

# שבת בשבת



Parshat Vayetzei

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## The Sacred Sulam Bridging Heaven and Earth

Rabbi Jonathan Morgenstern

*Rabbi Of Young Israel of Scarsdale, Scarsdale, NY*

Early on in my own religious development, I gave a lot of thought to the idea of the ideal religious life. As we see in the vision of Jacob's Ladder at the beginning of Parashat VaYeitzei, is it a life devoted solely to Heaven, or is there a way to bridge Heaven and Earth? There is no doubt that in contemplating Avodat Hashem, how best to serve God, the Chareidi "Torah only" approach has great allure. To spend all day studying God's word, through Torah learning, connecting to God, through Tefillah, and communing with God on Shabbat and Holidays, through a sweet mix of Torah, Tefillah and Zemirot can be intoxicating. This lifestyle had great appeal to me at an important crossroads in my life. But as I continued to contemplate my path forward, I thought a lot about my past as well. I come from generations and generations of Chassidic Rabbis. My grandfather sat at his father's Tisch, as the son of the Rebbe, in Wengrow. Yet, through the hand of God, which saved my grandfather, sending him to Scotland, then England and, finally, settling in Chicago – we were no longer Chassidic – we were Modern and Orthodox and that is how I was raised. In some cosmic way, I felt (and continue to feel) that it was God's will that I was raised in the way that I was here and I wasn't meant to transport myself back to the way it was in Europe. Don't get me wrong, I still consider myself a Chassid but I guess a Modern Orthodox-Religious Zionist version of one. Armed with this recognition and with the guidance of certain very special Rabbis and teachers of mine, as well as the counsel of a very wise woman (who I went on to marry), I saw being Modern Orthodox as a *privilege* not a *problem*.



This is why, for me, the ideal path of Avodat Hashem – in serving God – is to carve out our own centrist path that combines the Torah life with the Total life; taking the best that both worlds have to offer and then offering that up to Hashem just as the angels ascended up to God and descended towards earth by way of the "sacred sulam," Jacob's holy ladder. Does the eternal Torah take primacy over the ephemeral things of this world?! Of course, but the two don't have to be in conflict. We should rarely have to *choose* between one over the other – if we set our priorities correctly and articulate and embody them from the outset.

If I had to put it into one word or phrase, I would say that our charge is to be *Nesi'im*, but not

just provincial or tribal leaders. I mean Nesi'im in the way that Ephron the Hittite (in Parashat Chayei Sarah) refers to Avraham. When Ephron encounters Avraham as he seeks to purchase our first Chelek in Eretz Yisrael, the Maarat HaMachpela in Chevron - Ephron calls him a "Nassi Elokim" – the prince of God. He refers to him as a sort of ambassador of God to the world. And that is exactly what I think we ought to be: "Nesi'eih Elokim" - **Ambassadors of Traditional - Religious Zionist - Judaism** to the world.

As Modern Orthodox Jews, who are passionate about the Am Yisrael and Medinat Yisrael, we are uniquely positioned to be conduits and connectors to so many groups of people, because of what we value, where we work and what we do. This unique ambassadorial role applies in 4 spheres, as I see it:

1) You can be a Nasi Elokim to your fellow Jew – to the non-observant, unaffiliated or Reform, Conservative, or Reconstructionist Jew – be it a neighbor, friend, classmate, dorm-mate, professor, co-worker or man-on-the-street. In the polarized world we live in, we ought to reach out in a collaborative and cooperative spirit to work with and respect Jews, irrespective of how they believe or practice differently than we do. This is why I am so proud of our collaborations and communal activities with our neighboring Reform Rabbis and Temples. May it only continue and may our Achdut message continue to spread.

2) You can be a Nasi Elokim to the non-Jewish world – to anyone you meet in any situation: in school, in the workplace, in the street, at a movie, a ball game, a play or a concert - and anywhere that life takes you across the globe. For in our day and age, sadly the world's image of an Orthodox Jew is one that is on the cover of newspapers as those who manipulate, steal, bribe, extort or cheat. That's why I say, wear a Yarmulke out on the street – in the city or in the neighborhood – so you can provide a counterpoint to this negative image of the Orthodox Jew. By identifying as Orthodox, albeit Modern Orthodox, you have the opportunity to be a model of the Jew as a moral and ethical citizen of the world.

3) You can be a Nasi Elokim in the pro-Israel community, both here and in Israel – always standing with the People of Israel and standing up for the State of Israel. Sadly, many Jews in the Orthodox and non-Orthodox community, don't share the pride, joy and shared destiny that we feel with Israel and its People. Not every community says Hallel and celebrates Yom Ha'atzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim the way that we do. This religious Zionist spirit is also something that we have that should be modeled for others.

4) Finally, you can also be a Nasi Elokim to the religious world - Jewish, Christian and Muslim – in promoting a traditional approach to Torah and Scripture that also has a *heart*. One that places humanity over theology and that gives dignity, love and credence to all people, regardless of: race, gender, creed or sexual orientation. This "Halacha with a Heart" is sorely needed in the Orthodox community and in so many other faith communities around the globe.

This is the special role that Modern Orthodox - Religious Zionist Jews like us can and will play in shaping the Jewish future. But, in order to do so, there has to be Orthodox as much there is Modern – the out-and-about lifestyle of the Nasi has to be coupled with a real dedication to Elokim. There must be a commitment to leading a life governed by our core Halachot, Mitzvot and practices - and if not a total commitment, at least, a total *aspiration* towards committing ourselves to do our very best.

**Shabbat** has to be observed as truly a holy day - we must have the courage and faith to turn off our phones/computers and really immerse ourselves in the day the way it ought to be observed, free from electronic or digital interruptions. **Kashrut** needs to be something more than just something I'll do when I go home. **Mikvah** should be more than just a one-shot deal before I get married. **Tefillin** can't just sit on a shelf collecting dust – waiting for a special occasion that requires me to bring them to Shul and put them on, they should be worn on a regular basis. Putting your Tefillin on at your dining room table or in your study will make all the difference in the world – years from now - when your son/daughter are off on their own and ready to start their own Jewish homes. Passionate Tefillah should be a part of our lives, both at home and in Shul on Shabbat and Holidays. Our *souls* should be nourished and sustained with Torah study, Jewish education, and communal prayer - just as much as our *minds* and *senses* seek to be nourished with technology, culture and fine wines, craft beers, gourmet foods, single-malts, Scotch and bourbons. And this commitment to the soul over the senses is paramount to sustaining the Orthodox aspects of

our Jewish lives. For Judaism without a soul is like a body without a soul...

This is not an easy path by any means, but I can assure you, it is the most meaningful and fulfilling path that you can choose. And I believe that you, our graduates, and all of us, can do it.

So the next time someone asks you what it means to be Modern Orthodox - Religious Zionist Jews, just tell them what it really means. We are the goodwill **Ambassadors of Judaism to the world.**

## Upcoming Event



**RELIGIOUS ZIONISTS OF AMERICA-MIZRACHI**  
Invites you to a special presentation

# The Contemporary Significance of the State of Israel: Reshit Zemichat Geulatenu?



**Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter**  
Senior Scholar, Yeshiva University's Center  
for the Jewish Future  
University Professor of Jewish History and  
Jewish Thought, Yeshiva University

**Congregation Rinat Israel**  
389 W. Englewood Ave, Teaneck, NJ

**Tuesday, December 13th**  
**7:30 pm**

# Introducing the New RZA-Aryeh Fellowship!

The RZA-Aryeh Fellowship is a new initiative of the RZA-Mizrachi to strengthen the mission of Religious Zionism. Fifty college and graduate school students from around the country have been invited to spend their winter-break in Israel where they will be studying Torah and attending intensive seminars devoted to Religious Zionism education. Upon their return the Aryeh Fellows will focus on their year-long Manhigut (leadership) projects designed to bring the message of Religious Zionism back to communities across America. We are excited to profile a different “Aryeh Fellow” each week.

## Meet Yoni Schwartz



I am Yoni Schwartz, a second year pre-med student in Yeshiva University. I'm taking chemistry and genetics - where I breed hundreds of flies in my spare time. I love flies and all, but I can't wait to reach my full potential when I become a doctor and help people in need to the best of my abilities. The closest way of helping people in need for now was the two summers I spent in Camp Simcha. Both of those summers I had a camper with a severe case of Familial Dysautonomia

(FD). Every need of theirs had to be taken care of. Whether it was feeding them through a tube or showering them, I was responsible for making sure it was done right. But my two campers (one each year) did not come to camp just to get taken care of. Although I had to be on top of their health I also made sure that every day had exciting activities that they would enjoy, and that they would be laughing a good portion of the day.

Before my fly-breeding days in Yeshiva University, I went to high school in MTA and spent two years in Yeshivat Sha'albim. My years in Sha'albim have helped me understand myself and what I want from my life. As I learnt during a portion of the day Tanach and spent all of my day in Eretz Yisrael, I inevitably fell in love with the Holy Land. Before my years in Israel I knew Israel was a land which our people belonged to and I visited a lot (to visit my many cousins living there). After living in Israel for two years I now not only understand that Israel is a place where the Jewish people belong, but I know that the Jewish people have to make Israel their home as soon as possible and I cannot stop myself from going back whenever I can (I have been to Israel two times last year and already one time this year!). Now, thanks to the RZA, I can't wait to spend YU's winter break learning in my yeshiva where I gained so much and I'll help inspire other people to come to Israel too in my Manhigut Project.

## Join us for Yom Yerushalyaim!

SPACES LIMITED



## WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US THIS YEAR IN JERUSALEM

FOR A MEGA-MISSION OF A LIFETIME  
Be Front and Center, Celebrating 50 years of a reunited Jerusalem  
over Yom Yerushalayim  
**MAY 22-25, 2017**

Dear RZA-Mizrachi Friends,

We very much look forward to having you take part in our Mizrachi World Movement's "This Year in Jerusalem" Mega-Mission over Yom Yerushalayim. Our aim is to bring thousands of people (including rabbinic and community leaders) from hundreds of communities from across the global Jewish community to learn, experience and celebrate together at this momentous time in Jewish history.

Please see below a personal invitation from Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, one of the global leaders of the mission, inviting you to join him on this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

More details about the program can be found at the following link - [www.mizrachi.org/YY50](http://www.mizrachi.org/YY50) - including the draft schedule, highlights, pricing options and booking procedure.

Please note the following:

1. There are 10 hotel options, with a price range depending on hotel choice. Each hotel package includes breakfast, lunch and dinner (excluding Wed evening). The hotel packages also include the entire 4 day program at discounted rates.
2. There is also an option for people who are not staying in hotels - if they have their own accommodation - to join for the 4 day program, at a cost of \$630 per person. It does not include hotel, breakfast and dinner, but does include transport from central meeting points to and from all the venues, lunch each day, and participation in the full program.
3. For those shuls/communities/groups who wish to bring missions and want to extend their trip either before or after our 4 day mission, that can also be arranged by contacting us at [YY50@mizrachi.org](mailto:YY50@mizrachi.org), and we - together with our partners - will put together a tailor-made package for your group.

Looking forward to celebrating together – in Jerusalem – on this historic occasion.

With excitement and anticipation,

Rabbi Gideon Shloush  
Mizrachi – Religious Zionists of America

Rav Doron Perez  
Mizrachi World Movement



## POINT OF VIEW

Dual-Sex in Close Quarters – And That’s an Order!

*By Rabbi Yisrael Rozen, Dean of the Zomet Institute*

### Putting Sticks in the Tracks of the Tanks

“**The Directive for Mixed-Gender Army Service**” which was just released by the IDF opens the way for women to serve in combat duty in the IDF (including in tanks), and will strengthen gender equality in the army. The new directive has appeared in close proximity to ongoing friction between the rabbis of religious Zionism and their followers as opposed to “IDF commanders” led by the Chief of Staff on matters that involve **clipping the “wings” of the IDF Rabbinate** (by removing the subject of Jewish awareness from the scope of the Rabbinate and replacing it by “tradition” under the control of the Education Corps, among other things). In the wake of the new order, heads of Hesder yeshivot and army prep schools and educators in girls’ schools hastily organized a meeting with the Chief of Staff; Knesset members from the Bayit Yehdudi Party expressed their shock, and came forward with criticism; rabbis who have an influence on candidates for the draft have threatened a ban on the Armored Corps, which was “built up and strengthened by students of the Hesder Yeshivot,” who will now refuse to serve there; organizations of former IDF rabbis declared that they will fight the decision; and the Chief of Staff declared – at the installation of the new IDF Chief Rabbi, Colonel Eyal Karim – something like, “Not a single woman has been drafted to fight in the tanks, and the subject will be reviewed again.” On the spot he received the approval of the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Yitzchak Yosef for his words.

As far as I am concerned, **it is a serious mistake to lump together the directive for mixed-gender service and the issue of the authority of the IDF Rabbinate, putting it all together as a “religious topic,”** like the question of singing by women at formal IDF ceremonies. **The mixed-gender topic is not a question of religion but is rather related to nationalism and security.** The main problem is the effort to deify the principle of gender equality in the face of possible harm to military preparedness and the mission of the IDF. In short, this issue is related to our ability to win future wars!

It has been noted in the press that the “Directive for Mixed-Gender Army Service” was promoted by the **Israel Democracy Institute**, which published a document on the subject in 2013. The agenda of this institute is closest to the position of the political left in Israel. Unlimited democracy, world-embracing legalism, and gender equality are given the status absolute values. A series of studies during 2003-2009, some of them together with the American army, showed that the physical abilities of women are much less than those of men. In the field of orthopedics and broken bones due to stress, the IDF found that women are more prone to injury than men of the same age by a factor of 10. But even so, the activist women’s rights organizations found that the IDF was a rich area for promoting their ideas, leading to the “Directive for Mixed-Gender Army Service.” Some of the leading organizations in this movement are prominent and known for their leftist activity in other realms. It was thus no surprise to hear the following hint recently by General (res.) Yiftach Ron-Tal: “I fear that there might be extraneous reasons that are not related to the desire for gender equality that are at the basis of the demand for women to serve in tanks. I hope very much that this is not a case of campaigning **with goals related to an attempt to weaken the IDF.**”

### **Fight the Directive on the National Level**

Thus, I propose to those who are organizing a campaign to reject this directive **to focus on the nationalistic and security elements.** When the emphasis is placed on religious factors, such as modesty and close physical contact, the struggle becomes a “religious” issue **which has little effect on patriotic figures** who are not interested in wearing a kippa on their heads.

It is true that the new command has serious “innovations” with respect to religion even for those who provide “support roles” for the front-line soldiers. It includes a retreat from the previous position of a concept of “appropriate mixing,” **which has been trampled on in the new version of the rules.** The new directive declares that the preferred default is to put together mixed units, since this is most appropriate for the “IDF spirit.” New recruits will be asked when they enlist if they “observe a religious lifestyle,” and if they prefer to serve in an non-mixed unit (up to the level of a company, the highest relevant group). As noted, the default will be mixed units. Anybody placed in such a mixed unit will not be able, for example, to ask to be excused from “army ceremonies,” as opposed to the situation today, even if the social content is contrary to their religious convictions.

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“Yaacov kissed Rachel, and he raised his voice and wept” [Bereishit 29:11]. This is evidently **the only instance in the Tanach of a man kissing a woman** (except for a mother or a sister). “Why did he cry? He saw the people whispering to each other because of the kiss, saying, ‘What, has this one come to reinstitute forbidden sexual conduct?’ From the time that the world was punished in the generation of the Deluge, the nations of the world stayed away from illicit sexual acts.” And the sages commented that “This was a kiss indicating a family relationship and not a frivolous act.” [Bereishit Rabba 70].

## **As Shabbat Approaches**

### **Is this How to Respond to a Woman in Distress**

*By Esti Rosenberg, Head of the Midrasha for Women, Migdal Oz*

This week’s Torah portion is filled with personal and family challenges – Yaacov and Leah, the births of the children, Yaacov and Lavan. But the main troublesome event may well be the harsh and painful discussion between Yaacov and Rachel.

“Give me children, and if not I will die” [Bereishit 30:1]. This is what Rachel demands from Yaacov. Yaacov responds with anger: “And Yaacov was angry with Rachel, and said: Am I in place of G-d?” [30:2].

Yaacov’s reaction is surprising and painful. Midrash Rabba indeed criticizes him for his words. “The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him: Is this the proper way to respond to a

woman in distress? I swear that your sons will have to stand up before her son.” Yaacov has demonstrated a decided lack of sensitivity with respect to Rachel.

Other commentators reveal deeper spiritualelements with respect to the pain that both of them felt and analyze the situation in terms of prayer.

The Ramban criticizes Rachel for her words. “The truth is that she wanted to ask him to pray for her to have sons, and that otherwise she would die as a result of her suffering... Prayers of the righteous ones are not guaranteed to always receive a response. And Yaacov became angry because he used the yearning of beloved women in order to frighten him about her death.”

Both Yaacov and Rachel understood very well that whether they would have children depended on the Creator. Rachel turns her pain towards Yaacov, and demands that he pray for her. In her zeal and anger she does not see the pain that Yaacov feels which would cause him to pray on his own, and she does not realize that in fact the key to the response is not in his hands but in the hands of the Creator.

“It was inconceivable that Yaacov would not pray for her, but his prayers were not answered... And he became angry because the matter was in G-d’s hands and not in his.”

The Ramban is here teaching us a great lesson. The ability to pray in order to obtain our requests is a great privilege and an obligation which G-d provided for His creatures, but there is no guarantee that our prayers will be answered. Many challenges in our lives do not get a positive response. Rachel assumed that if Yaacov prayed she would definitely have a child, but there is no such promise.

Our personal challenge to believe that prayer can change reality but at the same time to understand the limits of prayer is what lies at the basis for Yaacov’s anger. The main lesson to be learned from Rachel’s predicament is to know that prayer does indeed provide a real solution for the challenges of life, but that in all humility we must accept the possible difficulty when things do not change after all.

Rachel can be criticized for her use of a threat to thwart an undesired problem – “If not, I will die” – and also for her lack of sensitivity for Yaacov’s difficulty, as he too stands frustrated by the lack of response to his prayers. Yaacov is also criticized for his insensitive reaction to Rachel’s feeling of distress.

And here you have it: Such a short dialogue between a man and wife – but so much that can be learned from the event.

The events of the forefathers are a sign for the offspring.

## A PARSHA INSIGHT

Why should Anybody Climb up to Heaven?

*By Rabbi Asaf Harnoy, Post-Graduate Beit Midrash for Torah and Leadership, Jerusalem*

A story is told about a Rebbe from Gur, the author of “Imrei Emet,” who studied the weekly Torah portion with his young son. When they reached the story of Yaacov’s dream of a ladder, the Rebbe asked his son: If Yaacov saw a ladder standing on the earth and reaching up into heaven, why didn’t he take advantage of the situation and climb up into heaven?

The boy answered, “Right after this we are told, ‘Behold, G-d was standing on it!’ [Bereishit 28:13]. **If G-d was already there why should he search for Him in another place?**”

### A Torah for Life

Many religions and faiths are based on a rejection of life and this world. In those religions, the “man of faith” yearns for a spiritual world which is beyond our real one. It is a world that

is as far as possible from the world in which we live. The Jewish faith is the exact opposite of this. One of the basic building blocks of our belief is that the way to approach G-d is specifically through events that take place in our world.

The ladder which appears in Yaacov's dream is an expression of this belief, which recognizes that a close approach to G-d takes place in our own world. While angels climb up and down the ladder, Yaacov himself remains below, on the earth. And that is where G-d is revealed to him and speaks to him.

**Yaacov's ladder is not so much a way to rise up to heaven as it is a way by which G-d can descend to be revealed down below.**

### **The Gate to Heaven**

The main question that we can ask is how it is possible to reveal and serve G-d in a world which is so far away from the heavens above. How can we bring about – as it were – the “descent” of the Holy One, Blessed be He, on a ladder, so that He will stand before us on the lowly earth?

When Yaacov wakes up from his dream he makes a definitive statement: “Yes, G-d is here at this place... this can only be a House of G-d, and here is the Gate to Heaven. (28:16-17).” After the tremendous revelation which he experienced, Yaacov knows with absolute certainty that G-d descends and lands on the earth. This is therefore “the Gate to Heaven.”

### **The Limit is the Gate**

The expression, the “Gate to Heaven,” which Yaacov coined, holds within it a very deep significance. The way in which we, Bnei Yisrael, can bring about the descent and the revelation of the Holy One, Blessed be He, is through the “gates” which he provided for us. And these “gates” are the precise limits which we study and find in our holy Torah. They are the fine details of the laws and the mitzvot which we find in the books of halacha.

**The concepts of “*sha'ar*” (a gate) and “*shi'ur*” (a precise limit) are related.** When we maintain the limits which G-d gave us, we open up the gates of “heaven” for the Master of the Universe, so that He will be revealed and appear here on the earth.

A man who recites the Shema at **the proper time** is fulfilling the limit and the proper measure as was set by G-d. This leads to opening of the “**gate**,” which is thus revealed. A man who recites the Grace after Meals after eating an amount equal to the minimum amount of a **kazayit** is at the limit which G-d established, and this leads to the “**gate**” being opened.

### **This is G-d's Gate, the Righteous Ones will Pass through It**

There are times when taking great care with the details of the halacha, especially the precise limits involved, is difficult and wearying. At times it seems that true service of G-d is defined by those matters which are perceived as great and powerful, while paying attention to the details of the halacha and strict limits are esoteric and ridiculous.

However, this is definitely not so.

Through His wise men, the Holy One, Blessed be He, sets the limits and the proper measure for everything. The Holy One, Blessed be He, has chosen what will be the gate through which He will be revealed in the world. The brave souls who manage to maintain the limits of the Holy One, Blessed be He, in all their detail, are “the righteous ones who will pass through the gate of G-d” [see Tehillim 118:20].

How happy we should be and how good is our lot that our Torah is a Torah of life. How happy we should be that there is no need for us to climb up the high ladder to the heaven but rather we can open the proper gates which will bring the Holy One, Blessed be He, down to us, in all His glory, and there He will be in our midst.

**WHEN THE CHILDREN OPEN THEIR HEARTS**

**I Got my Life Back!**

## *System*

"Shalom, Imma, I'm home!" I shouted as I came through the front door of our apartment, and I dropped my heavy schoolbag right there.

Imma gave me a smile and asked how my day had gone, and she offered to give me lunch. I said, "I'm not hungry. I just had a long and tough day, I'm going to sit at the computer." And I went into my room.

That's how it was almost every day. I would sit at the computer and play all sorts of games. Then I would move on to the sports channels, watch some of the games and get an update, play some more, and then move on to some interesting sites about science and animals. Sometimes I would look at funny movies or watch some television shows (only those that Imma lets me see...).

When I sat at the computer I could forget myself and everything else. I stopped only when Imma forced me to come and eat and to do my homework. I would hurry through my meal, get the homework out of the way as fast as can be, and then go back to the computer.

Imma said to me, "Go out and play with your friends!" And I explained to her, "My friends are with me all the time, on Facebook." I showed her that we were 35 friends, all connected through the computer. The truth is that I never met most of them face to face, but what difference does that make?

And Imma would try over and over. She said, "Go out to get some fresh air, to the playground or to ride around on your bike." But I was so deep in my computer that it was hard for me to leave it.

One day, something different happened. I went to the computer as usual and I pressed the start button, but nothing happened. I shouted, "Imma! What is wrong with the computer?" She came into the room and tried to help, but the computer would not go on...

I was disappointed, and I left the room. What could I do now?

"Well," I said, "I guess I'm hungry." Imma gave me a plate with fried chicken and French fries. I ate very slowly, there was no reason for me to hurry. I said, "Yummy... Thank you Imma, that was delicious." I cleared the dishes from the table, and I put them in the sink.

Then I went back to my room and tried again to turn the computer on. But it didn't work! What could I do now? I opened up my schoolbag and took out my homework. I saw that the questions on the subject of the prophets about how Shaul chased after David were very interesting. I opened a book with commentaries and I answered all the questions very thoroughly. After all, there was no reason to hurry.

When I finished I went to the computer to try to turn it on again, but it still had not changed its mind. I went outside to the playground, and I was surprised to see that I met many of my friends from school. They hadn't expected to see me, but they were happy to let me join their games. It was a lot of fun. When I got back home at night, my younger brother Elad had made a paper boat, and he asked me to help him float it in the bathtub. While we were there, I suggested that he might as well take a shower already. Imma was very happy to see that Elad had cleaned up and was already wearing pajamas. She said, "What a nice surprise!" And she gave me a big hug.

When we ate supper, I saw how much fun it could be to eat together with the family. My brothers are nice and very funny. At night, before I went to bed, I tried again to turn the computer on. "I must have a huge number of messages on Facebook," I said to myself. But what could I do?

Abba came home from work and also tried to help. He said in a very serious voice, "The computer is very old, and it has simply died. I am sorry, but we cannot afford to buy a new computer right now. If you need a computer to print something or to read some information, you can use my laptop."

I almost started to cry. I got into bed, almost in mourning. I had never gotten to bed so early.

What could I do? On the shelf there was a book, which my older sister Dona brought home from the library. I took it with me under the blanket, and I started to read. I read some items that were very exciting, and some others that were funny. I learned about the underground fighters and the War of Independence. It was absolutely fascinating...

In the morning, I woke up early and hurried to school. The teacher gave me high praise for my answers about Shaul and David. That really made me feel good. Never before had anybody praised me about my work, usually they just criticized me.

At recess, Dani and Shai brought me into a soccer game. They said, "We saw yesterday that you play very well." When I made a goal, I felt that I was in the clouds.

On the way home from school, I planned what I would do for the rest of the day. What a surprise: I had a lot of ideas, and I planned to do everything.

Days passed, I was doing very well in school, and I had a lot of new friends – real ones this time. We went for bike rides together, we built a fantastic campsite, and we played many different games at the playground. I discovered that books can be fascinating, and I felt that ever since my computer died I had gotten my life back.

What about you, my readers? What are you going to do with your lives? Write to me at: meggeni@gmail.com.

## HOLY AND SECULAR

The Priestess will not be a Barmaid

*By Rabbi Amichai Gordin, Yeshivat Har Etzion*

"They have gone too far," the woman said. And the man agreed, "Absolutely. The very first time that I saw him I was sure that he would make trouble."

A little while later, the woman and the man invited the parents of all the girls in the Ulpana to an emergency meeting. All the parents agreed – a red line had been crossed. "We will not let the rabbi take over our lives," Mr. Mizrachi said, half stating a fact and half demanding action. All the people sitting there nodded in agreement. From the other side of the room somebody cried out, "Why was a rabbi appointed as the social director in the first place? I warned our principal that we were in danger of a religious takeover in our liberal Ulpana."

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They meet in the principal's room in a charged atmosphere. "I don't really understand what you want," the social director defended himself. "This is not my rule, it is a demand of the management." The parents did not blink. The head of the parent's committee said, "You will not measure the lengths of our daughters' skirts. I don't care about the management's demands. What business is it of theirs how our daughters dress? I cannot accept this language of requirements and demands. What right do they have to get involved in our free choice?"

The social director tried to answer, but the woman sitting next to him cut him off. "And they still talk about modesty? This is modesty? To look in detail at the clothing worn by the girls, is that modesty? If this synagogue wants us not to wear short skirts, they should leave us alone. We simply won't go there at all. Not in short skirts or long skirts. We will look for another synagogue, one that shows greater empathy and is not so stuffy, and is more flexible."

The shouting went on for a long time. The social director tried to put in a word now and then, but to no avail. Only forty minutes after the stormy session began, the social director was

able to say something. "I am sorry to say this, but this is a terrible misunderstanding. We will not be visiting any synagogue ("beit kneset") during our field trip in Jerusalem next week. We will visit the Kneset, the Israeli parliament."

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For many years there has been a sign prominently displayed at the entrance to the Kneset building in Jerusalem. It is headed, "Dress Code," in large letters. "Attention visitors: Entry into this building is granted only to those wearing modest clothing. Inappropriate clothing will not be allowed – undershirts, short pants of any length, pants with torn cloth, clogs... or blouses that reveal too much."

Last week, the newspaper "Demarker" reported that there was a change. "The Kneset recently renewed the dress code for visitors to the place, and added a prohibition to come wearing miniskirts or dresses... In the Kneset we were told that the sign refers to skirts and dresses which end above the knee... Authorities in the Kneset said that updating the dress code is meant to clear up some ambiguity while showing a maximum of sensitivity, on one hand demanding respectable clothing while at the same time attempting not to hurt the feelings of visitors."

Reporter Tzvi Zerachia wrote that since the new rules were instituted a few weeks ago the Kneset staff did not encounter any problems except for one visitor who was asked to change a garment. The woman accepted the comment with full understanding.

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Why, then, doesn't such a rule work well in our regular lives? Why is it only the Kneset that has the right to maintain its honor? Why doesn't an Ulpana or a Midrasha also have the right to demand respect for its Beit Midrash? Why don't we demand at a Torah lesson to have the same respect as is demanded of visitors to our Kneset building? Why is the respect due to the Kneset greater than that demanded from visitors to a synagogue?

It seems to me that there are two answers to the above questions. The first is the mistake of demanding "modest" and not "respectful" clothing. One should never have to ask somebody else to wear modest clothing. Modesty is a matter for every person and his or her Maker. What we should be demanding is respectful clothing. Respect is a matter between one man and another, and therefore any institution has a right and an obligation to demand that people who come to visit maintain a standard of respect – for the place and for the other people who are present. Clothing which reveals some limbs that should really be concealed shows disrespect for other people in the area, and also disrespect for the place itself.

The second answer to the above questions is our fear of young people. We are afraid to make demands on our youths, out of our fear that they will stop loving us if we do. I have the feeling that if we in the religious school system would be in charge of the decorum in the Kneset building the very first thing we would do is to remove the sign about the dress code. We would say, based on our internal conviction, "This will only keep people from visiting the Kneset and bring out antagonism to the rule of law and to democracy as a whole."

We are afraid that our students will be angry with us if we give them a set of demands, but the truth is just the opposite. If we don't demand from the students that they show respect for us and for themselves, then they really will not do so. The way to conquer the hearts of our students passes through a path of demands and obligations and not only through relaxing the demands and considering their opinions. The head of every educational institution in the country can demand from his or her students exactly what the Director General of the Kneset, Albert Saharovitz, demands from those who visit his institution.

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