that this unique databank – nine million records of people of all ages and multiple ethnicities – could be anonymized and released for research. Using big data and artificial intelligence, Israel overnight became a world center for

the development of digital, personalized medicine, training machine learning algorithms on Israel's huge dataset.

When the pandemic struck, officials realized that Israel was in a unique position to simply add the vaccination and its results to the patient fields in the databank, providing the world with an instant snapshot of the effects of the vaccine on a large and varied population, backed by a complete medical record of each recipient.

With more than 5 million jabs delivered, including 83 percent of over-60s, and some 200,000 people being added to the list each day, early results appear to confirm the jab is working, with an average of 92 percent efficacy and less than 0.3 percent reporting side effects – the first field results outside Pfizer's own clinical trials. Based on its rich patient records, Israel will continue to track responses to the vaccine, producing real-time data on the long-term efficacy of the vaccine and the effects of the virus itself.

With luck, the Israeli experience will help scientists to develop even more effective vaccines and other treatments to battle Covid-19. Israelis make unlikely guinea-pigs, but I don't know of anyone here who isn't delighted that we are able to provide the world with this much-needed live experiment for the benefit of all.

j. We also still do not know the long-term effects of the virus itself. "Long Covid," reported by many who survived the initial disease, may be emerging as a chronic condition whose ultimate impact remains a mystery. Nor are we sure whether people who were successfully vaccinated will not infect others.

But we Israelis could not stand still. Even without knowing the end result of the vaccinations, or waiting the usual years to prove its efficacy and long-term safety, we had to embark on this journey even when its ultimate destination remains unclear. "It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you at liberty to neglect it," Rabbi Tarfon, a revered Jewish sage, teaches us in *The Ethics of the Fathers*.

This is how the Israeli health dataset began. Years before big data and artificial intelligence were developed, it seemed like a good idea to begin the task of collecting patient health records. We had no idea we were amassing data that would become more precious than oil, helping to fuel a multi-billion-dollar digital health industry and companies like Zebra Medical, Diagnostic Robotics, MeMed and Sight Diagnostics.

Decades later, that visionary decision has helped lay the foundations for a mass vaccine experiment that could benefit the entire global population.

k. Even as Israel surged to the top of the global vaccination table, the Israeli traits of rule-breaking and chutzpa were on full display. From December 21, every Israeli over the age of 60 could get the jab. I got mine the first day by simply going on line and making an appointment. But from day one it was clear that there would be shots left over that could not be returned to the sub-zero temperature required to store them. WhatsApp and social media groups sprang up, prompting anyone who wished to turn up at the vaccination centers in the evening, without an appointment, to use up the leftovers. Unlike other countries, where these excess batches were discarded, Israel's tight sense of community and improvisation created an instant response. Thousands flocked to the centers to finish off the leftovers so they would not be wasted.

Just this week, the government extended the vaccination program to everyone aged 16 and up.

We still do not know what will happen come the spring when we have finished vaccinating all our citizens, but our national experience of risk-taking and moving fast to fix things leads us to believe that we will be better off having done it – and more

able to help others.

I. In building this small and still developing country, Israelis have often chosen velocity over verification. Faced with multiple dangers over the decades, we prefer to move than be marooned.

In building this small and still developing country, Israelis have often chosen velocity over verification. Faced with multiple dangers over the decades, we prefer to move than be marooned. Doubtless we will make mistakes, but like most startups we and others will learn from those mistakes, which will be as important in building the global response to the next pandemic as our successes

This is the entrepreneurial mentality that created the Startup Nation and has now transformed us into the VacciNation. Sometimes, in choosing what seems like the right direction, you must be prepared to make multiple course corrections and learn along the way. Sometimes you cannot plan perfectly. You just have to move and learn as you go.

Like many startups, the path ahead is not entirely clear and we are not yet sure of our exit, but in choosing action over inaction we hope we are on the right track. Whatever happens, the whole world will benefit from our journey.

2. Looking back, looking ahead

1. Talmud Torah

נתונים חדשים: שיא של כל הזמנים במספר האברכים ותלמידי הישיבות :

מספר תלמידי הישיבות ואברכי הכוללים מגיע לשיא של כל הזמנים: לאחר עשור של עליות, ירידות ושינויי מגמות, בהשפעת מדיניות משתנה של הממשלה, זינק בשנים האחרונות מספרם של לומדי התורה הרשומים בישראל, ועמד בשנת 2117 על 451,124 - הגבוה ביותר בתולדות המדינה.

2. Higher education

Higher education plays a pivotal role in the economic and social development of the country. Almost a quarter of a century before the state came into being, the Technion - Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa was opened (1924) to train engineers and architects and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem was founded (1925) as a center of higher learning for youth in the Land of Israel and to attract Jewish students and scholars from abroad. When Israel attained independence (1948), enrollment at the two universities totaled about 1,600. In 2009-2010 some 280,000 students attended the country's institutions of higher learning. Of these, 38 percent attend universities and 41 percent are enrolled in colleges, while 21 percent participate in courses through the Open University

3. "Nobel Prize" for Math again. For the second year in a row, (see [here](#) for last year) an Israeli has won a share of the Norwegian Academy of Science's Abel Prize - the math equivalent of a Nobel Prize. Israel's Avi Wigderson won the 2021 prize for contributions to theoretical computer science and discrete mathematics.

4. ZAHAL

a) IDF acquiring first-of-its-kind GPS and laser-guided mortar

The new munition "will revolutionize ground warfare and equip battalions with organic, accurate and effective firepower," says a defense official. The Israel Defense Forces will soon receive its first-ever mortar munition guided by GPS and by laser, representing a new level of accurate firepower that units will be able to deploy in the

battlefield.

The system, called "Iron Sting," is made by Elbit. The Israeli Defense Ministry described the mortar as a "network precision fire system." Iron Sting can hit targets with a very high degree of accuracy and reduce the risk of collateral damage, particularly in urban warfare settings. The announcement of the acquisition came after a series of trials of the new weapon was held in southern Israel, and Iron Sting is now entering a serial production phase for the IDF. Elbit company sources explained that the mortar is able to automatically load data on the target from a computer terminal onboard the vehicle that hosts the mortar launcher.

Israel deploys first-of-its-kind laser system to Gaza border to fight incendiary balloons The "Lahav Or" (Light Blade) laser system, designed to intercept airborne incendiary threats launched from the Gaza Strip, is deployed by the Border Police for the first time on Tuesday.



The Light Blade system is now deployed to the Gaza border

Israel's "Lahav Or" (Light Blade) laser system, designed to intercept airborne incendiary threats launched from the Gaza Strip, was deployed operationally by the Border Police for the first time on Tuesday. Said to be the first defense system of its kind in the world, the Light Blade system will target incendiary balloons and kites, which have started countless fires in the southern border vicinity communities in recent years, as well as drones.

The past week has seen a rapid increase in incidents in which Gaza-based terrorists send explosives-laden balloons flying over the border. On Tuesday alone, incendiary objects launched from Gaza ignited 60 brush fires across southern

Israel. The system resembles the Iron Dome missile defense system in its technology. Light Blade was developed by three civilian engineers working with Ben-Gurion University researchers and the technology branches of the Israel Police and IDF. The project was led by Border Police Commissioner Maj. Gen. Yaakov

Shabtai. According to available details, the laser is capable of engaging targets with an effective range of 2 kilometers (1.2 miles), day or night.

b. Once the system locks onto its target it fires a unique laser beam at it. If the target is a balloon or a kite, it incinerates it midair. If the target is a drone, the laser burns parts of it until it crashes. Shabtai said last year upon the system's initial unveiling that Light Blade "provides a near conclusive response to everything relating to balloons and kites. The flow of humanitarian aid and petroleum fuels into the Strip will remain unchanged, Gantz's office stressed." Such incidents will first and foremost hurt the residents of the Gaza Strip and the efforts to improve its economic state for the welfare of the Palestinian people. Israel and the IDF will react forcibly against any infringement on our sovereignty and any harm that comes to Israeli civilians

c. New Iron Dome upgrade latest step in Mideast arms race

Upgrades include the ability to knock out threats at higher and lower altitudes, and to strike larger numbers of incoming rockets—a key capability in light of intentions by terror armies to “saturate” Israel’s air defenses. (March 30, 2021 / JNS) The announcement by the Israeli Defense Ministry earlier this month of successful trials of an upgraded version of the Iron Dome air-defense system represents the latest step in a lengthy arms race.

The current upgrade program has seen live-fire trials every few months, designed to test out how the improvements work in practice. This is the third installment of the current initiative to boost Iron Dome’s performance.

The work is being led by Rafael, Iron Dome’s prime contractor, and the Israel Missile Defense Organization, the agency within the Defense Ministry that is responsible for evolving Israel’s multi-layer air-defense system in response to changing enemy capabilities. For security reasons, few specifics were given about the upgrades themselves with the Defense Ministry merely confirming that the tests “demonstrated a significant upgrade of the system’s technological capabilities,” and that “Iron Dome was tested in a range of complex scenarios and successfully intercepted and destroyed targets simulating existing and emerging threats, including the simultaneous interception of multiple UAVs [unmanned aerial vehicles], as well as a salvo of rockets and missiles.” The trials were held in southern Israel with the participation of the Israel Air Force’s Air Defense Array personnel—the latest indication of the fact that the IAF takes an active part in the development of Iron Dome, rather than just receiving a final product and then giving feedback about it to engineers. “The new version of the Iron Dome system will be delivered to the IAF and the Navy for operational use and will strengthen Israel’s multi-tier missile defense capabilities,” said the Defense Ministry. The mention of the Navy is a reference to the sea-based version of Iron Dome, known as “C-Dome,” which will be used on-board Israel’s new Sa’ar 6 missile ships to protect offshore gas rigs. These are strategic sites in Israel’s economic waters that adversaries like Hezbollah and Hamas would likely target in a future conflict. In light of the fact that some 70 percent of Israel’s electricity supply now depends on natural gas, defending the rigs is a top national priority, and Iron Dome has a big part to play in this defense. ‘Significant leap forward in technological capabilities’

A general sense of improvements being made to Iron Dome is discernable in recent comments to JNS by Brig. Gen. (ret.) Shachar Shohat, Rafael vice president and marketing and business development manager of the company’s Air and Missile

Defense Division. Shohat noted in February that a decade had passed since Iron Dome's first revolutionary interception of a Gazan rocket heading towards an Israeli built-up area in 2011. Ten years and more than 2,500 interceptions later, Iron Dome's interception rate surpasses 90 percent, while the system itself has undergone so many changes that it's not the same as it was in 2011. Upgrades include the ability to knock out threats at higher altitudes and lower altitudes, and to strike larger numbers of incoming rockets—a key capability in light of intentions by terror armies like Hamas and Hezbollah to “saturate” Israel's air defenses and try to punch through them after overwhelming them.

The Iron Dome of 2021 can protect not only cities but also vital strategic sites. In addition to rockets and mortars, it is designed to now take on drones and cruise missiles. The latter have low-altitude flight paths unlike the rainbow-shaped trajectories of ballistic rockets. Rafael is the prime contractor and the developer of the Tamir interceptor, while the system's advanced radar is developed by Israel Aerospace Industries—ELTA. Iron Dome's, and the command and control system, is developed by mPrest.

The interface between operators and the system—designed to make it relatively straightforward to use—is also undergoing regular upgrades.

The head of the Israel Missile Defense Organization, Moshe Patel, alluded to these changes when he stated, “Thirty years after the First Gulf War, which led to the establishment of the Israel Missile Defense Organization, and 10 years after the Iron Dome's first operational interception, we have achieved a significant leap forward in the technological capabilities of the Iron Dome system. In the three test campaigns conducted in the last few months, the Iron Dome system demonstrated outstanding capabilities against evolving threats, including successfully intercepting salvos of rockets and missiles as well as intercepting multiple UAVs simultaneously.”

It's also important to note the significant American financial assistance that goes towards the production of Iron Dome batteries, helping Israel position sufficient numbers of them to deal with multiple fronts at the same time.

In August, the U.S. House of Representatives greenlighted \$500 million for missile-defense assistance to Israel, which includes \$73 million for Iron Dome batteries.

d.

Officials: It will take Iran 9 months to fix damage at Natanz

Intelligence officials tell *New York Times* that the fire at Iran's Natanz nuclear facility was caused by a large explosion that completely destroyed its internal power system.

Two intelligence officials told *The New York Times* on Sunday that the fire at the Natanz nuclear facility in Iran was caused by a large explosion that completely destroyed the independent — and heavily protected — internal power system that supplies the underground centrifuges that enrich uranium.

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that the explosion had dealt a severe blow to Iran's ability to enrich uranium and that it could take at least nine months to restore Natanz's production.

The intelligence officials said there had been an “Israeli role” in the incident. Israel has not publicly confirmed or denied involvement in the incident.

It was not immediately clear how much advance word — if any — the Biden administration received about the Natanz operation, which happened on the same morning that US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin was visiting Israel, noted *The New York Times*.

Earlier on Sunday, an Iranian official blamed "sabotage" for the disruption of the electrical distribution grid of the Natanz nuclear facility.

Malek Shariati Niasar, the spokesman for the Iranian parliament's energy committee, wrote on Twitter that

the accident, which occurred one day after the plant began enriching uranium, was "very suspicious" and speculated that it was caused by "sabotage and infiltration."

Iran has stated that there were no casualties or radiation leakage from the incident.

Iran's top nuclear official condemned the attack on the country's uranium enrichment plant at Natanz as an act of "nuclear terrorism", and hinted that Iran may retaliate.

5. Zahal & Chessed to the Gentiles

a. IDF team lands in Equatorial Guinea to help after deadly munitions blasts

Israeli delegation made up primarily of medical personnel; African nation's hospital system overrun after massive explosions on army base kill 105, injure hundreds



A forklift loads medical equipment onto an airplane on March 10, 2021, for an Israeli delegation heading to Equatorial Guinea following a massive explosion in the African country that injured hundreds. (Israel Defense Forces)

An Israeli medical delegation landed in Equatorial Guinea on Thursday morning to assist the African country after massive explosions on a military base killed over 100 people and injured hundreds, an Israeli general said.

On Sunday, a series of major blasts — apparently triggered accidentally by munitions — on the Nkoa Ntoma camp in the country's economic hub Bata devastated buildings at the military compound and houses in surrounding districts.

According to Maj. Gen. Itzik Turgeman, commander of the IDF Logistics and Technology Directorate, the Israeli team included 67 people, 50 of them from the IDF Medical Corps and

seven from the IDF Home Front Command, which is in command of the delegation. The remaining 10 people were civilian medical workers sent by the Health Ministry. The IDF Chief Medical Officer, Brig. Gen. Dr. Alon Glasberg, said the medical personnel in the delegation were mostly surgeons and intensive care unit staff.

Israel routinely sends medical and search-and-rescue crews to countries struck by natural and man-made disasters. Last December, the IDF sent such a delegation to Honduras after two hurricanes devastated the Central America country.

- b. Moshav in Vietnam. (TY Hazel) Four young Vietnamese men have started an organic farm in Khanh Hoa province after training in Israel. It is based on the Israeli Moshav communal farm system. It grows coconuts, pomelos, guavas, grapes, jackfruits, mangos, and herbal medicine plants, as well as raising chickens and sheep.

<https://vietnamnews.vn/society/901675/young-men-launch-organic-farm-after-studying-in-israel.html>

- c. Treating diabetics & women in Dubai. (TY Hazel) Doctors from Israel's Sheba Medical Centre are flying out to Dubai to treat an initial 350 diabetes patients in the UAE army, police, and firefighting services. Sheba is also sending physicians to train medical staff at Medcare Women & Children Hospital in Dubai.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-03-14/israel-s-largest-hospital-to-treat-emirati-security-personnel>

- d. New homes for Guatemala volcano victims.

(TY Hazel) Israel's embassy in Guatemala has just finished its Guatelinda project in the town of Escuintla. It has built new homes for 39 families that lost their properties in the 2018 Fuego volcano eruption. The Guatemala Government named the street "Jerusalem Capital of Israel".

Zapping malaria-spreading mosquitos.

Israel's zappmalaria uses topographical analysis to determine the formation of bodies of water. It helps professionals scan the fields, find these bodies of water where mosquitos may breed, and upload them to the system so that the spraying team can go in and apply treatment.

March 11, 2011 began as an ordinary winter day with gray skies for the 12,000 people living in the fishing village of Minamisanriku. None of them knew that within several hours their world would be turned upside down, in the most destructive way imaginable.

"We lost 831 members of our small community, with 70 percent of the buildings razed to the ground. The rest were severely damaged," says Sato. "The industrial area was gone; the municipality building all but disappeared from the face of the earth." An Israel Defense Forces delegation was the first foreign-relief delegation to arrive at the site. The government of Japan made any foreign assistance contingent on having the teams bring their own equipment, and Israel was the only country that could meet that requirement on such short notice.

- e. It comprised doctors, nurses, X-ray specialists and all the necessary equipment. They immediately began setting up a field hospital.

"We required that they be able to conduct tests, but we could not imagine that they would have so much equipment and be so skilled at what they do," Nishizawa recalls in a conversation with *Israel Hayom*. "Their expertise was amazing, and they had everything up and running at record speed."

Among the first patients to be admitted to the hospital was Sato's own staff, and he himself was given an X-ray. "They were courteous, they smiled, and I was very grateful to get treatment," he says. The Israelis won over the locals with various gestures that underscored just how dedicated they were to help them. "Pregnant women faced particular duress because they lacked proper equipment. They had to travel long distances just to get checkups or to give birth," Nishizawa says. "But the Israeli delegation had a doctor trained in delivering babies, and after he had learned of the situation, he began making house calls, accompanied by a local female nurse.

This level of dedication and their willingness to extend a helping hand to the community was really touching for me," Nishizawa says with admiration. "Israel helped us so much after the disaster struck, and we are greatly indebted to it," the

mayor says. “Last year, we wrote a letter of thanks to all Israelis and had it sent to the Israeli embassy. Our people are very grateful for this; we will never forget Israel’s help.” When Nishizawa speaks about his experience with the Israeli teams, he also mentions Israel’s rapid pace of vaccinating its citizens against COVID-19. “This shows more than anything else what Israelis are capable of,” he says. I think that for many Japanese, Israel is considered to be some far flung country; but for us, Israel—despite its being so far away and so different—will always be remembered as the first country that came to our rescue and gave us the feeling that we are connected to the rest of the world. Japan is an island nation, and our first inclination when disaster strikes is to handle things on our own; but Israel, rather than focus on its own problems, extended its outstretched hand, and we are tremendously thankful for its assistance.”

6. ISRAEL’S MEDICAL ACHIEVEMENTS

- a. For third year in row, Sheba Medical Center ranks as one of world’s ‘Top 10’ hospitals. Newsweek magazine’s annual “World’s Best Hospitals” survey cited its superior health care, medical innovation and cutting-edge research. The Padeh Geriatric Rehabilitation Center at Sheba Medical Center in Tel Hashomer, Isra(March 3, 2021 / JNS) For the third consecutive year, Newsweek magazine has ranked Sheba Medical Center among the “Top 10 Best Hospitals in the World,” placing it at #10 in 2021. The magazine’s annual “World’s Best Hospitals” survey, which debuted on the Newsweek.com site on Wednesday, once again cited Sheba’s superior health care, in addition to its medical innovation and cutting-edge research. Sheba faced stiffer global competition this year, as the annual Newsweek/Statista ranking featured far more countries, expanding from 1,000 hospitals in 2019 to 2,000 in 2021. Despite doubling the number of participating hospitals, Sheba still placed in the “Top 10.” “To be nominated and ranked among the Top 10 World’s Best Hospitals for three consecutive years, underscores Israel’s image as a small country with world-class medicine and what we call ‘Sheba Global Impact,’” said Professor Yitshak Kreiss, CEO of Sheba Medical Center, the largest facility of its kind in Israel and the Middle East region.

“This honor is also a testament to our dedicated staff, which has worked tirelessly to utilize cutting-edge medical treatments, treating patients from all walks of life during these challenging times, offering hope without boundaries,” he added. Sheba is located on a 200- acre campus and is home to 11 of Israel’s national health centers, four hospitals, two institutes, expansive research laboratories, 159 medical departments and clinics and diverse educational facilities.

b. HEALTH

Tel Aviv is world’s 6th healthiest city. Tel Aviv, known for its vegan scene and vibrant culture, was ranked the 6th healthiest city in the world, according to a new report from UK’s [Money.co.uk](#). It compared life expectancy, obesity levels, pollution levels, safety score, sunlight hours, and cost to be healthy. [o-live#valencia-is-the-healthiest-city-in-the](#) Hope for Parkinson’s treatment. Ben Gurion University researchers have discovered that proteins called BMP5/7 are new promising potential therapeutics for Parkinson’s disease. In lab tests, the proteins prevented the accumulation of toxic alpha-synuclein clumps and loss of vital dopamine-producing brain cells. Trial success for kidney monitor. Israel’s Serreno (reported [here](#) previously) reported over 96% accuracy in the trials of its Sentinel monitoring system for Acute Kidney Injury in three Israeli Intensive Care Units. The devices will now be manufactured by Israel’s Elcam Medical, which has also invested \$1.5 million in Serreno Israeli organization breaks world record for kidney donations. Matnat Chaim has facilitated 1,000 donations since it was founded in 2009. (April

5, 2021 / Israel Hayom) Israel celebrated a special milestone Sunday, as the Matnat Chaim nonprofit organization, which encourages and facilitates living kidney donations, is about to break a world record by marking its 1,000th transplant.

Since Matnat Chaim, Hebrew for “Gift of Life,” was founded in 2019, the number of kidney donations in Israel has quadrupled.

- c. The organization’s data reveals that about two-thirds of the donors are men, a third are women and 40 percent of all donors are teachers or educators. The organization’s work is estimated to have saved the state some 4 billion shekels (\$1.2 billion) by decreasing the need for treatments, hospitalization and medication for patients with kidney disease. The COVID 19 pandemic led to an increase in the number of donations. Some weeks, the organization said, it oversaw five to nine kidney transplants a week. An especially large number of donations occurred when Matnat Chaim’s founder, Rabbi Yeshayahu Heber, passed away after having contracted coronavirus. Kidney recipient Kobi Oshrat told *Israel Hayom* that since he received the transplant, “life has been wonderful. The transplant was more successful than expected. My physical condition improved tremendously. I am back to being a young man. ... I engage in sports and generally function.”

Oshrat’s donor was Yoav Matityahu, and Oshrat says, “We have become a family. He and his wife are wonderful people. Those who decide to donate a kidney are undeniably saving a life. And all of this is happening here, in Israel. It’s amazing.”

Culture Minister Yehiel Tropper, who donated a kidney more than a year ago, told *Israel Hayom* that he had not been nervous or afraid of the procedure.

“I spoke with the doctors beforehand, and they explained the process to me. I understood that the risk was minimal. It’s true that it involves surgery, but the understanding that the kidney is highly likely to save a life trumps it all.”

As for this week’s record that Matnat Chaim broke, Tropper said, “It is one of Israel’s greatest points of pride. Israel ranks first in the world in organ donations from live donors. We are a wonderful and extraordinary people.”

Discussing the person who received his kidney, Tropper said, “I am in touch with Yair. He had his operation on his 60th birthday. We speak every Friday. We haven’t skipped a single Friday, even when it was especially busy. Each time, it’s inspirational, over and over again.”

New BGU Chemistry building dedicated. Ben Gurion University has held a dedication ceremony for its new five-story 6,300 square meter Lorry I. Lokey Chemistry Building. Its modular, state-of-the-art laboratories and workspaces allow all BGU research groups to be located close together for the first time in 40 years.

- d. Huge drop in coronavirus reproduction. Israel’s “R” factor – the average number of people that one person infects with the SARS-Cov-2 virus – has fallen to just over 0.5 and less than 1% of tests are returning positive. Israel has no “red” (high infection rate) cities for the first time since the start of the pandemic.

<https://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/299353>

- e. IDF has herd immunity. (TY WIN) Israel’s Defense Force was the first army in the world to vaccinate over 80% of its personnel. The whole operation was conducted with military precision in just 10 weeks without wasting a single vial. Currently, no IDF member has died from Covid-19 and only one had a serious infection.

<https://www.jns.org/idf-becomes-first-vaccinated-military-in-the-world/>

- f. It could have been much worse. Excluding the Negev desert, Israel’s population density is by far the highest in the OECD – a key factor for high Covid-19 mortality rates. But Israeli fatalities were lower than most of the 37 OECD countries. Only South Korea had both less deaths per million and a higher total

population density. Treating heart & kidney patients remotely. The IPUD (Implantable Peritoneal Ultrafiltration Device) from Israel's Paragate Medical (reported [here](#) previously) removes excess fluid from patients coping with chronic heart and kidney failure at home. Paragate is a portfolio company of Nazareth's NGT3. Human trials start soon.

<https://www.med-technews.com/news/latest-medtech-news/implantable-device-developed-for-remote-care-of-heart-and>

[ki/ https://www.startupvalley.news/uk/paragate-ngt3-vc/](https://www.startupvalley.news/uk/paragate-ngt3-vc/)

- g. Saving lives from snakebites. (TY [Israel21c](#)) Some 1.8 million people are bitten by snakes each year – about 94,000 fatally. An international research team including Tel Aviv University's Eyal Goldstein have designed a model to determine (and so avoid) the probability of a snakebite at specific places, months, and times of day. <https://www.jpost.com/health-science/tel-aviv-university-participates-in-new-study-to-predict-snakebites-661850>

- h. Training the brain to see. Israel's Revitalvision has developed vision training software to improve eyesight in adult amblyopia, eye diseases and vision impairments. The FDA-approved therapy uses Gabor patches with a patented stimulation technique to stimulate the visual cortex and create new neural connections.

<https://www.revitalvision.com/> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PfEWPRCUDbw>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0gyvsyKBZmQ>

- i. Saved twice by the same medic. When United Hatzalah volunteer medic Alan Malka saved a 30-year-old man who suffered a heart attack in Petah Tikva, he recognized that he saved the same man two months previously. Resuscitation was much quicker this time, and he now should get treatment to prevent a further incident. <https://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/298658>

7 World Happiness Report

Relatively happy. (TY [WIN](#)) Israel climbed two spots to 12th in the 2021 World Happiness Report which measured GDP, life-expectancy and opinions in 149 countries. Citizens of 100 countries were surveyed on social support, freedom of life choices, society corruption and generosity. Israel ranked 11th in that survey.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-climbs-to-12th-spot-in-pandemic-focused-world-happiness-survey/>

8. World Water Day. (TY [JNF-USA](#) & ILTV) To mark World Water Day, this great video summarizes the work of JNF USA in helping Israel conserve its water. The JNF supports hydroponic farms, wastewater recycling and helped fund Israel's largest artificial lake that has turned Beersheva in the Negev desert into a water city. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xy4qgK50qR0>

9. Most resilient Middle East country. (TY [JNS](#)) The Institute of Economics, Society and Peace in the Middle East Studies ranked Israel top of its resilience list of 33 Middle East countries. Military strength was excluded but Israel scored high in , social, gender equality, global openness, plus ethnic and religious varianceconomyce. <https://www.israelhayom.com/2021/03/18/study-israel-ranks-1st-in-strength-index-among-middle-east-countries/>

10. International relations

- a. Bahrain appoints its first ambassador to Israel The move represents another important step in the implementation of the Abraham Accords.
- b. Turkey ready to resume exchange of ambassadors with Israel, says Ankara official Erdoğan wishes 'all Jews' a happy Passover The Turkish president says that his country's "legacy of respect and tolerance" led the government to place great importance on the worship of all faiths. FEATURE
- c. Equatorial Guinea to move embassy to Jerusalem. President Teodoro Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea phoned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to say it is moving its embassy to Israel's capital where it will join the USA and Guatemala. Kosovo and Malawi have also announced plans to open embassies in Jerusalem.

- d. UAE's first ambassador to Israel sworn in

The UAE's cabinet last month approved the establishment of an embassy in Tel Aviv.

Dubai's ruler and The United Arab Emirates' Vice President Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum has sworn in the country's first ambassador to Israel, Mohammed Mahmoud Al-Khaja, the Dubai Media Office said on Sunday. The UAE's cabinet last month approved the establishment of an embassy in Tel Aviv in Israel, state media said, while Israel announced its embassy had opened in Abu Dhabi, after the UAE and Israel agreed to normalize relations in August.

In addition to tourism, Israel and the UAE are currently building bridges in a variety of sectors, from hi-tech to space exploration and For instance, Israeli companies flocked to the GITEX trade show last year and hope to be at IDEX in Abu Dhabi this month and also GISEC this summer

Israel signs multimillion-dollar commerce accord with Morocco

"Beyond the important potential for additional trade, there are now infinite investment opportunities that Moroccan and Israeli private sectors can take advantage of," says the president of the General Confederation of Moroccan Enterprises. (April 1, 2021 / Israel Hayom) Jerusalem and Rabat have signed a strategic accord worth hundreds of millions of dollars, *Israel Hayom* has learned.

The heads of the Israel Manufacturers Association, the Israel Farmers Federation and the Israeli Federation of the Chambers of Commerce signed the unprecedented agreement with the General Confederation of Moroccan Enterprises, also known as CGEM, on March 27. According to Zeev Lavie, director of international trade at the Federation of Chambers of Commerce, "The leading fields of trade will be food and agriculture, spare parts and vehicles, chemicals and mechanical equipment. On the other hand, Morocco looks forward to various technologies in the renewable energy fields, water treatments, agriculture and health." At the signing ceremony, the president of CGEM said, "Beyond the important potential for additional trade, there are now infinite investment opportunities that Moroccan and Israeli private sector[s] can take advantage of locally, regionally and globally; in particular, as far as existing advantages in various sectors in our countries—like tourism, industry and innovation—are concerned."

- e. Israel Manufacturers Association President Ron Tomer said that he was "happy and thrilled to stand at the forefront of economy and trade through the renewal of Israel's Morocco ties, following a lengthy, 15-year break. Many Israelis' roots are in Morocco, where there has been a large, thriving Jewish community for years. It's only natural that we are renewing and bolstering ties between the two states through a genuine, long-term partnership that will yield trade cooperation and assist in promoting imports and exports between Israel and Morocco."

According to the Federation of Israeli Chambers of Commerce president Uriel Lynn, "Israel and Morocco have special and long-term ties. Morocco has always been a natural destination for bolstering Israel's collaboration in all fields of life, and

certainly in the economic field. The Israeli market can enjoy cooperation with Morocco, which is situated between the European continent and Africa, and can serve as a bridge for Israeli companies for activity in the northern Sahara and the African continent.”

Caring for the planet Reducing paper waste. Israel's ePaper has developed technology to reduce the environmental footprint of office work. It uses tighter security and control printing systems to reduce paper usage by up to 35% and over 40% of office power consumption. Other impacts include far less pollution, CO2 and deforestation.

11. ECONOMY & BUSINESS

- a. Record month for investments. January 2021 saw an unprecedented record \$1.2 billion invested in Israeli companies. It included the generating of five new Israeli Unicorns (value over \$1 billion). Trade with Dubai tops \$270 million. The Dubai Media office reports that since Israel and the United Arab Emirates normalized ties in September, trade between the Jewish state and Dubai has reached 1 billion dirham (\$272 million). Figures for the other seven states in the UAE were not yet available.
- b. Another digital health fund. (TY Atid-EDI) Israel's OTV (formally Olive Tree Ventures) has closed a new fund totaling \$170 million. OTV focuses on digital health products that have the potential to work in different countries, make healthcare more affordable and fill gaps in overwhelmed healthcare systems.
- c. Record exports for Intel Israel. Detailed accounts have just been released for Intel Israel. They show that the Israeli operation increased exports in 2020 by 14% to \$8 billion. Intel is responsible for 14% of Israel's hi-tech exports, and its 13,950 employees generate 2% of the country's GDP.
- d. Saving the Australian almond crop. Israel's Edete (reported here previously) is to trial its artificial pollination technology in the Australian state of Victoria. Its machinery that can be deployed both day and night, and at extreme temperatures. While Israel is busy saving the world's honeybees, this is Plan B!
- e. Tesla launches in Israel. Tesla officially launched its official sales in Israel for its electric vehicle on a new website. It is also building a sales agency at Ramat Aviv Mall in Tel Aviv. Record Japanese investment. In 2020 Japanese firms invested some \$1.1 billion in Israel – 20% higher than in 2019. (In 2015 it was just £87 million.) Japan now accounts for more than 11% of all foreign investment in Israeli high-tech (compared to under 2% in 2016). Mitsubishi and Sumitomo were the largest investors.
- f. Plenty of funds for new startups. A recent survey by US-Israel Ground Up Ventures debunks reports that there is a drought of funds for new Israeli startups. 37 of Israel's leading venture funds they surveyed made 145 investments at the seed stage in 2020 (rising from 112 in 2019). The average investment also rose - by 20%.
- g. An impossible year. Israeli VC firms JVP, Pitango and Qualcomm thought the coronavirus pandemic would sink many Israeli startups. But something crazy happened - the opposite occurred, and funds flooded in. They found that business can be done without face-to-face meetings and that (in Israel at least) anything is possible.
- h. A record 22 Israeli startups each raised millions of funds in just one week. Investment in Israeli startups: CYE raised \$120 million; Gamida Cell raised \$75 million; Personetics raised \$75 million; Pliops raised \$65 million; PerimeterX raised \$57 million; Lusha raised \$40 million; Redefine Meat raised \$29 million; Atera raised \$25 million; Nanit raised \$25 million; EquityBee raised \$20 million; Galmed raised \$18 million; accessiBe raised \$16 million; Oribi raised \$15.5 million; Theator raised \$15.5 million; SecuriThings raised \$14 million; FundGuard raised \$12 million; SuperSmart raised \$10 million; Mirato raised \$9 million; Acumen raised \$7 million; anecdotes raised \$5 million; Bio-Fence raised

\$3.8 million; GOTO Global raised \$3.5 million;

- i. New gas pipeline to Egypt. (TY Hazel) Israel Natural Gas Lines Ltd. is to lay a new subsea pipeline to export Israeli natural gas to Egypt. The \$228 million route will send as much as 7 billion cubic meters of gas annually to Egypt. Gas is expected to begin flowing down the pipeline by April 2023 at the latest.
- j. Record year for Intel. Intel Israel's 13,000 employees have just received huge bonuses as recognition of their contribution to Intel Corporation's best-ever year. Despite (or because of) the pandemic, the global demand for technical products increased Intel's revenue by 8% in 2020 to \$78 billion.

12. Signs of the Geula: Ingathering of the exiles & fertility of the Land (Yechezkael 36, Sanhedrin 98)

a. KIBBUTZ GALYOTH

6.8 million Jews live in Israel on eve of Independence Day

Over 1/4 of Israeli population are children under age of 14. Nearly 50% of global Jewish population lives in Israel.

On the eve of the 73rd Independence Day, the population of Israel was 9.327 million people, 6.894 million of whom are Jews (73.9%), 1.966 million Arabs (21.1%) and 467,000 defined as "other" (5%), according to figures published by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS).

Since last Independence Day, the population of Israel has increased by 137,000 people (an increase of 1.5%). During this period, about 167,000 babies were born, about 16.3 thousand immigrants arrived, and about 50,000 people died.

At the establishment of the State, the population of Israel numbered 806,000. Following establishment of the state, the percentage of Jews in Israel was 82.1% and the percentage of Arabs was 17.9%.

A total of 3.3 million immigrants have arrived in Israel since its founding, about 1.5 million (44.7%) of whom arrived beginning in 1990, following the end of the Cold War. An additional 129.1 thousand "citizen immigrants" also immigrated to Israel since 1990.

In 2030, the population of Israel is expected to number 11.1 million, in 2040 - 13.2 million, and on Israel's 100th Independence Day in 2048, the population is expected to number 15.2 million people.

At the end of 2019, 46% of the total Jewish population in the world lived in Israel, about 78% of the Jews in Israel were "sabras" (Jews born of Israel).

The CBS data also show that the population of Israel is a young population: about 28.1% of the population are children aged 0-14 and about 12% of the population are age 65 and over.

- b. Despite pandemic-era challenges, the number of American Jews considering moving to Israel spikes.



Making AliyahFlash 90

When Aaron Feinblatt moved to Israel in late February 2020, just as the first signs of the worldwide coronavirus outbreak were emerging, only one person wore a mask on his aliyah flight.

Feinblatt had no idea that masks would soon become the norm for him and everyone else, nor how COVID-19 would affect the first year in his new home. "I got here two weeks before the country completely shut down," he said. "With all the lockdowns and restrictions in the last year, I feel like I have been physically here but my aliyah hasn't yet happened."

Yet the 29-year-old lawyer from Philadelphia has no regrets about arriving when he did.

"I am thrilled to be here," Feinblatt said. "I'm healthy and I have a job with an Israeli start-up and I live a 10-minute walk from the beach in Tel Aviv. I would have pushed through and come here even if my aliyah date had been during the pandemic and not before it."

Rather than diminishing interest in immigrating to Israel, the COVID-19 pandemic appears to have fueled it. A total of 7,965 aliyah applications from North America were submitted in 2020, double that of the previous year. Over the first three months of 2021, the number of immigrants arriving in Israel from North America was up 30% over the same period a year ago.

- c. "We've seen unprecedented interest since spring 2020," said Marc Rosenberg, vice president for Diaspora partnerships at Nefesh B'Nefesh, which manages aliyah applications from North America and assists with immigration in partnership with Israel's Ministry of Aliyah and Integration, the Jewish Agency for Israel, Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael and JNF-USA.

"Past national or international events sparked inquiries and applications, but never like this," he added.

A few factors are driving the increase, immigration officials theorize. The pandemic has spurred people to reconsider their life priorities, giving greater urgency to the dream of living in Israel. The shift to remote work has enabled a growing number of people who want to move to Israel without giving up their U.S. careers to do so. The difficulty of travel and Israel's ban on non-citizen entry (with some exceptions) is prompting some Americans who were frequent visitors to Israel, particularly retirees with grandchildren there, to relocate permanently. And Israel's early success

combating the coronavirus and efficient rollout of vaccinations encouraged some of those already considering aliyah. “I figured that the risk of contracting the disease seemed the same in both countries, but in Israel I would be able to be immediately vaccinated,” said Ariana Gordon, 33, who made aliyah recently from Los Angeles. After Gordon lost her job at a California gym due to COVID closures, she realized it was time to act on her longstanding aliyah wish. She initiated her application late last June and put her graduate degree in computer science to use by beginning a remote internship with Israel Tech Challenge. Now she lives in Tel Aviv.

The pandemic also prompted educator Ilanna Price to make the move. Price, 27, was living in New York while the rest of her family had moved to Israel over the past decade.

“I had a life in the U.S., and things were going well. But then with COVID I was stuck at home and the ability to do my job was severely limited,” Price said. “The situation gave me the extra push to finish up my aliyah application.”

Price moved to Israel in October. She lives in the trendy Florentine neighborhood in south Tel Aviv and works as a kindergarten teacher.

Making aliyah during the COVID-era has not been easy. The pandemic slowed the processing of necessary paperwork on both sides of the Atlantic. Israel’s government limited the operations of the country’s main airport for several weeks more than once, frustrating the scheduling of immigration flights.

When Tel Aviv’s Ben-Gurion Airport was shuttered in January during a third national lockdown, Gordon’s aliyah flight was canceled and she found herself stranded in the United States after having given up her apartment and car.

“I got my aliyah visa in late January and my original flight was scheduled for Feb. 1, but Israel wasn’t letting in any flights,” Gordon said. “I was rebooked five more times, and finally made it to Israel on a Nefesh B’Nefesh charter flight that arrived March 1.”

Due to the delays, Gordon had to redo some costly paperwork, including import documentation for her dog, and underwent three COVID tests at her own expense.

“It was a real emotional roller coaster,” Gordon said. “I tried not to get my hopes up each time, but I couldn’t help it because I wanted to be in Israel so badly.” For Rachel and Yosef Gross, a couple who immigrated to Israel in February 2020, the challenge of aliyah during the COVID era came after arrival.

“My dad was sick with cancer in Chicago and I thought I would be able to go back to visit him regularly,” Rachel Gross said. “But then COVID happened. He passed away in early February 2021 and I couldn’t get there.”

Yet she says she has no misgivings about moving to Jerusalem. Rachel, 28, has a full-time job as a graphic designer with an Israeli start-up. Yosef, 27, works in digital marketing and music management, and is also pursuing a graduate degree in environmental studies at Tel Aviv University. The couple is expecting their first child later this year.

“It’s always been our dream to be in Israel, and we are blessed to be here,” Yosef said.

“It would have been worse for us if we had gotten trapped in the U.S. because of COVID.” Rachel added.

With most of Israel’s adult population vaccinated, new COVID cases at their lowest levels in months and the country largely reopened, Feinblatt says he’s looking forward to doing the things he’d planned to do a year ago. Primarily he wants to make the social connections he missed out on before starting work. “I had been looking forward to integrating, being out and about, learning and practicing Hebrew, and meeting people,” Feinblatt said.

Looking back on her own experience, Price said that when she completed her aliyah application last summer, she figured it could be the worst time or the best time to make aliyah – she just wasn’t sure which.

“The truth is that I probably would have continued to put off aliyah if it hadn’t been for COVID,” Price said. “I’m glad I took the step to do it.”

This article was sponsored by and produced in partnership with Nefesh B’Nefesh,

which in cooperation with Israel's Ministry of Aliyah, The Jewish Agency, KKL and JNF-USA is minimizing the professional, logistical and social obstacles of aliyah, and has brought over 65,000 olim from North America and the United Kingdom for nearly two decades.

d. Countries with the Largest Jewish Population (2019)

Rank	Country	Population	% of World Jewry
1	<u>Israel</u>	6,870,000*	46.7%
2	<u>United States</u>	5,700,000 ¹	38.8%
3	<u>France</u>	450,000	3.1%
4	<u>Canada</u>	392,000	2.7%
5	<u>U.K.</u>	292,000	2.0%
6	<u>Argentina</u>	180,000	1.2%

7	<u>Russia</u>	165,000	1.1%
8	<u>Germany</u>	118,000	0.8%
9	<u>Australia</u>	118,000	0.8%
10	<u>Brazil</u>	92,600	0.6%
11	<u>South Africa</u>	67,500	0.5%

12	<u>Ukraine</u>	48,000	0.3%
13	<u>Hungary</u>	47,300	0.3%
14	<u>Mexico</u>	40,000	0.3%
15	<u>Netherlands</u>	29,800	0.2%

D. Wedding for Bnei Menashe couples. Eleven Bnei Menashe couples, who recently immigrated to Israel from India, were wed in a festive and emotional group ceremony at Shavei Israel's absorption center in Nordia, near Netanya. They were remarried after their formal conversion to Judaism and return to the Jewish people.

e. Emotional hotline for new Olim. (TY IH) New immigrants can find coping in the pandemic more difficult than veteran Olim (Vatikim) and sabras (born in Israel). A new call center has now been setup, providing access 5 days a week to mental health professionals who speak English, French, Spanish, Amharic and Russian. Warm weather kits for the elderly. The International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, plus Government agencies are to distribute 10,000 winter kits to elderly residents in public housing across the country. The kits, costing a total of \$1 million, include a heated blanket and scarf, plus around \$100 of vouchers for essentials.

f. Tu B'Shevat: An annual reminder to appreciate the beauty of the land of Israel One can only marvel at the transformation of the landscape described by Mark Twain to that of today and look forward to a future when the native forest species described in the Bible dominate the landscape.

For many in Israel and across the world who have been confined to their homes—wary from a constant diet of political drama and itching to extricate themselves from coronavirus woes—a new year is about to begin: Tu B'Shevat, the "New Year for the Trees." Many rabbis describe this as a particularly important time to appreciate the "land" of Israel. As Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov, writes in the *Book of Our Heritage*, "Tu B'Shevat bespeaks the praise of the land of Israel—for on this day the strength of the soil of the Eretz Yisrael is renewed and it begins to yield its produce and demonstrate its inherent goodness." How does one appreciate the land of Israel? First, taste it, or more precisely, drink and eat what it produces. Of the seven biblically mentioned species, five grow on Israeli vines or trees. Today, Israel grows 55,000 metric tons of grapes each year. Seventy major wineries and 250 boutique wineries use most of these grapes to produce more than 4.5 million bottles of wine, many of which are winning international awards. Israel also grows 60,000 tons of pomegranates, 2400 tons of figs, 32,000 tons of dates and produces 16,000 tons of olive oil each year, also with award-winning varieties. This is in addition to delicious Israeli oranges, grapefruit, avocados, cherries, nuts, tomatoes, strawberries and so

many more. Much of this “holy deliciousness” is available around the globe. Second, appreciate the land by traversing it. This year, we will have to make do with virtual hikes and plan for future ones as soon as possible. Israel has miles and miles of trails from which to choose.

- g. The 620 mile-long National Trail is listed by *National Geographic* as one of the most epic in the world. Not only does hiking in Israel provide spectacular scenery, but where else in the world can you hike on the same paths where our biblical ancestors walked, and see the same species and mountains that they saw?

There are also breathtaking trails along the cliffs of the Mediterranean, through amazing hidden desert canyons and waterfalls of the Golan Heights. In case one needs additional motivation, the Talmud commenting on the Torah commandment to “possess the Land and dwell in it” (Numbers 33:53) states that “a person who walks four amot (four steps or about seven feet) in Israel, it is assured to him that he is one deserving of the World to Come.” (Ketubot 111a) Third, appreciate those who came before us and reforested the land by planting a tree. In his 1869 travel book, *Innocents Abroad*, Mark Twain describes the Holy Land as “a desolate country whose soil is rich enough, but is given over wholly to weeds—a silent mournful expanse. ... There was hardly a tree or a shrub anywhere. Even the olive and the cactus, those fast friends of the worthless soil, had almost deserted the country.” In the early part of the 19th century, whatever trees were left from earlier over-harvesting were removed by the Ottoman Turks in their efforts to build and power a railroad. There is also photographic evidence of where ground level was a few hundred years ago, and where it is today. The ground in some areas is two meters (6.5 feet) lower than it used to be; the land of Israel had literally been pouring into the sea.

In 1901, Keren Kayemeth LelIsrael—Jewish National Fund (KKL-JNF) was founded. KKL JNF looked for native Mediterranean pine species to help reestablish forests. It began planting in earnest with much help from Jews around the world, who donated and continue to donate via the “little blue *tzedakah* boxes.” Its efforts have been wonderfully successful. The massive soil erosion that was occurring was arrested. Organic matter was returned to the land of Israel. Reestablishing forests on denuded sites has to begin with species whose seedlings can withstand full sunlight. Since there was no dormant seed source left in the soil, seedlings needed to be planted. Once this was done, there were opportunities to plant the native broad leafed species. This is exactly what KKL-JNF has been doing.

KKL-JNF tree nurseries today are raising the original biblical species: oak, pistachio, Aleppo pine, cedar and carob. Today, all these species have a much better chance of survival because the sites are forested.

- h. To date, the KKL-JNF has planted somewhere around 240 million trees. It is responsible for caring for approximately 400,000 of Israel’s 5.45 million acres, or 7 percent of Israel’s land mass. It focuses its efforts on previously forested land or in specific areas where soil loss or the encroaching desert is a critical concern. A satellite view shows Israel as an island of green in a sea of badly abused desert. The plentiful oaks of Bashan and the cedars of Lebanon described in the Bible, and the native species of Israel, are beginning to flourish. One can only marvel at the transformation of the landscape described by Mark Twain to the Israeli landscape of today, and look forward to a future when the land of Israel has healed and the native forest species described in the Bible dominate the landscape.

Before I made *aliyah* several years ago, I had the opportunity to work on the U.S. House Natural Resource Committee. Rep. Bruce Westerman (R-Ark.), the only

congressman who is also a practicing forester, was kind enough to send me a personal note hoping that when I arrived in Israel, I would have the opportunity to plant oaks of Bashan and cedars of Lebanon. Last year on Tu B'Shevat, my wife and I were able to do just that. After the COVID-19 crisis is over, we plan to plant again. This Tu B'Shevat, Thursday, take the opportunity to taste, appreciate and plan a hike and the planting of a tree. This is the land that God chose for us. How thankful we should be.

13. The human side of covid

- a. History in the Making: Israel's Campaign to Vaccinate as a. Told by 5 UH Medics
United Hatzalah medics continue to take an active lead in Israel's COVID-19 vaccination efforts. Last Saturday evening, the cover story of [BBC World News](#) featured a photograph of United Hatzalah medic Shira Hershkop administering a dose to one of Israel's elderly. Currently, the vaccination efforts in Israel are going faster than any other country in the world, with the goal to get 5.2 million people vaccinated by the end of March. Israel's HMOs have contracted United Hatzalah to help them with the effort by providing the man/woman power of our volunteers. The moment I saw the photograph of Shira Hershkop, I understood that United Hatzalah is currently at the forefront of history like never before. I felt proud to personally know many of our medics. I first wrote Shira right away to congratulate her on her efforts! Then expanded to contacting a few other medics, who each kindly took a 15-minute break from giving vaccines to speak with me, as well as the Director of Operations of United Hatzalah, Moshiko Moskowitz. Shira Hershkop, *Beitar Illit*



Mainly, they want to meet their families again. Some haven't seen their grandchildren in such a long time. Many haven't left their houses in so long. I vaccinated someone aged 101 this week. Everyday is different on the ground. I am based at the Arena, a sports stadium in Jerusalem. Today I vaccinated 70 so far. Last week I did 130 in one day. I am really, really proud to be a part of this moment in history, and I hope this will finally get us out of the lockdown!



b. I am a mother of 6 living in the Old City of Jerusalem, and currently giving vaccines in Maale Adumim. I am part of the Women's Unit and have been volunteering for the last year and a half. It is a small world, as I graduated from the same EMT course as Shira Hershkop! At first, I wasn't sure about giving vaccines. I was nervous.

It is such a new vaccine. I wasn't sure I wanted to be a part of it. Now that I started giving the vaccines on 5-hour shifts each day, I see that every single person we have been vaccinating really, really needs it. These are people who haven't left their house in months. People who are suffering from depression at home. They are rushing up to us, crying to us. It is so emotional because they finally feel like they are going to see the end of this. Last week I had one elderly couple who came in, and it was so sad because the night before their son-in-law in New York died of Covid-19. They haven't left the house in months, and they couldn't see any hope. But now, after getting the vaccine, they really see the light at the end of the tunnel. Many of the elderly who come in keep giving us their blessings. We don't stop getting *brachas*! As of now the HMO's have opened more centers, but the first week I was vaccinating anywhere from 75-105 people in 5 hours. We had people coming in from as far as Kibbutz Ein Gedi.

C. All the United Hatzalah medics got additional training because we had to learn how to make the vaccine ready, which basically means to dilute it. For each vial we need to add a saline solution, which makes 5-6 vaccines. What surprised me in a good way was that we don't only vaccinate the population over 60. We also vaccinate all the foreign workers who take care of the elderly. When someone comes in who qualifies for a vaccine, and their worker comes with them, we vaccinate them right away. Or, if their child is the primary caregiver, they can also get vaccinated. As long as they are over the age of 16. I really, really do feel a part of history.



D. Ahmad Asila, Kafr 'Aqab I am really proud that I am part of United Hatzalah, and have been volunteering for the last two years. Not only did I want to be part of the first to give the vaccines, but I am also a taxi driver by profession and my work has been really slow. Therefore, I have had even more time to join the program. I am here at the Sport's Arena in Jerusalem, and many people are coming to receive the vaccine and they are really happy. Everyone is so thankful to finally move on from this pandemic. They tell me they have been waiting for this day for such a long time. In Israel, all Jews and Arabs over the age of 60 have gotten the vaccine. This is under my eyes. Everyday I open the list of appointments and see many Arab families. Often, they need me to speak Arabic to specific people. They call me and ask me to help them, or that I myself give them the vaccine. This is historic. Something like this only happens every 100 years. How our vaccination program works is that we have agreements with the Israel HMOs. They need to vaccinate thousands of people per day. We supply them the man/woman-power to do the vaccinations for the HMOs. So far we have 300 volunteers from all over the country who registered for the program. About 100 of them are women and 40 of them are from the Arab population. Our medics really feel part of the national effort. The effort to fight the pandemic that we have been suffering so much from in the last year. We feel this is a part of our mission, our "shlichut". Even though I am running this program, this vaccination effort is not the same as any other job. It is a different drive. The proof of this is that many people who have a regular job, are still coming to take a part. As the person who started United Hatzalah's Humanitarian Mission that has been running since the first lockdown, in which we distributed toys and medicine during the beginning of the outbreak, and is still conducting COVID-19 tests and patients transports the to the corona hotels, there is something very emotional in all this. That by being a part of the vaccination program, it is as if we are closing the circle.

14 Conquering the Har Habayit! A most magnificent & majestic expression of והיינו כחולמים

- a. ירדן התלוננה בפני ישראל: יותר מדי יהודים עולים להר הבית משרד החוץ הירדני מחה על הפרת הסטטוס קוו בהר הבית וטען כי "יהודים נכנסים במספרים גדולים מדי". פעילי הר הבית ציינו שמספר העולים היהודים להר יותר מהכפל לעומת פסח האחרון, הקרן "למורשת הר הבית: כ-611,2 עלו בחול המועד

ירדן התלוננה בפני ישראל על הפרת הסטטוס קוו בהר הבית בימים הראשונים של פסח, טענה כי "יהודים נכנסים במספרים גדולים מדי להר". לטענת ירדן, בימים האחרונים חל זינוק

b.

לפי נתוני הקרן למורשת הר הבית וסטודנטים למען הר הבית, "כבר בימים הראשונים של פסח פקדו את ההר כפול ממספר היהודים שעלו בימים המקבילים בפסח האחרון". מאז שפרסמו את ההודעה ביקרו בהר עוד כאלף אנשים. לפי נתוני הקרן למורשת הר הבית, במהלך חול המועד עלו כ-611,2 יהודים להר. ממטה ארגוני המקדש נטען שהמספר המדויק הוא 641,2.

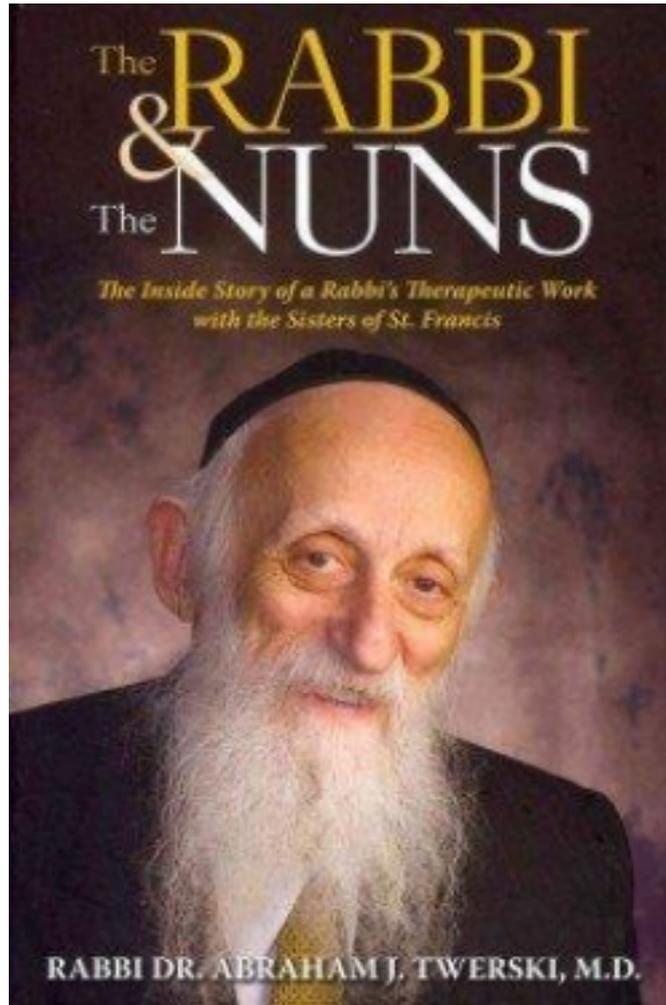
c. שחרית ומנחה במנין כל יום



15. In conclusion, in memory of 2 giants who inspired me to take the proactive approach:

- a. My brother-in-law Dr. Ronny London ZT”L-As a young & impressionable teenager back in the 70’s in my hometown of Belle Harbor, I was Zoche to watch Ronny grow as an observant Jew from week to week, both before and after he married my beloved sister Amy, may she live and be well, and have so much growth & Nachas for many, many years to come. His Middot were impeccable, his growth in Torah was meteoric, and his love for God & mankind was legendary. He became an outstanding doctor here in Israel in the 80’s, and would have settled in the Holy Land had his health left him such a noble option. He was a most unassuming leader in his family, community, Shul and profession, so beloved by the thousands of children that he treated with his giant heart, soul & mind over the years. He has inspired me to love Hashem, the Jewish Nation & mankind, and to try to lead in a humble and genuine manner. His light shines quite bright from Scarsdale to Ramat Bet Shemesh and beyond.





Rabbi Dr. Twerski, Sabba Shea ZT”L-As a young father, I was Zoche to have Rabbi Twerski ZT”L join our family and become our very own Sabba Shea. His world fame was unnoticeable, his love for Bubby & us as his own family was palpable, and his mastery of Torah & Madda lit up our lives. His Chassideshe Mesora & spirit added so much to our lives, our Shulchan, and most of all, our Neshamot. He was the ultimate model of איש אמת, searching for truth & pursuing it at all costs, even when the world may not have always received his honest & brutal insights with love & appreciation. He was a writer, a creator, a pioneer and a true maverik. He taught me what it meant to stand up for the truth, no matter what the consequences, and he inspired me to forge my own path, and follow what I deem proper, ethical and appropriate. He was a bridge to a fargone era, a dreamer, and a man of action, and he has moved me to follow suit, no matter what the costs may be.

היינו כחולמים
 Please Hashem, on this miraculous and Providential day, uplift our Nation. הושיעה את עמך

חג שמחה!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!