



Pain, Pride & Predicament-Yom Ha'azmaut 5784

## 1. Can one celebrate and mourn together?

שולחן ערוך אורח חיים רכג במת אביו מברך דיין האמת היה לו ממון שיורשו אם אין לו אחים מברך גם כן שהחיינו ואם יש לו אחים במקום שהחיינו מברך הטוב והמטיב

**מגן אברהם (ד) מת אביו:** וה"ה שאר אדם כשר ומכ"ש ת"ח דהוי בכלל שמועות רעות והעולם נהגו לאומרו בלא שם ומלכות ואינו נכון (ב"ח) ועיין ביורה דעה סימן ש"מ ס"ו: (ו) דיין האמת: וצריך לברך בשם ומלכות בא"י אמ"ה דיין האמת ודוקא אביו או שאר אדם כשר שהוא מצטער עליו אבל שאר אדם א"צ לברך וע"כ נוהגין העולם לומר ברוך דיין האמת בלא שם ומלכות ועכ"פ באביו או קרוביו או אדם חשוב מכ"ש במיתת ת"ח חייב לברך דוקא בשם ומלכות. (ח) הטוב והמטיב: ועל מה שנתבשר ראשון מברך ראשון אם א"ל מת אביו והניח מעות יאמר דיין האמת ואח"כ הטוב והמטיב וכן להיפוך ואם משני בני אדם כאחד יקדים הטוב דאקדומי פורעניות לא מקדמינן הלק"ט ח"א סי' ר"ה. **משנה ברורה (ח) מת אביו** - וה"ה שאר אדם כשר שאדם מצטער עליו דהוא בכלל שמועות רעות מיהו העולם נוהגין לברך בלא שם ומלכות ואינו נכון ועכ"פ על ת"ח שמת שצריך בודאי להתאונן ולהתמרמר ע"ז וכן על קרוביו שחייב להתאבל עליהם ודאי יזכור הברכה בשם ומלכות:

אורח חיים רכב

**סעיף ב על שמועות רעות מברך 'ברוך אתה ה' אלוהינו מלך העולם דיין האמת:**

**סעיף ג חייב אדם לברך על הרעה בדעת שלמה ובנפש חפצה כדרך שמברך בשמחה על הטובה כי הרעה לעובדי השם היא שמחתם וטובתם כיון שמקבל מאהבה מה שגזר עליו השם נמצא שבקבלת רעה זו הוא עובד את השם שהיא שמחה לו:**

**על שמועות רעות: בין שהן רעות לו לבדו או גם לאחרים:**

אורח חיים סימן תרמח אבלות במועד

## 2. Shoah vs. Simchat Torah 5743

a. On the eve of Holocaust Remembrance Day, Yad Vashem Chairman Dani Dayan, speaks to Israel National News - Arutz Sheva about the Hamas massacre on October 7th, the Holocaust, the similarities and differences between the two, and antisemitism today around the world.

Dani Dayan agrees that there is a definite comparison between the Holocaust and the massacre of October 7th: "There is no doubt that it's felt by everyone, but one of the first lessons I was taught by the historians at Yad Vashem is that you can compare a pair of events with one condition; if you define the similarities, must also define the differences. There are similarities – the cruelty, the sadism, the intention to kill us all, but there are also a lot of differences that I think are much more powerful. The members of the first response teams, the volunteers, the first

responders, the soldiers, and the policemen that fought in Be'eri and Sderot and Nir Oz, had the same heroism as Mordechai Anielewicz and Pavel Frankl in the Warsaw Ghetto, but there was a completely different purpose. Anilevitz and Frankl fought in order to die with dignity. They fought in southern Israel in order to save lives, expel the enemy, and exert a toll on the perpetrators, and indeed they did. Dayan continued, "We have an independent state today. The IDF eventually arrived and the differences are much more powerful than the similarities."

### **b.President Herzog: Oct. 7 was not the Holocaust because today we have Israel and the IDF**

#### **Israeli President addresses start of Holocaust Remembrance Day at Yad Vashem, says Hamas terrorists sought to emulate the horrors inflicted by the Nazis.**

At this hour, this time of remembrance, at the threshold of these 'Days of Awe' for Israelis - which begin tonight and will conclude on the seventy-sixth Independence Day of the State of Israel - a holy spirit descends upon the land, and silence envelops all of the House of Israel. But this is not a regular Memorial Day. This year, the State of Israel is at war. We are at war.

Two hundred and twelve days have passed since the terrible massacre carried out by Hamas terrorists, against on babies, children, and elderly, women and men. Since then, we have been in a period of 'difficult days and heavy bloodshed.' Since then, our brothers and sisters have been held hostage by a cruel enemy, and our hearts along with them. I appeal from the heart to the families of the hostages, and I cry out, and pray, and hope, and commit on behalf of the entire nation: we will not rest and we will not be silent until our sons and daughters returned home.

From here, I embrace and offer strength to the bereaved families. I hope the success and safe return of our soldiers on the various fronts, and for the swift return of the displaced residents to their homes, and I pray for the complete healing of the wounded in body and soul.

**As I stand here tonight, at 'Yad VaShem,' at the foot of Mount Herzl, a video I saw at the height of the war stays with me and overwhelms me. In the video is embodied the essence of this holy place: Holocaust and revival intertwined, if you will – embracing each other; in the form of a grandfather and grandson, grandson and grandfather.**

**The grandfather - Eliakim Hollanders, a Holocaust survivor at 96 and a reservist in the IDF. The grandson, Uri Hollanders, a reserve soldier who went out for his first deployment, and came to visit his grandfather. They embrace. And the grandfather - a Holocaust survivor - whispers to his grandson, as tears flow down his cheeks: 'Blessed be God who allowed me to see you, armed, with a medal.' And adds: 'You are my victory.'**

Our dear ones, the survivors of the Holocaust - heroes of resilience, members of families and generations to come. On April 11, 1945, the forces of the United States Army arrived at the Buchenwald Concentration Camp on German soil. The Gates of Hell were opened. There were then 4,000 Jews in the camp. Women and men, elderly and children. Sole survivors from whole families, the last remnants of extensive communities that were turned to dust and ashes. One of them, as is known, is you - Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, formerly the Chief Rabbi of Israel and Chairman of Yad Vashem Council.

Dear people of Israel, my sisters and brothers. Throughout the decades that have passed since the Holocaust, we assured time after time: "Never again," and we swore that the Jewish people would never again stand defenseless and unprotected. And yet, despite all that, the horrors of the Holocaust shook us all during the October massacres, echoing in all our hearts.

To me as well, the descriptions of mothers silencing babies so they wouldn't cry and give away their hiding place; of children torn from their parents; and of abominable murderers – who saw in the Nazis a model to emulate, and who, burnt, and butchered entire families – echoed the horrors among us. But especially on this day, I ask that we pay close attention to the words of Naftali Furst, who, after the massacre, said to his granddaughter Micah, and I quote: "This is similar, it's terrifying, there are no words to describe this cruelty, but it's not the same thing. It's not a Holocaust. There won't be a second Holocaust."

Indeed - it's not a Holocaust. It wasn't a Holocaust - because the Holocaust was the deepest abyss in human history, in every measure. Never in the annals of human history has there been such a systematic and total murder, on such a massive scale – spanning countries and continents. Lasting for so long, like the Jewish Holocaust.

One out of every three Jews in the world was murdered by the Nazi extermination machine. In Auschwitz alone, the factory of death, the symbol of horror, about ten thousand Jews were murdered on average every day. But the magnitude of the Holocaust is not the sole reason.

**October 7th was not a Holocaust because today we have the State of Israel and the Israel Defense Forces.**

Although the results of the tragedy and the shock still haunt us; we don't forget that what our brothers and sisters who perished in the Holocaust could only dream of, only imagine: a country and an army of our own. An army that even now fights in a battle that has not yet ended – for our national home. The home of national independence.

I say this with complete and absolute conviction - despite the disaster and mourning that still afflicts us: nothing can destroy this home. This people, our people, who endured the most terrible Holocaust of all, and built for themselves sovereignty in their homeland two millennia after being exiled from it by force - nothing can erase them.

I hear the fear, worries, and concerns among many in the people. People ask me with deep concern – what will happen? I understand these concerns, and I respond decisively and smoothly: I believe in the eternal perseverance of Israel. I believe in the people of Israel, in the State of Israel, and in our duty to protect them at all costs.

For this reason, on this holy day, we must commit together to return and rebuild ourselves, relying on three foundations, weakened before the October massacre. And they are:

The foundation of self-defense.

The foundation of partnership and unity.

And the foundation of faith and hope.

**c.The first foundation: always knowing how to defend ourselves. Always. As Iran and its terrorist proxies attack us, the State of Israel must continue to develop the capabilities to defend itself against any threat and attack; with a strong and advanced defense force, and diplomatic alliances – global and regional. Integration**

**that will ensure us a proven qualitative advantage, and will fortify our existence as a Jewish and democratic state. (D.M. Do we have a new approach?????)**

The foundation of defense also pertains, of course, to our brothers and sisters in Jewish communities around the world, who are currently under threat and attack – in communities and campuses. I address them from here – from our eternal capital, and say: we stand with you shoulder to shoulder against the onslaught of antisemitism, terrorism, and hatred directed at you in recent days. The State of Israel is with you. We are all with you.

The second foundation is the foundation of partnership and unity. Let's not forget that our historical claim to statehood – a claim fully backed and endorsed by the family of nations and its institutions – is based, among other things, on being one people, entitled to its own national state. Therefore, when I speak of unity - I mean being one people. When I say unity - I mean both unity of destiny and unity of purpose. When I say unity - I mean being one people, with a variety of stances, beliefs, lifestyles, and worldviews. Unity is not uniformity. And I certainly do not mean to undermine the culture of Israeli debate, protest, and disagreement – an inseparable part of our DNA as a state that knows how to make decisions together and democratically.

#### **D. D.M. Definition of unity regarding fellow Jews.**

But we must not for a moment be confused, and allow divisiveness and factionalism to rule over us. Because our enemies don't hesitate for a moment.

If we don't listen to each other, if we don't share each other's pain, if we don't understand each other – despite our disagreements. If we turn into communities and camps that no longer remember what connects them – we might lose not only our unity as a people, but also our unity as a nation. We must remember at all times: Israeli unity – rare, courageous, beautiful – that we saw in the past half-year, both on the frontline and in the home front, is our true character.

And the third foundation is the foundation of faith, spirit, and hope. The deep faith in the righteousness of our path, the spirit of fighting for a better future, and the clear knowledge that hope will prevail. The story of Deputy Commander of the legendary 188th Barak Brigade in the Yom Kippur War - Colonel Meir Har-Zion - is a shining example of this.

#### **E. D.M. Faith in Hashem, indispensable part of the Nation.**

Meir - prisoner number 78524 from Auschwitz-Birkenau, and later a partisan - lost his entire family in the Holocaust. After World War II, he fulfilled the vow he made while in the footsteps of death: he immigrated to Israel, was one of the founders of Kibbutz Netzarim, and became a commander in the IDF. Addressing the soldiers amidst the battles of the Yom Kippur War, facing them directly, Meir said to them: "I started fighting before you were born. Four wars in this land, and a world war in Europe. The most terrible was in Europe. They took my parents, all of my family, without the chance to defend, to resist, to cry out. I haven't seen them since then. If you ask what a man my age is doing here? Here's your answer. I fight, boys. I fight unwaveringly, so that what happened to my generation's sons – won't happen again." That's what he said.

This faith in the justness of our path is the source of our people's fighting spirit. A spirit of fighting for the sake of hope, for the sake of the future, for the sake of building in our homeland. And for the sake of peace within us and with our neighbors. This fighting spirit belongs to the survivors of the Holocaust, and to the warriors of the Israel Defense

Forces. It's the fighting spirit of this generation – of the residents of the Western Negev and the North, and of the entire Israeli society - on the front line and home front.

And this fighting spirit – for the future and hope – that I was moved to see in the kibbutz Haggadah of my friends from Kibbutz Be'eri, since the early days of the state, they wrote: "And let us not forget, that only by their merit, and by the merit of all the house of Israel – have we reached peace, and that for their sake, and for the sake of establishing a beacon for the remnant of Israel – we are fighting now. We will stand firm in our place, no evil spirit will move us. Do not fear, do not be sad, do not extinguish the burning fire!"

Our beloved Holocaust survivors - you are our eternal heroes. Your legacy is a legacy of resilience, of pride, of hope. You are the source of my unwavering belief that our people can overcome anything. Everything!

We will continue to plant, to build and to rebuild, we will keep the eternal flame, we will continue to produce new generations, as you have done – in the name of the past and for the sake of the future, and we will prove to the whole world that the eternal people is here – forever. Am Yisrael Chai!

May the memory of our millions of brothers and sisters who were murdered in the Holocaust by the Nazis and their collaborators be blessed, and engraved on the heart of the nation for generations to come.

### **3. Approaching our enemy through the Lens of The TORAH**

R. Eliezer Melamed Shlita

a. Our enemies constantly declare that they want to destroy us in the cruelest way possible, yet many have not internalized this. This is how we accepted the Oslo Accords, the withdrawal from Gush Katif, the agreements to release murderers in exchange for hostages – the most horrific of which was the release of Gilad Shalit in exchange for 1,027 terrorists. If we understood that we are dealing with enemies who truly want to destroy the State of Israel, we would strive for complete victory in which the enemy surrenders unconditionally, and only then, begin to consider the day after.

### **The Meaning of the Mitzvah to Eradicate Amalek for Our Generation**

#### **1. The Reasoning behind Eradicating Amalek**

Amalek was the bitterest enemy of Israel and humanity, as Amalek was a people who did not engage in agriculture or industry, but rather trained their youth to suddenly attack villages and caravans – to kill those in their way, plunder their property, and sell the remaining men, women and children into slavery. They were difficult to fight since they had no permanent dwelling. They wandered in the deserts, attacking a settlement every few months, murdering, looting and selling the captives into slavery. It was impossible to predict where they would attack, as they roamed over hundreds of kilometers, threatening all settlements on the desert frontier. To defend against them required stationing

a large guard force in every nearby town, which was impractical. So the Amalekites succeeded in killing and plundering during their attacks, until most frontier residents congregated in crowded areas, leaving vast food-producing lands desolate out of fear. After the Israelites left Egyptian slavery, when they were tired and weary, the Amalekites began attacking them. Instead of seeing the magnitude of the miracle, or having mercy on the slaves who had just been freed, the Amalekites saw before them an opportunity to plunder booty and capture people to sell into slavery, and they began to prey on the stragglers behind the camp. Even after Joshua, on the order of Moshe Rabbeinu, fought against them and drove them away, it was clear this would not be the last battle – as they roamed Israel's borders, they would attack at any sign of weakness.

### **The Three Commandments Regarding Eradicating Amalek**

We were therefore commanded three mitzvot:

- 1) A positive commandment to remember what Amalek did to us.
- 2) A negative commandment not to forget.
- 3) A positive commandment to erase Amalek's descendants from the world (Deut. 25:17-19).

To eradicate Amalek required a large army to surround their vast area of activity, find them, block escape routes, engage in face-to-face battle, and destroy them. For this, the people of Israel needed to be established in its Land, and able to allocate large forces for an extended operation, as well as additional forces to guard the home front. This is why our Sages said (Sanhedrin 20b) that upon entering the Land, Israel was commanded three things: 1) to appoint a king. 2) Eradicate Amalek's descendants. 3) And only then, build the Temple.

### **The Moral Logic behind the Mitzvah**

From this, we can understand the moral logic behind the mitzvah – just as Amalek did to the cities they plundered, so too should be done to them. Indeed, they usually did not kill all the inhabitants of conquered cities, but that was only because they hoped to profit from selling them into slavery. If they found no buyers, they would kill them. This measure was also necessary as a deterrent. One who pardons enemies and does not avenge them in kind, emboldens those enemies to fight against them. The great empires severely punished those who opposed them, thus creating a deterrence that sustained their rule for centuries.

### **Amalek – The Root of Evil in the World**

On a deeper level, Amalek represents the root of evil in the world. Since the Exodus from Egypt until today, the greatest wicked have arisen specifically against the Jewish people. Just as the destiny of the Jewish people is to rectify the world, so do the world's evils awaken to fight against it. Therefore, eradicating Amalek is eradicating the root of evil from the world.

## **2. Amalekites Can Repent**

Although the Torah commanded eradicating Amalek's descendants, any Amalekite who accepts the Seven Noahide Laws, exempts himself from this ruling. Some **poskim** (Jewish law arbiters) say we even accept converts from Amalek (Rambam, Laws of Forbidden Relations 12:17). Our Sages relate that descendants of Haman converted, and taught Torah in Bnei Brak. Others say we do not accept converts from them, but if they joined another nation after their origin was forgotten, we accept converts from them (Chida, see Peninei Halakha: Zemanim 14:8:10).

Not only that, but the Torah commanded that before going to war with Amalek, we must offer them peace – meaning, that they accept upon themselves the Seven Noahide Laws and the sovereignty of Israel. If they accept – we do not fight them. If not – we fight until they are annihilated (Rambam, Laws of Kings 6:1-4).

Thus, the ideal way to fulfill the mitzvah to eradicate Amalek is through their repentance. If not, there is another way **le'chatchilah** (ideal), which is to eradicate them through war. In practice, the mitzvah was fulfilled in a **be'di'aved** (ex post facto) way: over the years, their descendants dispersed and assimilated among the nations, and their Amalekite ancestry was forgotten, absolving them from the law of Amalek without repenting.

### 3. One Whose Amalekite Descent is Revealed, but Identity is Different

Since we have learned that if an Amalekite accepts the Noahide laws he is exempt from the ruling, it follows that even if he changes his nationality and joins another nation, he is exempt from the Amalekite ruling. All the more so when his origins are forgotten, and he identifies from birth as belonging to another nation. In other words, the law of Amalek applies to one who ethnically and ideologically identifies as an Amalekite, not merely biological descent.

### 4. The Significance for Our Times

According to our Sages' tradition, Amalek has become extinct from the world, so today there is no nation or individual subject to the Amalekite ruling. But we are still commanded to remember the mitzvah and not forget it, because of the moral idea behind it. This mitzvah may be especially important for Jews, who are naturally merciful and kind. Many Torah commandments educate us in this way, to the point that our nature would be to pardon Amalek, as long as they committed not to attack. Therefore, the Torah commanded us to remember Amalek's deeds and eradicate them. Through this, we will remember that there is evil in the world, and when we must wage war, do so uncompromisingly until complete victory, as is customary in every generation. Only then can we rectify the world.

### The Concept Was Fulfilled Because We Forgot Amalek

**This year, we received a very painful reminder of this. Our enemies constantly declare their desire to destroy us in the cruelest possible way, yet many have failed to internalize this. This is how we accepted the Oslo Accords, the withdrawal from Gush Katif, the agreements to release murderers in exchange for hostages – the most horrific of which was the release of Gilad Shalit for 1,027 terrorists. If we understood that we are**



**dealing with enemies who truly want to destroy the State of Israel, we would strive for complete victory in which the enemy surrenders unconditionally, and only then consider the day after. But as long as we fail to understand this, many delude themselves into thinking that compromises can be found that will satisfy them.** Of course, war against the enemy must be conducted according to international law (as I explained in another article), but international law does not preclude total victory – it only prevents harm to uninvolved civilians that is not absolutely necessary.

We hope that by fulfilling the mitzvah of **Zachor**, from now on whenever there is an opportunity to strike the enemy, we will do so even if it consequently harms family members with them, as is permitted by international law. Apparently, had we acted this way, we would have won victories, while also causing much less harm to “uninvolved” civilians.

We hope that by fulfilling the mitzvah of **Zachor**, we can revert to the Halakhic principle of not redeeming a captive for more than his value – i.e. one captive, in exchange for one captive. Had we acted this way in the past, most of the anguish experienced by families of captives would have been avoided. If we do not remember this, there is a serious concern that there will be more families of bereaved and captives in the future.

We hope that by fulfilling the mitzvah of **Zachor**, we can strengthen ourselves to continue the war until complete victory over the enemy, after which there will be no authority seeking to undermine Israel, whether it is called Hamas, or the Palestinian Authority.

The Highest level of Araivut

**The difference between the mitzvah of fighting a war, as opposed to the standard mitzvah of saving a life, is that the mitzvah of fighting a war requires mesirut nefesh (self-sacrifice), and it overrides an individual's obligation to protect his own life (Maran HaRav Kook, Mishpat Kohen 143; Responsa, Tzitz Eliezer 13:100).**



Soldiers of the Neztach Yehuda Battalion (Nachal Charedi) complete the final stages of a 40-kilometer journey all through the night.

#### 5) Machloket L'shaim Shamayim/Achdut

a. A couple of months ago, I was handed a pamphlet titled "Why B'nai Torah Don't Belong in the IDF" by a colleague of mine, a Rosh Kollel. Bothered as I was by its arguments, I wrote a response, and a dialogue ensued. Last week, he distributed volume two of his pamphlet containing my counterarguments.

Early in the war, I asked a friend learning in the Mir whether his shul would be saying any sort of Mi Shebeirach for the soldiers. My friend, gabbai of the shul, questioned why that should be necessary if general tefillot are being said for everyone's safety. A respectful, lively discussion ensued and he said he would ask the shul's Rav. A week later, he informed me that they are saying a Mi Shebeirach for the soldiers composed by Rav Yaakov Hillel. We commended each other for being able to disagree on such a contentious topic, and we each gained from hearing the other's viewpoints. There is a cardinal rule I strive to live up to in such conversations: More important than arguing one's point is arguing it in a way that will stimulate further discussion, not shut down the discussion. It is in this spirit which I submit this letter. It is important to open with valid concerns which I believe Centrist Orthodoxy needs to continuously recommit itself to – specifically, belief in Divine Providence and taking care to avoid an attitude of kochi v'otzem yadi. Embracing IDF service carries the occupational hazard of forgetting that any military success of ours owes to Hashem, when in fact, based on the natural order, there is no way we could match up to enemies as large and well-funded as those who surround us.

Argumentation against chareidi service in the IDF is couched in two primary arenas: halachic and cultural. A primary halachic argument, used most recently by Rav Yitzhak Yosef and [Agudath Israel's spokesperson](#), is that all chareidi youth are considered Shevet Levi, whom the Rambam apparently exempts from military service (Hilchot Shemittah v'Yovel 13:13). As Rav Aharon Lichtenstein demonstrates in *Leaves of Faith*, this is a spurious argument. First, Rambam describes a person totally divorced from the material world who devotes himself wholly to spiritual pursuits. I can easily embrace a group of genuine such talmidei chachamim being exempt from the army based on the Rambam. (This although many Torah sources would suggest specifically the most G-d-fearing Jews should be the ones fighting, as they have the most merits.) But we know that thousands of young men in the chareidi community are not learning most of the day and, truthfully, even many of those learning don't come close to this elevated standard.

b. Second, Rambam is famously analyzed regarding how he categorized various halachot. If this halacha was meant to speak to an actual exemption of war, it would seem to belong in Hilchot Melachim, not the end of Sefer Zera'im. It seems more likely to be something to aspire to, an inspiring message with which the Rambam often ends his sefarim.

Third, taking it to be an actual exemption from defending people in danger, and letting one's own safety be reliant on other people putting themselves at risk, seems radically opposed to Hilchot Talmud Torah 3:10 and Peirush HaMishnayot Avos 4:5. There, the Rambam discusses the chillul Hashem and disgrace to Torah which results from willfully being dependent on others for financial sustenance.

Fourth, if the Rambam meant that Shevet Levi had a categorical exemption from all situations of war, this would go against an explicit non-aggadic Gemara, Kiddushin 21b, which discusses whether a kohen is permissible to an "eishet yifat to'ar."

Fifth, the Rambam in Hilchot Shabbat 2:23 discusses a case where non-Jews come with clear intention to murder. Not only do we violate Shabbat to fight against them, Rambam says, he emphasizes that it's incumbent upon every able-bodied Jew to do so. Surely, extra Talmud Torah is not more important than Shabbat observance!

A second primary argument centers around whether this war is a milchemet mitzvah. The Rambam appears to make it clear that when the Jewish nation is murderously attacked, it is a milchemet mitzvah shel ezrat Yisrael mi'yad tzar (saving the Jewish people from a murderous enemy). Yet some argue that this Rambam is irrelevant today, since we no longer have an anointed king or kohen gadol who consults with Hashem via the urim v'tumim. Such an argument is difficult to understand, since no commentary seems to have suggested this until the Chazon Ish. In fact, the Shem MiShmuel (Shoftim, 1911) makes the exact opposite argument regarding all the wars in the times of the Shoftim, wars which were a milchemet mitzvah despite not having a king. The Chazon Ish himself wrote that if there were a milchemet mitzvah, every Jew would be obligated to go fight in it (Orach Chaim, Eruvin, 114).

c. The most recent use of this argument is from Rav Yitzchak Berkovits, for whom I have great respect, in [last week's Mishpacha](#). Curiously, he quotes Rav Moshe Feinstein. No source is provided there, but it seems he is referring to Igrot Moshe Ch"m 2:78, where R' Moshe says that even a milchemet mitzvah requires approval from the Sanhedrin and the urim

v'tumim. However, R' Moshe goes on to say there that this would not apply to the subcategory of milchemet hatzalah, which characterizes most of Israel's wars. Either way, the same Rav Feinstein explicitly says that we do go to such a milchemet mitzvah even without the kohein gadol or urim v'tumim (Dibrot Moshe al Shabbat, Vol 1. 20:132), which is the opposite of what Rav Berkovits quotes him as saying. A third argument, buttressed by many sources, emphasizes the importance of the spiritual aspect of the war (Torah and tefillah). Of course Torah and tefillah are an equally critical part of any Jewish war. No dati-leumi Jew would dispute that. Yet two brief notes and some questions are in order.

First, these sources prove the inverse – namely, not everyone learns Torah full-time. We live in olam hazeh and the physical battles need to be fought as well. Second, while the fear-mongering rhetoric emerging in the wake of funds being frozen to chareidi yeshivot declares that Torah learning is in danger, the fact is there are more people learning Torah than at any point in Jewish history, even if we don't count any Israeli chareidi draft-age yeshiva students!

D. And, if Torah study is what protects from the most dangerous of threats, including Hamas, why be bothered by the Supreme Court's recent ruling? Surely more intensive Torah study is all that's needed to solve the issue. Also, if Torah study is so critical to the point that yeshiva students could not leave yeshiva for one day to help farmers whose livelihood was crushed, why were they able to take a day off to vote in municipal elections? Or go around my neighborhood asking for money on Purim, while drunk no less? All this being said, in my experience of numerous conversations the past few months, halachic concerns are only the surface-level issue. Once the halachic issues are covered, the primary issue which emerges is, in one form or another, a fear of secularization by joining the army.

Many chareidi rabbonim, most recently Rav Yitzchak Berkovits in the aforementioned article, like to point to the attrition rate in the dati-leumi community as the reason to avoid the army. The concern is real, and many in the secular community do wish to see chareidim assimilate via the army. However, such sweeping generalizations ignore three critical points.

One, the reality is completely changing regarding how the army relates to Torah/emunah/frumkeit. Twenty years ago, a commander was officially reprimanded for referring to "Avinu she'bashamayim" before battle. Now? Commanders are loudly doing kabbalat ol malchut shamayim before going into battle, all their soldiers answer, and no one is reprimanded. It's not the same reality anymore. Are there still spiritual dangers? Sure, but not nearly in the same way they once were.

Second, among the wide spectrum of Israel's dati community, there are those whose education does not leave them with religious observance/avodat Hashem at the top of their values pyramid upon graduating 12th grade. Such people go on to drop religious observance as they enter the army, yes, but their decision to do so came before graduating high school, and was going to happen regardless of whether they actually spent time in the army. Sociological data from [Dr. Ido Liberman](#) backs this up. In Gemara-speak, the army is the siman, not the siba.

Third, there is a major distinction between yeshivot hesder and mechinot (with exceptions on both sides). Yeshivot hesder incorporate many years of intensive, classical yeshiva Talmud study along with deep exploration of the fundamentals of Jewish thought. As well, their students tend to go through the army together as a group (contrary to Rav Berkovits' assertion that this

is only true in the beginning of their service) and overall, yeshivot hesder graduates seem to experience a much lower dropout rate than many mechinot. This is particularly relevant because it demonstrates how, institutionally, through extensive negotiations, yeshivot hesder took the spiritually challenging environment of the army and turned it into something much more favorable to a religious hesder soldier. If chareidim came to army and demanded some suitable framework as yeshivot hesder did, they'd probably get a favorable answer as well.

e. Actually, not probably. One brave Rav has already done so. Rabbi Carmi Gross, formerly of the Ma'arava chareidi yeshiva high school, created a chareidi hesder yeshiva, Derech Chaim. Rabbi Gross, whose father, Rabbi Alexander Gross, was a close talmid of Rav Shraga Feivel Mendelovitch, recently gave a Hebrew interview to Makor Rishon. There, he lays out his vision in which a chareidi life and IDF service complement each other, rather than clash. Along with nine hours a day of Gemara b'iyun and bekiut, the students study computers at night. Ultimately, they serve in cyber units with the IDF, but sleep in the yeshiva and return each evening for night seder. Being that this is an internal Israeli issue, what is the relevance of writing about it in The Jewish Press? One, it affects all Jews. Last week, a seminary student I know – a Bais Yaakov graduate – broke down crying after seeing a chareidi anti-draft protest in Geula. Second, with so much anti-IDF rhetoric emerging, it is important not to just nod along agreeably nor to spew rhetoric in return, but to take a step back and reflect on whether the reasons for such rhetoric resonate with us and, if not, why not. Third, it is important to realize that even people in America can make a difference. If an Anglo chareidi is making aliyah, research the various sub communities and schools one can join. RBS is now filled with serious Torah communities and schools which encourage integration into the workforce and allow for pursuing army service, rather than demonizing it.

Lastly, one can choose to support yeshivot and organizations that bring limud haTorah and army service together, such as yeshivot hesder, Rabbi Gross' yeshiva (note: I do not know anybody affiliated with the yeshiva), or Tzalah, an organization endorsed by Rav Asher Weiss which strengthens the connection to Torah for religious IDF soldiers.

#### 6. Where did we go wrong? Avi Abelow

a. "Many people do not truly understand the tremendous challenges that Netanyahu, and the government of Israel, are dealing with in trying to protect Israel from the Iranian terror octopus, and defeat Hamas down South, Hezbollah up North, and free our captives.

#1. Externally - Our closest ally, the Biden administration of the USA, that provides us with all of our weapons and munitions, is working on giving Hamas & Iran guarantees that Israel won't be able to attack them. Basically, our closest ally is protecting our enemies. **(D.M. Need for serious discussion here. Can & must we become more independent?)**

#2. Internally - The heads of our security/defense/intelligence services run policy and make their staffing decisions based on being more afraid of the impact Smotrich, Ben-Gvir and the National religious public can have on Israeli society than Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran. Which explains why that defense establishment is right now promoting

officers personally responsible for the failure of the IDF and intelligence services on Oct. 7th, and instead letting go of not promoting all the most heroic officers who have the true understanding and motivation to turn the IDF into a winning fighting force, because they are religious.

To give one example of this internal challenge, my friend Shai Kalach is a pilot in the Israeli Air Force. He was the only pilot to vocally repudiate the horrible, destructive campaign of air force pilots who proudly pronounced that they would refuse to serve due to the judicial reform a year ago. When Shai was called up to serve on Oct. 8th, after the massacre, when he got to his base his higher ups told him to go home, that they didn't want him to come and serve anymore. When he asked them why, they told him it was because he repudiated the campaign of air force pilots to refuse to serve. Internalize that, the air force high command punished the one pilot who stood up against refusal to serve, a position many in the high command publicly supported!

Senior Israeli journalist Amit Segal found out about this immoral incident and called Shai to verify. Shai verified the story, and Amit called the senior officer of the Israeli officer threatening to publicize the story if Shai was not returned to service in the air force. Due to that threat, Shai was returned to the air force but to a lower position than before.

That story about Shai highlights the ideological agenda of the senior commander of the Israeli security/intelligence establishment.

**(D.M. Tzarich Iyun)**

Despite this all, we are winning this war and we will win it. But now you have a deeper understanding of the external and internal challenges Netanyahu has to diplomatically tiptoe around, behind the headlines in the media, in order to best protect the Jewish state of Israel.

b.Ultimately, Netanyahu is the best realistic leader we have who understands the depth of these horrific challenges we have to deal with in trying to protect us from our true enemies.

And above it all, we have Hashem above protecting us!"

7.Unity Amid Adversity: The Secret to Israel's Remarkable Happiness



In a thought-provoking op-ed for the Wall Street Journal, American historian Gil Troy explores the profound sense of happiness pervading Israeli society, even in the face of adversity. Despite the challenges posed by geopolitical tensions and internal political polarization, Israel astonishingly ranks fifth in the latest World Happiness Index, outpacing many seemingly more tranquil nations, including the United States.

Troy, a respected presidential historian and senior fellow in Zionist thought at the Jewish People Policy Institute, argues that the essence of Israeli happiness lies not in the absence of conflict, but in the deep social cohesion, enduring family ties, and a rich tapestry of tradition and history that bind its people. This unity was especially evident following Hamas's invasion, which, despite its horrors, brought Israelis closer together, finding solace and strength in each other and a shared purpose.

Contrary to the isolated and often directionless feelings that plague many in the West, Israelis derive their joy from a profound sense of community, belonging, and a purposeful existence. The nation's

happiness is rooted in family and communal bonds, nurtured by a culture that values diverse influences and adult role models beyond the nuclear family.

Highlighting the importance of family as the backbone of democracy, Troy echoes political thinker Alexis de Tocqueville, emphasizing that families instill virtues of loyalty, commitment, and self-sacrifice. This foundation extends to the wider community, fostering a culture of cooperation, trust, and hope, ensuring that no Israeli ever feels truly alone.

Moreover, Troy points out, Israelis are buoyed by a deep connection to a millennia-spanning narrative, seeing themselves as part of a continuous Jewish saga. This historical consciousness, with its cycles of oppression and liberation celebrated in key holidays, provides a resilient framework for understanding and overcoming contemporary challenges.

In a world where happiness is often equated with material comfort or fleeting pleasures, Israel's example stands out as a beacon of how a society can flourish through adversity, bound by the unbreakable ties of family, tradition, and a collective sense of destiny. This is the spirit of Israel, a nation that, despite facing unparalleled challenges, continues to shine brightly on the world stage, embodying the values of unity, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to life and liberty.

עמו אנכי בצרה

8על אלה אני בוכיה

a.Captain Daniel Peretz HY"D While mourning his son Captain Daniel Peretz, who commanded a tank unit in Nahal Oz on October 7, Rabbi Doron Perez explains why he decided to hold a funeral despite his son's body being held in Gaza. Rabbi Doron Perez held a funeral for his fallen son, [Captain Daniel Perez](#), despite Hamas holding his body in Gaza. "We knew after six weeks that Daniel was injured, after all kinds of tests. They told us that his blood was inside the tank, outside the tank, and they also found his ranks on the way to the border with quite a bit of blood," he explained. "At this stage, from the army's perspective, there was nothing necessarily indicative of a serious injury. We hoped and prayed it wasn't a serious injury, we prayed it was a light injury, but following the new findings and videos, they determined his death."





How did you decide what to do? We spoke with families in similar situations who told us they would not hold the funeral until the body was returned. "It's different. For our dear friends, Hagit and Rubi Hen, [whose son was killed in the same incident](#), there is nothing to bury, there is no blood either, so they don't have a burial obligation. If there's nothing at all to bury, you don't bury. There's no such thing as burying a completely empty coffin. Therefore, that's the right thing to do from all aspects." "In our case, there was blood, and relatively significant blood. There is what is called in Judaism 'a quart of blood,' which means if there is a certain amount of blood, there is an obligation to bury. Since there is a burial obligation, which others don't have, we said: let's honor our son, let's focus on what we have. His body is still not here, and it will come with God's help along with all the casualties and with all the living ones quickly, but what we have is blood, and it is written in the Torah 'for the blood is the life.' My wife and I decided that this is not the end of the story, we have all our lives to cope with the loss. We also need to fight for the body to return, but we said: let's honor Daniel," Rabbi Perez said.



"This is the hardest struggle of all, the loss of a child. We are all suffering, but when I saw the longing of my wife, the suffering of a mother, I have never seen such suffering in my life. It is written in the Midrashim about the Binding of Isaac that Abraham's trial was difficult, but the moment Sarah, his mother, even knew there was a trial to sacrifice the son, she immediately passed away. Our suffering is indescribable, but if while coping with our personal grief and pain, we gain some comfort or offer comfort, strengthen others and ourselves, it is a privilege." Israeli heroism from all parts of our society, people who put their lives on the line and simply teach us what bravery is. This generation knows what bravery is. Our son has become our teacher and rabbi. I offer condolences to all the families suffering with us, and wish that all the kidnapped return soon, and only good to all the wounded and all our soldiers."

b.Yosef Malachi Guedalia



Sgt. First Class Yosef Malachi Guedalia who was killed in Kfar Aza on October 8, 2023. (Courtesy)

Sgt. First Class Yosef Malachi Guedalia, 22, of the Duvdevan commando unit, was killed in action on October 7 near Kibbutz Kfar Aza. He is survived by his parents, Dina and Yitzhak, and his siblings Shira, Asher, Yael, Micha, Esther and Elisheva, as well as his wife, Senai. Guedalia was born and raised in Beit Shemesh in an English-speaking family. Proud of his Spanish-Portuguese heritage, he was “a very gentle, sweet person. He would blend seamlessly into any new group he joined. People loved him and he was accepted by everyone,” a relative told The Times of Israel. Guedalia was due to finish his IDF service soon, and had gotten married almost exactly one year ago. His was buried on October 11 at the Har Hertzl Military Cemetery in Jerusalem. [A fundraising campaign](#) for the Duvdevan unit was started in his name. It describes Guedalia as “a friend, a brother, a soldier, a husband, and most importantly a beautiful soul. He left behind a wonderful family and a heroic unit that could really use some good news and is continuously fighting for our safety.”

His wife, Senai, wrote on Instagram that her husband was “kind, generous, happy, curious to learn more, dedicated and loved life. There was no situation in which he wasn’t smiling, no situation in which he wasn’t calm. He was inspired by the people around him and the new people he met.” He was “an incredible, dedicated, and loving husband. Even from afar, I always felt he was close by and with me whenever I needed.” He was also “a very dedicated soldier,” she wrote, “Yosef loved being in the army, and considered it his most important mission. He loved his friends, he loved the fast pace, and he loved that he was doing something so meaningful. Even after almost four years, he loved it and wasn’t tired of it.”



Yosef Guedalia (right) with his wife Senai, grandparents Susan and Isidore Zuckerbrod (Family handout/PA Wire)

On his fourth journey into the kibbutz, Mr Guedalia's armoured vehicle was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) and he was shot as he fled the smoking wreck, his grandfather said. Yosef Guedalia has been named as another British-Israeli killed by Hamas in the 7 October attack. The 22-year-old soldier was part of an anti-terror unit when he was killed confronting Hamas gunmen at Kibbutz Kfar Aza. His brother Asher said he "literally saved people minutes before he got shot". He added that Yosef had helped evacuate injured civilians before returning to fight Hamas. Asher said there is a video of Yosef carrying out an injured civilian who is now recovering in hospital. "He acted with heroism and determination, he continued to fight and didn't think of himself or hesitate...He went in to rescue as many citizens as possible before they got murdered in their homes and to kill as many terrorists as he could," Asher said.

He added that Yosef was "always happy, there was no bad in him", adding he was "a righteous and good person". Yosef's mother was born in Manchester, and he was about to celebrate his first wedding anniversary.

"I'm sure he understood he might not get back to his wife and his family but that's his calling. That's the hero we had for 22 years," Asher said. His grandfather Isidore Zuckerbrod, whose parents survived the Holocaust, told the PA news agency that Yosef returned to the kibbutz four times while under fire to rescue hostages. On his fourth journey, his armoured vehicle was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade and he was shot as he fled, his grandfather said. Israeli soldiers shot the men who were dragging Yosef's body away in an effort to use him as a "dead hostage", he said. They managed to retrieve his body. "Every person who dies is a world in themselves - if you save one life you save the whole world," Mr Zuckerbrod said. "Yosef's loss to me is the loss of a whole world."

c.Elisha Medan

**Elisha Medan, son of Rabbi Yaakov Medan, was critically injured while fighting in Gaza. Now, 53 days later, he will begin rehabilitation - learning to adapt to life without both his legs.**

After fifty-three days of hospitalization, IDF soldier Elisha Medan, who was critically injured and lost both his legs while fighting in Gaza, was released to rehabilitation. Medan is the son of Rabbi Yaakov Medan, a prominent Religious-Zionist rabbi. On Tuesday, he was released from Shaare Zedek Medical Center, where he had been treated since his injury. He will now head to Tel Hashomer Medical Center to begin the lengthy process of rehabilitation. Upon his release from Shaare Zedek, Medan said, "The doctor in the helicopter who evacuated me insisted on evacuating all the injured. I think that was my biggest miracle - that they allowed the helicopter to take all four of the injured, and he dropped me off here, with all the injured. That is the biggest miracle, that I landed here and not in another hospital. There is no chance that I would be so healthy, happy, optimistic, without you. You're such an amazing staff, you're the dream of every critically-injured person. From the cleaning staff, the aides, the nurses, the doctors, and the managers. It's just an amazing, terrific staff. Thank you very much for saving my life."

Dozens of staff members bid an emotional farewell to Medan, saying, "We met a hero who fought courageously together with his comrades. Elisha's survival, his emotional and physical strength, were great inspiration for us. We came to offer encouragement and came out encouraged. From all our hearts, we wish Elisha and all those injured in the war an easy and speedy recovery." Prof. Ofer Merin, Director of Shaare Zedek Medical Center, told Medan, "Every one of us has a part in your recovery. But the main credit goes to you. Your energy, your will. We need that in the staff. The main credit is yours. Thank you to the amazing staff. May we see soldiers leaving and coming back to visit.





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d.The story of Rotem Inbar

Rotem Inbar – served as a combatant in the Special Recon Commando of the Nahal Infantry Brigade, served on the “Sufa” Outpost. He was wounded on October 7 when the terrorists infiltrated their base. “South of the Gaza Strip, in front of Rafah, the unit’s role was to protect the surrounding settlements. Half of the fighters went home that weekend. He goes to the border at five in the morning and the Rapid Response Squad is ready on standby. Normal routine procedure. Suddenly there was a terrifying barrage of rockets from all directions. Before the siren we heard booms and realized that something was not normal, we got into our uniforms, took our weapons and ran to a protected area.

Many rockets fell near them. The Company Commander was distraught, updated that there was an intrusion, we were unaware of the numbers, but we went on heightened alert. The special lookout post reported that she had no cameras.

Non-stop shooting. We jumped to the front guardhouse, heard a shot, tried to understand

One of the fighters recognized someone suspicious.

See an RPG, the outpost is surrounded but we had no idea that was the case.

Amir the senior officer went up for observation.

The rear guard suffered the hardest blow.

A battle on three fronts. Attacked from all directions.

We had shots, whistles inside the outpost.

It took us a few seconds to come to, we realized that they had inserted their rifle barrels in the holes and we realized that we had no protected place.

Our outpost was under a three-pronged attack.

The terrorists manage to break through the gate. The fighters realize that only the dining room remains the most protected.

The wounded lie in the back, Rotem sees the terrorists right in front of his eyes. He hears the grenade hit the floor

Two meters from me, I realized it could kill me

There was a strong barrage of shots, I aimed my rifle towards to the entrance

I had a feeling that if I left the door no one would get out alive.

The grenades kept coming at us.

One of the grenades exploded next to me, the whole leg was in shreds, they put a tourniquet on me.

Excruciating pain.

We are being shouted at in Hebrew, raise your hands..

The grenades did not stop.

The terrorists managed to blow up the back door of the dining room.

Only at half past one did a combat helicopter arrive. Fires a missile from the air while the soldiers are below.

We felt hope, that there was a chance we would win.

Then the fighters of Shayetet 13 (Naval Commando) at 14:30 broke into the outpost and the helicopter arrived to evacuate the wounded.

It took them several hours to take control of the outpost.

In the end, unfortunately, the civilian residents were hurt, but we did our best.”





e. Although the **October 7 Hamas massacre** produced unprecedented devastation in Israel, it also gave rise to modern-day Maccabees. As we usher in Hanukkah at the darkest hour in recent memory for all of world Jewry, we recognize the courage of the following eight individuals — one for each night of Hanukkah. Some of them made the ultimate sacrifice. Others have survived against the greatest of odds. All of them are showing us the light.

**f. Youssef Ziadna - A hero behind the wheel**



Youssef Ziadna has given new meaning to the concept of a “magic bus.”

The Bedouin mini-bus driver is credited with saving 30 Jewish Israelis from the attack on the Nova music festival. Once he reached the Sa’ad junction, a mile away from Kibbutz Kfar Aza, Ziadna was met by a man who had escaped the attack and frantically signaled to the driver that he should make a U-turn. Yet Ziadna pushed through, more than doubling the capacity of his 14-passenger van and navigating a flurry of rockets and gunshots along the road to safety. “I had an option to go back,” Ziadna **said**. “A weaker man may have done a U-turn at that junction. But I said no way, I will throw myself at death if it means I can save lives.”

**g. Staff Sgt. Roey Weiser - A hero of selflessness**



In the process of diverting terrorists' attention away from his besieged base at the Kerem Shalom border crossing with Gaza, Staff Sgt. Roey Weiser allowed at least 12 other soldiers to escape and survive. The Israeli-American soldier from the Golani Brigade paid with his life, but his selfless act won't soon be forgotten. He "died how he lived, by putting others first," **said his mother**, Naomi Feifer-Weiser. "Roey lived his life to the fullest, almost always with a smile on his face," she said. "He was always looking for ways to help those around him, and before he was conscripted he was a volunteer firefighter who was always the first to jump into action when needed."

**h. Ariel Bilya - A hero of his family**



Ariel Bilya was originally scheduled to join the IDF reserves the day after the Oct. 7 attacks. But he never donned the uniform. He died in an unexpected battle, successfully saving 10 members of his family, including a newborn baby. Bilya fought off invading Hamas terrorists with a metal rod so that members of his immediate and extended family could escape from a home in Ofakim, where they were spending the Simchat Torah holiday. He was shot dead while attempting to flee via the window, while the rest of his relatives were subsequently rescued from a neighbor's roof. "It's a tragic miracle," **said his sister-in-law**, Michal. "We were at one funeral instead of 11. The ending is sad and happy together."



**i.Lisa Fliegel - A hero of healing**

As a trauma therapist who spent more than 30 years working with Israelis and Palestinians, it's almost as if Lisa Fliegel had trained for the aftermath of Oct. 7.

Fliegel, who formerly lived on a kibbutz, is a consultant to the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute. She has trained trauma workers in Israel and the West Bank, as well as in Northern Ireland, and has worked with survivors of the Boston Marathon bombing and with family members of homicide victims in that city. Following the Hamas attacks, she departed the Bay State of Massachusetts to the Jewish state of Israel, to help heal the countless Israelis traumatized by the attacks on their Gaza-adjacent communities. “My whole philosophy is that therapists need to be in the trenches,” **she said**. “People need to know that you are in their world and seeing what they see and they experience.”

### **j.Yossi Landau - A hero on a holy mission**



For ZAKA — Israel’s volunteer organization for disaster victim identification, search and rescue, and the recovery of human remains — October 7 was an unthinkable day. That’s doubly true for **Yossi Landau, ZAKA’s head of operations for southern Israel**. Yet Landau is unflinchingly committed to the task at hand. “I am telling the volunteers that we are on a mission,” **he said**. “It’s a holy mission. It’s in our religion...We are going to get everybody to have a grave and a place where their family should be able to come and say a blessing and give a blessing.” ZAKA is renowned in Israel for its solemn, sacred work to honor those who meet sudden death and ensure a proper Jewish burial. ZAKA volunteers processed more than 670 bodies in the first week following the October 7 attack. The unfolding shock and horror were occasionally pierced by moments of solace, as when a crying baby was found in the back seat of a car. Sadly, the baby’s parents were not spared. The family was emblematic of ZAKA’s motto: “To save those who can be saved, and honor what remains.”

October 7 and its aftermath brought a haunting sense of déjà vu for Landau, who was also a first-responder after the September 11 terrorist attacks on the U.S. “I’m a survivor of the Sept. 11 attacks,” **he said**. “I was there. I helped out with the bodies, I helped out with the people. So, nothing is new for me.”



**k. Rachel Edri - A hero of hospitality**

What would you do if Hamas terrorists entered your living room? Rachel Edri served them tea and cookies. She even sang to them in Arabic. “One of the terrorists said to me: ‘You remind me of my mother,’” **she recounted**. Edri said she replied to the attacker, “I am really like your mother. I will help you, I will take care of you. What do you need?” The unlikely gesture of hospitality worked, buying her time until police arrived at the scene and freed her, ultimately killing the terrorists. Her creative, lifesaving solution has earned her folk hero status.

9. Next Chapter?

**a. Israeli UN Ambassador Erdan blasts UN for fueling antisemitism on US college campuses in fiery speech at UNGA**



Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations Gilad Erdan speaks after U.S. Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Robert Wood voted against members of the Security Council allowing Palestinian U.N. membership during a Security Council at UN headquarters in New York City, April 18, 2024.

In a stinging speech to the [UN General Assembly](#) on Wednesday, Israeli Ambassador to the UN Gilad Erdan accused the United Nations of triggering a new wave of antisemitism on [American college campuses](#) by falsely accusing Israel in its war against Hamas terrorists in Gaza.

b. "By falsely condemning Israel and marking the Jewish State as the foundation of all evil, you are emboldening antisemites and terrorists alike. It is because of you that these mobs think that attacking Jews is acceptable. That calling for the deaths of Israelis is tolerable," Erdan told the members of the UN General Assembly (UNGA).

"This body reeks of antisemitism. It's everywhere," he continued and described pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel protests on college campuses that have led to Jewish students being attacked and barred from classes in recent weeks.

"The chants of the pro-Palestinian rioters on campuses are calls for Israel's destruction. We always knew that Hamas hides in schools. We just didn't realize that it's not only schools in Gaza. It's also Harvard, [Columbia](#), and many elite universities," Erdan said in his fiery speech.

“The UN cares nothing for Israeli blood. It is a collaborator with the Nazis of our day. Working to ensure Hamas’s survival and even reward them for murder and rape. I have no words,” Erdan stated.

c.“The UN! The General Assembly! The anti-Israel vitriol spread by this organization is what sparked what we are seeing today,” Erdan said as he continued to lambast the general assembly.

“The UN today is the main impediment to peace. You. You are the dream come true for every Palestinian terrorist that seeks to destroy Israel through diplomatic terror. Because without your support, the Palestinians would have had to internalize that negotiations and mutual compromises are the only way forward – that’s how you make peace.”

The UN has singled out Israel while wars are raging in Sudan and Myanmar, Erdan said, calling out the Houthis for dragging Yemen to disaster. He also said that Pakistan is in the process of forcefully displacing 1.3 million people, Afghans are back under the Taliban’s radical control, and Iran is forcibly repressing women.

“But you aren’t interested in criticizing rogue states. You are interested only in smearing the Jewish state,” he continued and told the international UN community that if the United Nations does not make a serious change, “the world will wake up and see the disaster that the UN has become,” Erdan continued.

“In the future, students will study the fall of the UN. They will learn of this organization’s moral bankruptcy and blindness. They will be taught that your indifference and hypocrisy is what brought the UN crashing down.”

d.Erdan wrote on X: “The mobilization of the UN on behalf of Hamas murderers is nauseating and makes me want to vomit! And promoting the unilateral recognition of a Palestinian state is a message that terrorism pays off.”

“And, you know by advancing a Palestinian state, you are telling the child murdering, child rapists that terror pays off. You have nothing for the victim but have mobilized for the murderers. You know that the Palestinian Authority doesn’t meet the criteria for statehood.”

“The Palestinians rejected every peace plan,” Erdan added, “because, to them, the existence of a Jewish state is unacceptable. This is not about land.”

Writing on X about his speech to UNGA, Erdan posted: “I quoted the Passover Haggadah on the UN stage and told the ambassador: Many have tried to destroy us, from the most powerful empires through the most evil decrees – but they all failed. Because the Jewish people are the people of eternity, and the State of Israel will exist forever!”

#### **e.Netanyahu makes rare pledge in English at Holocaust Remembrance Day event**

Netanyahu delivered an English message during his speech at the start of the Holocaust Remembrance Day events in Jerusalem, speaking amid the ongoing war with Hamas, which we has accused of being the modern-day Nazis. The speech took an unusual turn when he shifted language since Netanyahu normally does not use this forum to speak in English.



This time, however, with the war with Hamas continuing for some 7 months and with more than 130 hostages still in captivity and immense pressure on Israel not to complete its conquest of the Gaza Strip by entering Rafah, the prime minister felt it was important to pause his Hebrew speech and repeat critical lines in Hebrew, perhaps in order to dispel the notion that there was a ceasefire in the offing that would end the war.

The following is the verbatim message:

f. In the Holocaust the Jewish people were totally defenseless against those who sought our destruction no nation came to our aid. Today, we confront again enemies bent on our destruction. I say to the leaders of the world: No amount of pressure, no decision by any international forum will stop Israel from defending itself. As the prime minister of Israel – the one and only Jewish state – I pledge here today from Jerusalem, on this Holocaust Remembrance Day: If Israel is forced to stand alone, Israel will stand alone. But we know we are not alone because countless decent people around the world support our just cause. I say to you: We will defeat our genocidal enemies. Never Again is now.

G. The Rambam's approach to our enemies

### הלכות מלכים ומלחמות פרק ו

**א** אין עושין מלחמה עם אדם בעולם, עד שקוראין לו לשלום--אחד מלחמת הרשות, ואחד מלחמת מצוה: שנאמר "כי תקרב אל עיר, להילחם עליה--וקראת אליה, לשלום" ([דברים כ"ג](#)). אם השלימו, וקיבלו שבע מצוות שנצטוו בני נוח עליהן--אין הורגין מהן נשמה; והרי הן למס, שנאמר "היו לך למס--ועבדוך" ([דברים כ"א](#)).

**ב** קיבלו עליהן המס, ולא קיבלו העבדות, או שקיבלו העבדות, ולא קיבלו המס--אין שומעין להם: עד שיקבלו שניהם. והעבדות שיקבלו--היא שיהיו נבזים ושפלים למטה, ולא ירימו ראש בישראל, אלא יהיו כבושים תחת ידם; ולא יתמנו על ישראל, לשום דבר בעולם.

**ג** והמס שיקבלו--הוא שיהיו מוכנים לעבודת המלך בגופם וממונם, כגון בניין החומות, וחיזוק המצודות, ובניין ארמון המלך וכיוצא בו: שנאמר "זוה דבר המס אשר העלה המלך שלמה, לבנות את בית ה' ואת ביתו ואת המילוא, ואת, חומת ירושלים . . . ואת כל ערי המסכנות, אשר היו לשלמה . . . ויעלם שלמה למס עובד, עד היום הזה. ומבני, ישראל, לא נתן שלמה, עבד: כי הם אנשי המלחמה, ועבדיו ושריו ושלישיו, ושרי רכבו, ופרשיו" ([מלכים א ט. טו-כב](#)).

**ד** [ב] ויש למלך להתנות עימהם שייקח חצי ממונם, או הקרקעות ויניח כל המיטלטלין, או כל המיטלטלין ויניח הקרקעות--כפי מה שיתנו. [ג] ואסור לשקר בבריתם ולכזב להם, אחר שהשלימו וקיבלו שבע מצוות.

**ה** [ד] ואם לא השלימו, או שהשלימו ולא קיבלו שבע מצוות--עושין עימהם מלחמה, והורגין כל הזכרים הגדולים, ובוזזין כל ממונם וטפם; ואין הורגין אישה ולא קטן--שנאמר "והנשים והטף" ([ראה דברים כ"ד](#); [וראה דברים ב"ד](#)), זה טף של זכרים.

**ו** במה דברים אמורים, במלחמת הרשות, שהיא עם שאר האומות. אבל שבעה עממין ועמלק שלא השלימו, אין מניחין מהם נשמה: שנאמר "כן תעשה לכל הערים . . . רק, מערי העמים . . . לא תחיה, כל נשמה" ([דברים כ. טו-טז](#)), וכן הוא אומר בעמלק "תמחה את זכר עמלק" ([דברים כה. ט](#)).

ז ומניין שאינו מדבר אלא באלו שלא השלימו: שנאמר "לא הייתה עיר, אשר השלימה את ישראל, בלתי החיווי, יושבי גבעון: את הכול, לקחו במלחמה. כי מאת ה' הייתה לחזק את ליבם לקראת המלחמה את ישראל, למען החריםם" ([ראה יהושע יא.ט-כ](#))--מכלל ששלחו להם לשלום, ולא קיבלו

h.R. Meir Kahane HY"D

Ohr Haraayon

Plan to deal with Arabs- Surprise, surprise-follow the Rambam

I. 2 State Solution/Delusion

-Halachically acceptable?Pikuach Nefesh?

-Practical option, with a pay for slay leader Y"S?

j.Rely on U.N. Y"S in Lebanon and Gaza?



#### 10. A Mother's Pain, a Mother's Pride: The Faith of Jen Airley

a. On the 5th of Kislev, 21-year-old Binyamin Airley was killed in Gaza. Since then, Binyamin's mother Jen has been an inspiration to all of Am Yisrael, speaking openly from the heart with extraordinary strength and faith. Rabbi Aron White spoke with Jen to hear about Binyamin's life and legacy.

**Tell us about Binyamin.** Physically, he was tall and good looking, but even more beautiful and strong on the inside. He was very connected to the ideal of growing as a person, that real gevurah is the battle with the yetzer hara, and growing to be the best person he could be. "Eizehu gibor, hakovesh et yitzro, Who is strong? One who conquers his desires." When he was in the army, he had said: "We need to do what we need to do, but the real battle is fought through our prayers."

b. He went to quite a few different schools. Ultimately, by 11th grade we found the right fit – which ended up being a yeshiva high school in Eilat. He thrived there before joining the hesder yeshiva in Tzfat. It's fitting that he received his education at opposite ends of the country, because he loved every inch of this country and knew almost every junction, almost every natural spring, and almost every tiyul in Israel. He wanted to join an elite army unit. He passed the test for paratroopers, and joined Unit 101. He was drafted in August 2021 and really loved the yeshiva boys he was with.



He trained as a “Negevist,” a role given to the stronger soldiers who operate the Negev machine gun. When they were training to go into Gaza, he was in a group of 16 guys who were essentially bodyguards of the brigadier general and the special equipment for all the paratroopers in Gaza. Technically, they were “safe,” as they weren’t on the frontline of battle, and other soldiers were assigned to protect these guys. Binyamin was frustrated that he wasn’t fighting himself. At one point, the other Negevist got injured, so Binyamin was then given the Negev gun and was involved in the fighting. They were stationed in northern Gaza. There was a house from which Hamas terrorists were shooting. The soldiers engaged them, but they weren’t able to neutralize the terrorists from afar. One defected, Jamal Abbas, a Druze soldier, along with his right-hand man Shachar Friedman, said: “I’m going in – we just can’t have the terrorists shooting at us and putting many soldiers in danger.” Binyamin saw they were going in and he still had his Negev, and he said: “You need ammo. I am coming with you.” He pushed his way in to join the soldiers. They got into the house, killing two terrorists, but one was hiding in the corner, and he killed all three of the IDF soldiers. It was typical of Binyamin to push his way forward – to take care of whatever needs to get done.

**c. This was on Shabbat morning, November 18th. When were you informed that he had fallen?**

That Shabbat morning, I was at shul. Right after Torah reading I started feeling antsy and unable to stay. My ten-year-old daughter was surprised to see me going home, but I said I felt I had to go home and say Tehillim. I was bawling and davening for a while – I didn't know what I was feeling. I just told my daughter I wished everyone could be home for Shabbat together. My Chana sat there hugging me. She gave me Sefer Mitzvat HaBitachon (The Mitzvah of Trusting G-d) and said, "I think you need this." We learned together, wiped my face and carried on. We got ready for lunch, and that afternoon we were taking a nap. My husband, who had been napping on the couch downstairs, woke me up and frantically said: "Get dressed and come downstairs." "Are the kids ok?" I asked him. "No," he said. I worried something happened to Chana, but why was it so quiet? No ambulance siren? As soon as I left my room and saw the soldiers at the staircase, I knew what that meant. I understood the phrase: "Vayidom Aharon, And Aharon was silent," when he learned of the death of his sons. There was nothing to say other than "Baruch Dayan HaEmet."

d. The soldiers were holy and special. What a horrible job to have but they were very caring, gentle, tried to help any way they could and worked to figure out how to tell the other children and family members who were in different places for Shabbat. It was surreal.<sup>1</sup>

**When a soldier dies defending Israel, there is often a dynamic where the private pain of the family and friends becomes also the national pain of a whole nation. Did you experience that?**

Initially, we felt it was our personal tragedy but within a very short time we realized Binyamin's loss was a national one. Binyamin was the son/brother of the entire nation.

Many people attended the funeral. It was pouring rain. All we could see were the people in the front who we knew; we had no idea how many people were there, apparently there were many of whom we had never met. We knew it was live streamed for our family in the Diaspora, but only later learned that so many people we don't know from Israel and around the world also watched it. It was very personal to begin with, but as the shiva was getting larger and larger, it dawned on me that you never know who is hearing you and watching you. Binyamin became someone people could connect with, a dugma, a role model, and people want to learn from him and gain inspiration from him. Every step of the way he has reached hundreds and thousands more people; we never could have imagined that he would reach so many people. He was our Binyamin, but now he belongs to everyone, as every soldier does. I feel that way visiting other shivas – these soldiers are all my soldiers, they are all our soldiers. Everyone feels this connection to them.

e. I was hesitant, but decided that I should speak at the levaya. I asked each person to take on one thing to try and improve themselves as a person to hasten the Geulah. People I never met were coming into the shiva and signing up to commit – I was told one woman turned her whole kitchen kosher! I tend to be a positive person and try to help others and raise them up usually on a one-to-one basis, not with crowds. It's been different now. I think people have connected to me because I am a mother, and I speak from the heart – I am just going one day at a time, speaking to whichever person, group or community Hashem brings our way.



**f. You have become a source of strength for many others, but what gives you strength?**

Firstly, I really feel and see that Hashem is constantly sending us hugs and kisses. Through all the pain of losing Binyamin, we are zoche to witness and experience so much of His chessed. I take great comfort in the verse, “Shivtecha u’mishantecha heima yenachamuni, Your rod and Your staff – they comfort me,” that even when there is seemingly stricter judgment, I know that too all comes from Hashem and is part of our relationship. I take comfort knowing that HHe is watching out for me and is directly involved in every moment my life.

I also take great comfort seeing the thousands of people Binyamin is now affecting. People are striving to learn from him and grow because of him. It is the greatest comfort that– thousands of people are learning and taking things on in his memory and are literally becoming better people. He is part of bringing Mashiach. I really feel Binyamin is giving me the koach to keep going, and Hashem keeps sending me people to speak to. I see the growth of Am Yisrael. It’s remarkable and a great comfort.

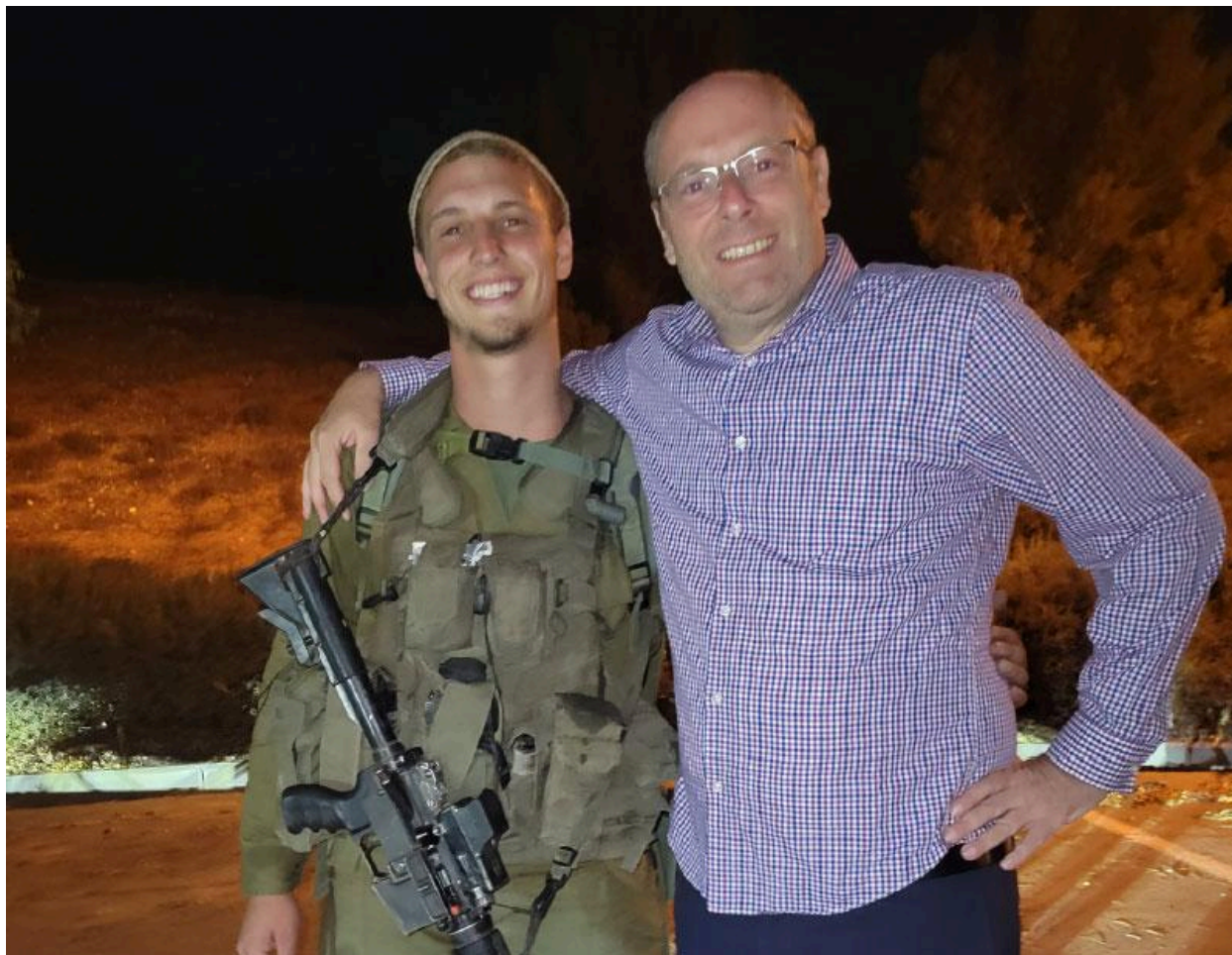
g. We cry virtually every day for him – when we see a new picture of him, when we hear something else that he accomplished or simply think of how much he’s missed– but Rob and I have made a conscious decision not to ask “Lama, Why?”, but “Le’ma, For what? What can we do now? How can we grow? How can we try to make good of this?”

There is no point in going down the dark road. We need to live life. That's what these soldiers are fighting for and even dying for. Yes, we have moments. We feel pain, we acknowledge it, and then we pick up and move forward. Binyamin wouldn't want it another way. He wants us to dance.

### **How do you want Binyamin to be remembered?**

Binyamin was a magnet for all kinds of Jews, and had a way of bringing people in. One thing he loved doing was bringing people along to Kabbalat Shabbat, so one thing we want to do is to create a spiritual, emotional place for therapeutic recovery. There are so many soldiers who have become religiously aware and even inspired during this time, from wearing tzitzit to connecting to other elements of Judaism. Binyamin learned in the Hesder Tzfat Yeshiva. We plan to open a program there b'ezrat Hashem that can be a point of entry for them where they can heal in a religious context.

Binyamin's essence was also intertwined with kedusha, with holiness. He believed deeply in kedushat haAretz, the holiness of the Land of Israel, and that this holiness is intertwined with kedushat Am Yisrael, the holiness of the people of Israel. He really believed that we are fighting this war to enable Jews to be able to live all over Israel, and believed passionately in Jews moving to live here. On Sukkot, he was involved in planting a new vineyard in the Shomron. It was so Binyamin that at his funeral, the first rain of the season started to fall. He believed deeply in the gift of Eretz Yisrael.



Binyamin hy"d and his father Robert.

#### **h. You are speaking to communities around the world. What is your message to the Jewish people?**

Part of Binyamin's legacy is that he really worked on himself and maximized his life, even if it was short. He accomplished in 21 years what might take a 40 long lifetime for others who are not focussed on their life mission. The message I hope he leaves is to inspire others to try and be their best self, and stay focused on their goals, of what's really important in life.

I really believe that each of our soldiers who have fallen in this war are working in heaven, building the Beit HaMikdash. It is our job, here in this world, to work on ourselves and keep our Achdut, to be worthy to bring it down. To be zoche of the complete redemption.

אַרְוַמְמָךְ הַשֵּׁם... דְּלִיתָנִי

ברוך דיין האמת

שהחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו...

זה היום....

מִי שֶׁבָרַךְ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֲבָרְהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב הוּא יְבָרַךְ אֶת חֵילֵי צְבָא הַגִּנָּה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, הַעוֹמְדִים עַל מִשְׁמֵר אֶרְצֵנוּ וְעָרֵי אֱלֻקֵינוּ מִגְּבוּל הַלְּבָנוֹן וְעַד מִדְּבַר מִצְרַיִם וּמִן הַיָּם הַגָּדוֹל עַד לְבוֹא הָעֶרְבָה בַּיְבֵשָׁה בְּאוֹר וּבַיָּם יִתֵּן ה' אֶת אוֹיְבֵינוּ הַקְּמִים עֲלֵינוּ נִגְפִים לְפָנֵיהֶם. הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא יִשְׁמַר וְיַצִּיל אֶת חֵילֵינוּ מִכָּל צָרָה וְצוּקָה וּמִכָּל נֹגַע וּמַחֲלָה וְיִשְׁלַח בְּרָכָה וְהַצְלָחָה בְּכָל מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיהֶם. יְדַבֵּר שׁוֹנְאֵינוּ תַחֲתֵיהֶם וְיַעֲטֵרם בְּכֶתֶר יְשׁוּעָה וּבְעֹטֶרֶת נִצְחוֹן. וְיִקְיָם בָּהֶם הַכְּתוּב: כִּי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הֵלֵךְ עִמָּכֶם לְהִלָּחֵם לָכֶם עִם אִיְבֵיכֶם לְהוֹשִׁיעַ אֶתְכֶם: וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן