

# שבת בשבת



*Parshat Tetzaveh (Zachor)*

*No 1664: 13 Adar 5777 (March 11, 2017)*

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# YOM YERUSHALAYIM *Honor Roll*

## NEXT STEPS

Now that you have signed the Yom Yerushalayim Honor Roll please tell us:  
**How will your institution be celebrating YY50?**  
Please let us know so that we can publicize your Yom Yerushalayim program.

Our website will feature Yom Yerushalayim Religious Zionist events taking place all across North America. Please send us your flyers, promotional videos, Facebook pages, general announcements and any other material you may have.

*The Religious Zionists of America is the US affiliate of the 115 year old World Mizrahi movement. The goal of the RZA-Mizrachi is to instill in the American Jewish community a commitment to religious Zionism, the preservation of Jewish political freedom, the enhancement of Jewish religious life in the land of Israel, and the promotion of aliyah. For more information, visit: [www.rza.org](http://www.rza.org)*

**If you haven't started planning, here are some suggestions:**



Concert



Picnic



Educational Program



Flag Ceremony



Lecture



Game Night



Mission to Israel



Siyum



BBQ



Movie



T'fillah Chagigit



Yom Iyun



Israeli Kiddush



Carnival



## Yom Yerushalayim Honor Roll

### More than 160 have signed up!!!

Dear Friend of Religious Zionism,

One of the initiatives we are planning, in anticipation of the 50th anniversary of the re-unification of Jerusalem, is an "Honor Roll" to be signed by the leadership of congregations and schools across the country.

1) Please have your leadership inform us if they want to be included on our Honor Roll. (We will include the names of all participating institutions in the media).

2) Please share this Honor Roll with institutions in your community and encourage participation.

3) Please arrange to display this Honor Roll in the lobbies of your Shuls and Schools. Click [here](#) to print out a copy of the poster OR kindly email us to let us know if you'd like us to mail you a hard copy flyer or poster.

More than 160 Shuls and Schools have signed up. If your community is not yet on our list please let us know.

Rabbi Gideon Shloush  
*Presidium*  
National Director  
Oliner  
Religious Zionists of America - Mizrahi  
gshloush@rza.org  
Agatsstein

Mr. Martin  
  
Rabbi Leonard Matanky  
Dr. Ernest

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Below is a list of shuls, schools, and organizations that are participating in our Honor Roll:

**Beth Jacob Congregation**

Beverly Hills, CA  
Rabbi Kalman Topp

**Young Israel of Orange County**

Irvine, CA  
Rabbi Dov Fischer

**Congregation B'nai David-Judea**

Los Angeles, CA  
Rabbi Yosef Kanefsky

**Harkham Hillel Hebrew Academy**

Los Angeles, CA  
Rabbi Yahel Tsaidi

**Yeshivat Yavneh**

Los Angeles,  
Rabbi Shlomo Einhorn

**Young Israel of Century City**

Los Angeles, CA  
Rabbi Elazar Muskin

**YULA Boys High School**

Los Angeles, CA  
Rabbi Dov Emerson

**Shaarey Zedek Congregation**

Valley Village, CA  
Rabbi Jonathan Rosenberg

**Westville Synagogue**

New Haven, CT  
Rabbi Fred Hyman

**Beth David Synagogue**

West Hartford, CT  
Rabbi Yitzchok Adler

**Young Israel of West Hartford**

West Hartford, CT  
Rabbi Tuvia Brander

**Boca Jewish Center**

Boca Raton, FL  
Rabbi Yaakov Gibber

**Boca Raton Synagogue**

Boca Raton, FL  
Rabbi Efrem Goldberg

**Congregation Torah Ohr**

**Congregation Pri Eitz Chaim**

Brooklyn, NY  
Rabbi Melvin I Burg

**Congregation Talmud Torah**

of Flatbush  
Brooklyn, NY

**Magen David Yeshiva High School**

Brooklyn, NY  
Rabbi Saul Zucker

**Merkaz Yisrael of Marine Park**

Brooklyn, NY  
Rabbi Elisha Weiss

**Yeshiva of Flatbush**

Brooklyn, NY  
Rabbi Raymond Harari

**Young Israel of Flatbush**

Brooklyn, NY  
Rabbi Kenneth Auman

**Shulamith High School for Girls**

Cedarhurst, NY  
Ms. Rena Zerykier

**Young Israel of Lawrence-Cedarhurst**

Cedarhurst, NY  
Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum

**The White Shul**

Far Rockaway, NY  
Rabbi Eytan Feiner

**Havurat Yisrael**

Forest Hills, NY  
Rabbi David Algaze

**Young Israel of Forest Hills**

Forest Hills, NY  
Rabbi Michael Weingarten

**Utopia Jewish Center**

Fresh Meadows, NY  
Rabbi Yonoson Hirtz

**Great Neck Synagogue**

Great Neck, NY  
Rabbi Dale Polakoff

**Young Israel of Hewlett**

Boca Raton, FL  
Rabbi Benjamin Yasgur  
**Katz Yeshiva High School**  
Boca Raton, FL  
Rabbi Jonathan Kroll  
**Anshei Chesed Congregation**  
Boynton Beach, FL  
Rabbi Avi Billet  
**Anshei Emuna Congregation**  
Delray Beach, FL  
Rabbi Jack Engel  
**Young Israel of Hollywood**  
Hollywood, FL  
Rabbi Yosef Weinstock  
**Hebrew Academy (RASG)**  
Miami Beach, FL  
Rabbi Zvi Kahn  
**Young Israel of Toco Hills**  
Atlanta, GA  
Rabbi Adam Starr  
**Congregation Anshe Motele**  
Chicago, IL  
Rabbi Alan Abramson  
**Cong. Kehillah Jacob Beth Samuel**  
Chicago, IL  
Rabbi Aaron Leibtag  
**Congregation KINS**  
Chicago, IL  
Rabbi Leonard Matanky  
**Congregation Or Menorah**  
Chicago, IL  
Rabbi Doug Zelden  
**Congregation Or Torah**  
Chicago, IL  
Rabbi Zvi Engel  
**Ida Crown Academy**  
Chicago, IL  
Rabbi Leonard Matanky  
**Young Israel of West Rogers Park**  
Chicago, IL  
Rabbi Elisha Prero  
**Congregation Yehuda Moshe**  
Lincolnwood, IL  
Rabbi Joel Gutstein  
**Hebrew Theological College**  
Skokie, IL  
Rabbi A. Friedman, Rabbi S. Schuman  
**Hillel Torah Suburban Day School**  
Skokie, IL  
Rabbi Menachem Linzer  
**Kehilat Chovevei Zion**  
Skokie, IL  
Rabbi Shaanan Gelman  
**Young Israel of Skokie**  
Skokie, IL  
Rabbi Gershon Schaffel  
**Congregation BIAV**  
Overland Park, KS  
Rabbi Daniel Rockoff  
**Congregation Kadimah-Toras Moshe**  
Brighton, MA  
Rabbi Jason Strauss  
**Congregation Beth El-Atereth Israel**  
Newton, MA

Hewlett, NY  
Rabbi Heshy Blumstein  
**Stella K. Abraham High School for Girls**  
Hewlett Bay Park, NY  
Rabbi Yisroel Kaminetsky  
**Young Israel of Jamaica Estates**  
Jamaica Estates, NY  
Rabbi Shlomo Hochberg  
**Young Israel of Kew Gardens Hills**  
Kew Gardens Hills  
Rabbi Yoel Schonfeld  
**Rambam Mesivta**  
Lawrence, NY  
Rabbi Zev Friedman  
**Congregation Beth Sholom**  
Lawrence, NY  
Rabbi Kenneth Hain  
**HAFTR**  
Lawrence, NY  
Rabbi Gedaliah Oppen  
**Young Israel of Long Beach**  
Long Beach, NY  
Rabbi Chaim Waksalak  
**Congregation Ohav Sholom**  
Merrick, NY  
Rabbi Ira Ebbin  
**Young Israel of Merrick**  
Merrick, NY  
Rabbi Marc Volk  
**Community Synagogue of Monsey**  
Monsey, NY  
Rabbi Moshe Tendler  
**Young Israel of New Hyde Park**  
New Hyde Park, NY  
Rabbi Lawrence Teitelman  
**Bialystoker Synagogue**  
New York, NY  
Rabbi Zvi Romm  
**Congregation Adereth El**  
New York, NY  
Rabbi Gideon Shloush  
**Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun**  
New York, NY  
Rabbi Chaim Steinmetz  
**Congregation Ohab Zedek**  
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**Congregation Ramath Orah**  
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**Lincoln Square Synagogue**  
New York, NY  
Rabbi Shaul Robinson  
**Manhattan Day School**  
New York, NY  
Rabbi Mordechai Besser  
**Manhattan Jewish Experience**  
New York, NY  
Rabbi Mark Wildes  
**The Jewish Center**  
New York, NY  
Rabbi Yosie Levine  
**Yeshiva University**  
New York, NY

Rabbi Gershon Segal  
**Congregation Shaarei Tefillah**  
Newton, MA  
Rabbi Benjamin J. Samuels  
**Young Israel of Sharon**  
Sharon, MA  
Rabbi Noah Cheses  
**Beth Tfiloh Congregation**  
Baltimore, MD  
Rabbi Mitchell Wohlberg  
**Beth Tfiloh Dahan Community School**  
Baltimore, MD  
Rabbi Mitchell Wohlberg  
**Rockville Jewish Outreach Center**  
Rockville, MD  
Rabbi Yaacov Benamou  
**Kemp Mill Synagogue**  
Silver Spring, MD  
Rabbi Brahm Weinberg  
**Young Israel of Oak Park**  
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Rabbi Michael Cohen  
**Young Israel of Southfield**  
Southfield, MI  
Rabbi Yechiel Morris  
**Nusach Hari B'nai Zion Congregation**  
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**Young Israel of St. Louis**  
St. Louis, MO  
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**Bais Medrash of Bergenfield**  
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**Congregation Sons of Israel**  
Cherry Hill, NJ  
Rabbi Ephraim Epstein  
**Yeshiva at the Jersey Shore**  
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**Ohr Torah Congregation**  
Edison, NJ  
Rabbi Yaakov Luban  
**Rabbi Pesach Raymon Yeshiva**  
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Rabbi Daniel Loew  
**Congregation Ahavath Torah**  
Englewood, NJ  
Rabbi Shmuel Goldin  
**East Hill Synagogue**  
Englewood, NJ  
Rabbi Zev Reichman  
**Congregation Darchei Noam**  
Fair Lawn, NJ  
Rabbi Jeremy Donath  
**Shomrei Torah**  
Fair Lawn, NJ  
Rabbi Benjamin Yudin  
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Rabbi Zev Goldberg  
**Congregation Ahavas Achim**  
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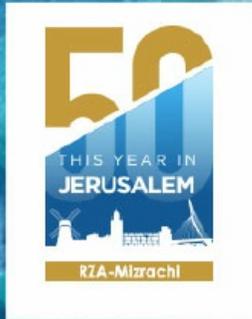
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**Young Israel of Oceanside**  
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**Young Israel of Plainview**  
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**Young Israel of West Hempstead**  
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**National Council of Young Israel**  
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**Rosenbaum Yeshiva of North Jersey**  
River's Edge, NJ  
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**Congregation Israel**  
Springfield, NJ  
Rabbi Chaim Marcus  
**Congregation Bnai Yeshurun**  
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Rabbi Steven Pruzansky  
**Congregation Keter Torah**  
Teaneck, NJ  
Rabbi Shalom Baum  
**Congregation Rinat Israel**  
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**Congregation Shaarei Orah**  
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Jerusalem, Israel  
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## YOM YERUSHALAYIM

# Honor Roll

### MY COMMUNITY IS PROUD TO CELEBRATE THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF YOM YERUSHALAYIM.

The fiftieth anniversary of the re-unification of Jerusalem is upon us. Yom Yerushalayim 2017 will take place on Wednesday, May 24th.

In celebration of this historic milestone the RZA-Mizrachi is preparing an Honor Roll of synagogues and schools who will be organizing t'fillot and festivities to mark this occasion.

#### JERUSALEM HONOR ROLL

Fifty years ago, through the miracle of the Six Day War, the holy city of Jerusalem was reunited. As the soul-stirring cry of "Har Habayit b'yadeinu" rang out, Israel's courageous young soldiers fulfilled the hopes and dreams of countless generations. At long last, the destroyed synagogues of the Old City would be rebuilt; the desecrated graves on the Mount of Olives would be restored; and the Kotel would resume its rightful place at the center of the Jewish universe. Yom Yerushalayim both commemorates that incredible moment in time and symbolizes the joining of G-d, Torah, and the Land of Israel, now and forever. On this 50th anniversary of the reunification of the eternal capital of the Jewish people, we renew our commitment to protecting the safety and sanctity of united Jerusalem.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(name of institution)



*The Religious Zionists of America is the US affiliate of the 115 year old World Mizrahi movement. The goal of the RZA-Mizrachi is to instill in the American Jewish community a commitment to religious Zionism, the preservation of Jewish political freedom, the enhancement of Jewish religious life in the land of Israel, and the promotion of aliyah. For more information, visit: [www.rza.org](http://www.rza.org)*

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Inter-Collegiate Game Night + Chidon HaTanakh**

RZA ARYEH FELLOWS PRESENTS:



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**GAME NIGHT**

**+CHIDON HATANAKH**

JOIN YOUR FELLOW COLLEGE STUDENTS FOR A FUN NIGHT OF ISRAEL-THEMED PANOPLY, DINNER AND REFRESHMENTS, AND WATCH OR COMPETE IN THE FIRST EVER COLLEGIATE CHIDON HATANAKH!

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6 PM (CHIDON NO LATER THAN 7:30)  
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**First Prize - \$300 + Set of Tanakh Sefarim. Second and Third Prizes - Set of Tanakh Sefarim. (Prizes subject to change)**

**Open to students and young professionals ages 18-24**

The Chidon will feature approximately 40 Perakim that focus on Israel, Zionism, and Shivat Zion: שמות: י-טז, במדבר: יא-יד, טז, כ, כא, לב, יהושע: כב-כד, מלכים א: יז-כב, מלכים ב: א-ה, ישעיה: לה, ירמיה: ל, יחזקאל: לו, הושע: יד, זכריה: א, ב, ח, נחמיה: א, ב, ד, ה, ו

FOR MORE INFO CHECK OUT OUR FACEBOOK EVENT  
"RZA GAME NIGHT + CHIDON HATANAKH"  
AND SIGN UP @ [TINYURL.COM/RZACHIDON](https://www.tinyurl.com/rzachidon)



## In The Spotlight

We are pleased to announce a new initiative: Each week, we will (translate and) feature a d'var Torah from a different Rosh Yeshiva of a Dati L'umi

## **Walled and Unwalled Cities**

**By Rav Eliezer Melamed**

*Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Har Bracha*

*Translated by RZA-Aryeh Fellow Yehudith Dashevsky*

We have already mentioned that the status of Purim is of an in-between nature. Its laws are considered Divrei Kabalah. One way in which this status holds practical significance is that there is a dispute about what to do in the case of a Safek regarding the application of the mitzvot of Purim.

Are we to be stringent in the case of a doubt regarding the laws of Purim, treating it like any other Torah law, or are we to be lenient, as we are for Rabbinic laws?

At first glance, it might be said that we consider the laws of Purim to be on the Torah-level and are stringent in the case of a Safek. This is illustrated in the example of Tiveria: it is said that its inhabitants must read megillah on both the 14th and the 15th of Purim. This is because there is a doubt about whether the city is considered walled or not. And so, perhaps we need to learn from this example that we must be stringent.

However, let us preface with an explanation of the law about walled cities, and then we will return to the question of Purim's status, of whether we are stringent or lenient in the case of a Safek.

There is a unique phenomenon regarding Purim. And that is, that the holiday of Purim has two times. There is no such thing in other mitzvot. The source of this lies in the story itself. Haman haRasha convinced Achashverosh to rule that Israel's adversaries can wage battle against the Israel specifically on the 13th of Adar. Even once Mordechai and Esther rose to power, it was impossible to annul the decree.

As an aside, this gives us an understanding of the power of malchut, kingship. Malchut is a very serious thing. Once the king decrees, there is nothing to be done. This is because if a king's decree were to be taken lightly, it would cast doubt as to the power of the king's dominion, which has the power to overturn the kingship. Therefore, every commandment, each decree, is ever-lasting.

Mordechai and Esther could not overrule the decree. Therefore, they passed a second decree allowing the Jews to defend themselves. We must remember, it was impossible to know the results. That depended on the morale, the fear etc. Indeed, the fear of the Jews fell onto their adversaries, and the Jews defeated them on the 13th in the entire kingdom of Persia and Media. But in Shushan, there were many who hated Israel and the Jews did not manage to kill all of them on the 13th. Esther then went to Achashverosh and asked if they could have one more day. Achashverosh agreed and so the people of Shushan fought on the 14th as well. That is how it came about that in all of Persia, the Jews killed their enemies and celebrated Purim on the 14th whereas in Shushan, they also fought on the 14th and consequently, the holiday was on the 15th.

Afterwards, when the Sages established the holiday for generations, they ruled that in all the regular, unwalled cities, that is, the cities that do not have a particularly important status, will read megillah on the 14th. However, they will read the megillah on the 15th in Shushan, the capital city, in which the miracle lasted for two days, and in which they were able to defend themselves against more people, and also in which they actually celebrated Purim on the 15th of that year. Really what should be said is that the Sages' ruling was that Shushan and all cities similar to it would read on the 15th. But if it were to be such, there would be a difficulty concerning the cities in Israel. Israel was in ruins – it had no cities as glorified as Shushan then. So, in order to make sure the once-glorified cities in Israel would not be

considered of lesser status than Shushan, the Sages ruled that the status of a city in Israel would be determined by its having walls during the times of Yehoshua bin-Nun.

Why would that be so? Rav Kook explains that here, the halacha is decided based on a precedent found in the Torah. This precedent is that there is a special status to cities surrounded by walls. For example, the laws of selling a house in a city – that the sale becomes finalized after a year but it can be redeemed within the year – are particular to walled cities. In short, there are special laws regarding walled cities. And these laws began from the time of Yehoshua bin-Nun.

Therefore, when they wanted to compare important cities in the land of Israel to the Shushan, they followed the precedent found in the Torah, that of walled cities having a special status. The cities that would read on the 15th were thus: Jerusalem and other walled cities. However, over the years, many doubts have come up regarding the status of all of the cities in Israel, as well as the city of Shushan, which has since been destroyed and it is unclear where it is. Regarding cities in Israel, the doubts abound. For example, Lud was a walled city but it is unclear exactly where it is, and same with Chevron. Tiveria was surrounded by three walls, but on one side there is the sea – is that considered a wall?

What do we do in the case of a safek, of doubt? The Gemara says that in Tiveria they read Megillah on both the 14th and the 15th of Adar. Seemingly, this points to the conclusion that the laws of Purim, while having the in-between status of Divrei Kabbalah, are considered De'Oraita on some level, because we are stringent in the case of a doubt. Indeed, it appears this way according to the Rambam.

However, many Rishonim explain that the Gemara's ruling is on the Lichatchila level. In which case, keeping both days is a hiddur and an act of piety. In truth, cities of questionable status fulfill their obligation by reading just on the 14th.

Today, the minhagin in these cities is to read on the 14th, especially as the safek increased with the decreased distance in between the older and the newer parts of cities and the uncertainty as to their borders. Few do read on the 15th as well, such as some people in Chevron and Tiveria. The one place in which we certainly read on the 15th is in Jerusalem, which has retained its glory. However, there are also certain parts of the city which have been subject to dispute. Ultimately, the rabbis of Jerusalem decided almost unanimously that everything in its municipality reads on 15th, although there were neighborhoods that remained in dispute despite the ruling, such as Har Nof, Kiryat Moshe and Bayit VaGan. There, they waited until the cities sprawled closer and closed the 70 amah-distance. Ramot is distant as well and was subject to dispute. In Mivasseret, some do read on the 15th because despite the distance it can be seen. However, for most places in Jerusalem, the rabbis of Jerusalem, including Rav Shapira and Rav Morderchai Eliyahu, ruled that municipality determines the day.



**Rav Eliezer Melamed** is the founder of **Yeshivat Har Bracha**, rabbi of the Har Bracha community, and the author of the widely popular halacha series ***P'nei Halacha***. Har Bracha is a religious community which is located on Mount Gerizim in the Shomron.

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**We are pleased to feature a different Religious Zionist rabbi each week from around the country to share a Dvar Torah.**

# Ta'anit Esther

Rabbi Dr. Leonard Matanky

*Rabbi of Congregation KINS and RZA Co-President*

*Chicago, IL*

In a typical year, Taanit Esther is observed on the 13th of Adar - the day before Purim. But not this year. Because this year Purim falls on Sunday and therefore the "day before" is Shabbat. As a result, Taanit Esther is "moved up" and observed two days earlier on Thursday.

But why do we observe the fast on an earlier date, and not postpone it as we would Tisha B'Av or the 17th of Tammuz when they fall on Shabbat?

The most obvious answer is that the fast days we postpone all recall tragedies, because, as the Talmud teaches, we never "rush" to remember such events. While Taanit Esther recalls the fast the Jews observed before Esther's unannounced visit to Achashverosh (or the fast they observed on the day of their battle with Haman's loyalists [Chidushei HaRan Taanit Chapter 2]).



However, HaRav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, zt"l suggested an additional reason - that Taanit Esther is part of the "pirsumei nisa" experience [publicizing the miracle of G-d's salvation] which is so integral to Purim. As a result, by observing the fast before celebrating the victory of Purim, we preserve the historic nature of this season, which G-d responded to our pleas and fasting.

A third possibility was suggested by HaRav Aharon Lichtenstein, ztz"l, who explained that the unique observance of this fast is tied to its unique message as a "zman kehillah," (lit. "a time of gathering") [Megilla 2a].

As Rav Lichtenstein explained, the threat that the Jews of Persia faced at the time of Haman was a result of their willingness to adopt the ideology of their society - an ideology represented by the feasts that Achashverosh presented in the third year of his reign. These feasts, in which the Jews participated, advanced a hedonistic ideology of radical individualism and the glorification of desires - "to perform the will of each individual" [Esther 1:8].

It is for this reason, that Esther insisted that Mordechai "gather all of the Jews" [ibid.4:16] to fast. Because Esther realized that by bringing the community together, she would succeed in negating the Persian values of individualism and the glorification of desire, creating instead, a sense of community and discipline.

It is for this reason that Taanit Esther belongs before Purim. Because, in order for the miracle of Purim to occur, the fasting and the gathering had to precede it.

Which for each of us is a most important lesson. Not only that celebrations must never be about the individual, but about the community, but even more, that for a miracle to occur we must reach out to others and create a community of caring and a community of commitment.

Which as Religious Zionists has been our unique role throughout modern times, as our predecessors and we built bridges throughout Israeli society, creating not only coalitions but opportunities of growth and cooperation. This is our legacy, and this must be our mission - "gather all of the Jews!"

## Welcome to Humans of Israel!

Created by RZA Aryeh-Fellows Jonathan Pedoeem, Ilan Atri, and Yishai Pearl

Our team is dedicated to increasing awareness of people that made a significant impact on Israeli society, served in the IDF, and/or made *Aliyah*. While we were in Israel during winter break, we sat down with our friends who made Aliya and talked with them about their journey. We listened and asked questions to understand why these people made these decisions and the difficulties they went through while executing it.

We took these interviews and are now sharing them with you to expose the true greatness of our brothers and sisters who are making this journey.

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Chaim is serving in Sherion in the IDF.



Adumim after serving in Sanchanim in the IDF.

What is the hardest part of making aliya?

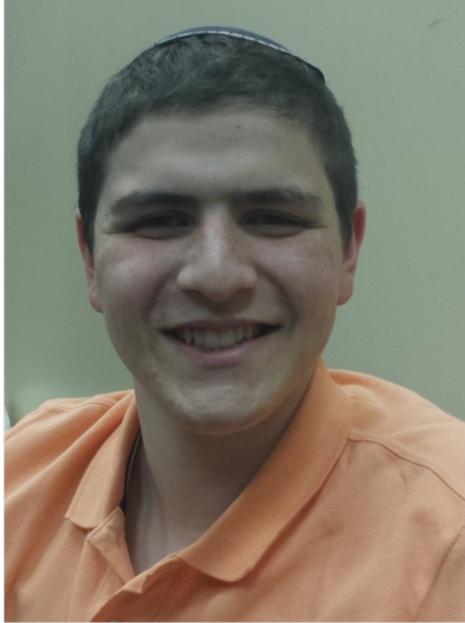
“One of the hardest parts of Aliya is that you leave behind a lot of your closest friends. You don't have those home friends you can always go back to. Here [in Israel] I can not get that until I settle down. Here you have a group of a few close friends, but it's not like the same you had before”

Baruch Margolis (2nd from the right) is now Shiur Hey at Yeshivat Birkat Moshe in Maale

## 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 Yakov Ellenbogen



Yakov Ellenbogen is originally from Sharon, Massachusetts and previously studied in Maimonides School and Yeshivat Har Etzion. Presently Yakov is a Junior in Yeshiva College, majoring in History with aspiration so pursuing a Masters degree in Jewish History.

The head of both YU's Tanach Club and Historical Society, Yakov enjoys learning in many different environments. This past summer, he was a fellow in Drisha's June Kollel, as well as an associate fellow in Rabbi Aryeh Klapper's the Summer Beit Midrash in the Center for Modern Torah Leadership. Yakov is very excited to contribute to the RZA's educational endeavors and to return to Israel this winter break, to learn at Yeshivat Har Etzion!

## Save the Date - Yeshivat HaKotel Dinner

**Yeshivat HaKotel will be hosting their 50th Anniversary dinner on Tuesday, Yom Yerushalayim, May 23, at the Lincoln Square Synagogue in New York City. Mr. and Mrs. Louis Drazin of Montreal will be honored for their many years of support and devotion to Yeshivat HaKotel. The program will include a Tefila Chagigit, Dvar Torah by our Dean of Students Rabbi Reuven Taragin, and music by Eitan Katz.**

**For those unable to join the mission to Israel, this is an incredible opportunity to celebrate Yom Yerushalayim here in the United States.**

**More details to follow.**

## Yom Yerushalayim Invitation

Watch this video invitation from the iconic paratroopers who liberated Jerusalem in 1967. They invite you to join them for a once in a lifetime opportunity to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Yom Yerushalayim, May 22nd-May 25th. More details below.



## Join us for Yom Yerushalyaim!

Please ask your Shul Rabbi and local school to include this in their weekly emails.  
Make sure to join us for this once in a lifetime opportunity!



**JOIN THOUSANDS  
FOR THE MEGA-  
MISSION OF A  
LIFETIME**



**May 22-25  
Iyar 26-29**  
Celebrating 50 YEARS of  
a reunited Jerusalem



**For more details  
and to book:**  
[www.mizrachi.org/YY50](http://www.mizrachi.org/YY50)



In light of the UN Security Council vote, our support for Yerushalayim is needed now more than ever. Register now for this once in a lifetime opportunity. Join Jewish people from around the world as we gather in our holiest city to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem. The time is now. Show your support!

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

**Please encourage your community leadership to include the paragraph below in your Shul and School Announcements:**

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem. On May 22-25 be front and center for a mega-celebration in Israel in partnership with the Religious Zionist of America (RZA) and World Mizrachi. Individuals and communities from around the world will participate in this once in a lifetime opportunity. Celebrating 50 years of a reunited Jerusalem

**Click below to see our video!**



## POINT OF VIEW

**My Proposal: A Transparent Kashrut Standard**

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

### **Who is a K.E. (Kashrut Expert)?**

The subject of kosher food in Israel has once again appeared on the public agenda. During the month of Iyar (June), the Supreme Court of Israel adopted the position of the Chief Rabbinate – not to allow alternative kashrut certificates, even if they are in accordance with normal halachic standards. (Examples would be the organization of Rabbi Aharon Leibowitz from Jerusalem or Rabbi Natan-Nachman Yismach, from Uman.) A number of “kosher” MK’s, men and women (such as Rachel Azaria, Aliza Lavie, and Elazar Stern), accused the Supreme Court of interfering with religious traditions and not accepting one of its main principals: “**private supervision.**” They also claimed that the judges of the Supreme Court were mounting an attack on “**Supreme Supervision**” which was a mainstay of the behavior of our ancestors in all past generations.

In the realms of the Chief Rabbinate, there was a tense hope while waiting for the decision of the court. Would it abandon its previous ruling which gave the Chief Rabbinate exclusive control, or would it continue on the right path and honor the Rabbinate?

I am happy to report to my readers that in order to be prepared for any eventuality that the Chief Rabbinate is working on a proposal which will be called by the grandiose name, “**According to the Will of Each and Every Man**” (see Esther 1:8). Those working on this draft have been asked to regularly incorporate the ultimate key words, “**transparency**” and “**regulatory power.**”

Note that this is being carefully worded in secret meetings. I take this opportunity to reveal one of the drafts of this document, which reached me through secret paths. This is still considered topsecret, and it is quite possible that many details will be changed in the future.

## **The Document: The Containment Version of the Kashrut Law**

Note: The purpose of this document is to gain acceptance by the Supreme Court, the Chief Rabbinate, the Chareidi parties in the coalition, and the N.L.'s (Nationalist Zionists), who are all working against the authorities. It covers eating establishments, including caterers, and pizza-and-ice-cream parlors. Other documents will be written for factories, slaughterhouses, and other consumers of kosher produce.

(1) Every kashrut certificate in a kosher establishment will be accompanied by an open display (as a book on the counter, a tablet, or a continuous screen display), with a full list of the relevant sectors. **A check mark will indicate which sectors will accept the kashrut of the establishment.** More than one sector may be marked.

(2) For reasons of transparency and supervision (regulation), **at least two rabbis from the past, Of Blessed Memory**, must be indicated whose rulings serve as the basis for the kashrut approval. They will be marked in a special **volume listing all the rabbis who lived in the exile since the fourteenth century**, which will be available at the counter to every person eating in the establishment. The list of rabbis will be numbered for purposes of transparency, as will be explained below.

(3) For a kashrut level of "**Mehadrin**" and above (see below) it is also necessary to note a specific reference to the relevant food item in books written by the rabbis or in their responsa (may they rest in peace).

(4) At every level of kashrut, **every item of food** that is offered to the customers, whether it is cooked, baked, fried in the establishment, or supplied in an original sealed package (for example, a popsicle), will be marked **in the food item volume** with the sequence number of the rabbis giving approval (as noted above, at least two rabbis are required).

(5) **Kashrut categories:** The approvals will be listed according to **twelve major halachic categories:** Meat, milk, insects, Shabbat, teruma and maaser, kela'im, sacrifices of idol worshippers, Shemitta, "take care of your souls" (Devarim 4:15), orlah, cooking by a Gentile or a Canaanite maid servant. The book of categories which will be readily available on site will include the halachot of all the above categories according to all the different halachic opinions. For those who are short on patience, an abstract will be provided for each section.

(6) **Kashrut levels:** The standard food establishments will be divided into **twelve levels of kashrut.** (Depending on the rulings of the Supreme Court about the need for transparency, the number of levels in each category might be increased to 613.) For now, the levels are: regular minus-minus, regular minus, regular, regular plus, regular plus-plus, Mehadrin minus, Mehadrin, Mehadrin plus, Mehadrin plus-plus, super Mehadrin, suitable for those who demand Ashkenazi ritual purity, and suitable for those who demand Sephardi ritual purity.

(7) **Supervision:** The supervision will be done by means of infrared cameras. In any food establishment between twelve and eighty-four cameras will be installed, as per the instructions of the regulator. The budget for this operation: The current pay scale of the supervisors, which will no longer be necessary when the new law takes effect.

(8) **A general note:** All of the related material, including lists of rabbis and food items, and halachic literature, will be displayed in alphabetical order, including references according to various useful categories. In restaurants from level 2 and above the material will also be displayed in English and Russian. Translations to other languages will be available on the open internet which all food establishments in Israel will be required to install.

We hope you enjoy your meal.

At the end of this week's Torah portion the incense is mentioned, which symbolizes the unity of the nation of Yisrael. "Every fast day which does not include the sinners of Yisrael is not a valid fast day, as is seen from the fact that even though 'chelbona' has a bad smell the Torah includes it as one of the ingredients of the incense" [Keritot 6b]. Unity in Yisrael is one of the elements of the time of Purim. And it is also significant for modern times.

In a sermon that he evidently gave at a Purim banquet, Rav Kook discussed Haman's declaration and its implication for today. Haman said to the King: "there is one nation **scattered** and **dispersed** among the nations" [Esther 3:8]. Esther, on the other hand, raises the principle of unity: "Go and **gather** all the Jews" [4:16]. According to Rav Kook, this declaration "must bring us back to life."

However, the great question is: "Can we now really say, 'Go and gather all the Jews?' How can we put them all and all their different parties under a single roof? ... We clearly see that scattering and dispersion devour us from all sides... We can see with our own eyes the terrible internal strife, how Jews rise up against each other, how brothers are transformed into wolves and snakes fighting each other. How can we say, 'Go and gather all the Jews?'"

"It is indeed one nation, even though it is separated into different parts," Rav Kook continues, "Do not wonder about the fact that two opposites appear in one body. There are amazing things in the world, and this nation – whose entire existence is entwined in wondrous phenomena, also demonstrates this remarkable feat. In essence it is **one nation**, even though from an external point of view **it is dispersed.**"

To explain this matter Rav Kook uses an apt parable. The best possible healing takes place when the body makes use of its own strengths and exposes its own wellsprings of power in order to cure itself, "making use of its unknown soul." This is true of the community of Yisrael. In essence it is truly one nation, as is written, "Who else is like Your nation Yisrael, **one nation** on the earth?" [Shmuel II 2:7]. While we judge the nation based on its external appearance, it should really be seen from the point of view of its internal forces, which are not always revealed. We must believe that we have within us a hidden force. "It is full of power, and it has the strength to put us on our feet, to renew our lives as in ancient times. It also allows us to stand up against all the Amaleks who wish to take advantage of the weak ones among us."

In another place, Rav Kook writes: "The love for Yisrael is a consequence of the belief that a Divine light shines on the community of Yisrael, and that this is an inherent trait that will never be taken away as time goes on" [Orot, page 148]. "And the hidden Judaism which is also unknown to us is the great soul of the nation... It will make itself known to us in these great times. And from the unknown place within the soul of the nation will come the blessing, 'Go and gather all the Jews.'" And based on the mitzva of the day, to drink so much that one does not differentiate between good and evil, when everything is in a hidden state, "The heavenly recognition will come to find the unknown Jewish soul within us – brother will get to know brother, and each one will give a hand to the other."

## ZIONIST CHASSIDIM

### Amalek in Our Generation

*By Rabbi Rafi Ostroff, Head of the Religious Council of Gush Etzion*

In Chassidic writing, "Amalek" has two meanings: The "external Amalek" is the physical enemy of the nation of Yisrael, while the "internal Amalek" is the evil inclination of an individual.

Here is what the Rebbe of Husiatyn wrote:

According to true wisdom, the forces of evil came into existence during the creation of the world in accordance with the heavenly plan of wisdom which is beyond the understanding of the creatures, and it will cease to exist when full mending of the world is accomplished. The forces of evil take on three forms: (1) In its basic form it is an angel, and the sages gave it many different names: Sama'el (known as the abbreviation *samech-mem*), Satan, the prince of Eisav, the prince of Amalek, the primordial serpent. (2) In this world it appears as the oppressors of Yisrael. (3) Internally in people, its form is the evil inclination. And that is what the Kedushat Levi wrote: "The eradication of Amalek includes the destruction of the evil part hidden in the heart of man, which is also called Amalek."

We are not capable of understanding why G-d found it necessary to create evil in the world. But in any case it exists and appears in many forms – in the heart, internally; as a spiritual force; and as the enemies of Yisrael.

### **Amalek – Evil for its Own Sake**

Why is it that Amalek was chosen as a symbol of world-class evil? The Rebbe explains:

**All evil appears in Amalek, in its perfect form. Normal behavior in the world is that war is fought for one of three reasons. (1) To capture new lands. (2) As retaliation. (3) To be recognized as heroes. None of these reasons was valid for the war fought by Amalek. (1) Yisrael did not have any territory of its own. (2) At that time, Yisrael had not yet attacked any other nation, they were still in the beginning of their national existence. (3) Winning a war against Yisrael was not recognized as a heroic act. And that is what the Torah tells us. "You were tired and weary" [Devarim 25:18]. Thus, the evil people do evil acts because they love them, like the Germans now, who are also called by the nickname Amalek.**

In practical terms, there was no reason for Amalek to fight a war against Yisrael. It was simply a war of evil against good – a war against the appearance of the name of G-d in the world. G-d chose Yisrael as the means through which His Kingdom would be revealed to the world. Amalek's war against Yisrael was meant to prevent this revelation. And therefore the war of Amalek was in essence a war against G-d, which continues throughout all the generations, until His name will be revealed to all.

**And here is something else we know from our prophets. In the future the evil will be no more, the world will be full of good. Then everybody will know that whatever G-d did was for the good. The nature of the evil force is that it delays the good that G-d sends us, thereby holding back the spreading of the Kingdom of Heaven (since as we noted the two are intertwined with each other).**

### **Remember the Evil of Germany**

The war against Amalek is the war between the good and the bad, between those who promote the word of G-d and the good in the world, and the evil in the world which rejects G-d. When the Rebbe wrote these words, evil was felt in all its strength.

**And just see how all the evil has been revealed in the evil ones on the earth. They are like Amalek (who stands over us in an effort to destroy us, heaven forbid). The more a nation reveals that it is evil, the greater is its hatred of Yisrael, since Yisrael carries the banner of the Kingdom of Heaven. (That is why the sages said, anybody who hates Yisrael also hates the One who created the world by His word.) Germany is the Amalek of our generation, and remembering its evils and how it pursued Yisrael is included in the mitzva of remembering what Amalek did to us.**

### **Doubts in Faith**

When the Rebbe wrote the above words (in 5701, 1941), the people in Eretz Yisrael were not yet aware of the dimensions of evil spread by Amalek in our generation.

**And now we see that the war of Amalek (the war between good and evil) continues until the arrival of the Mashiach. The heavy burden of the war was not the same in all generations. There were some generations when because of the war Bnei Yisrael were close to being destroyed, heaven forbid: The generation of the destruction of**

the Temple, the time of Rabbi Akiva, the era of the Crusades, the times of expulsion, the times of moranos in various different lands. However, the tragedy and the Holocaust in the current war against Amalek cannot be compared to anything that happened in the past. And Amalek continues to fight us now from inside and from outside. From the outside, millions of Jews have been murdered with great cruelty. From the inside, faith has been weakened, leading many people to thoughts of doubt, as is written, "G-d does not see us, G-d has left the land." [Yechezkel 8:12]. We need Moshe, for what do Moshe's hands provide? It is faith. "And his hands provided faith!" [Shemot 17:12].

The Rebbe insists that the Holocaust was unique and unlike any persecution of Yisrael throughout all the generations. And the physical war that entailed the murder of millions of people was combined with a spiritual war. The fact that the Germans had such success in their attempt led some people to lose faith. What doubt was there among the people? Could it be that G-d had abandoned His nation, as many people said after the Holocaust? Such thoughts appear as a result of the actions of Amalek, since his war against Yisrael is first and foremost a spiritual war against the revelation of the name of G-d in the world.

## THE ROOTS OF FAITH – Basic Tenets of Jewish Philosophy

### The Soul

*By Rabbi Oury Cherki, Machon Meir, Rabbi of Beit Yehuda Congregation, Jerusalem*

Just what is the soul of man? There have been many attempts to define it. There are some who try to constrict it into the tiny realm of biomolecules, what is called the "animal soul," so that when a person dies his soul also disappears. Some even view it as an illusion, leading to the conclusion that man has no soul even while he is alive. As opposed to these approaches, the religious masters insist that the soul is eternal, and that it is a spark of the Divine which can never be destroyed.

This primal question was debated by the disciples of Aristotle, Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themostius. The first one felt that the soul of man is basically identical with the animal soul but that it has a potential, a "readiness," to become eternal by the study of philosophy if it has merit. The second one felt that the soul is eternal from the beginning but that it has to enhance its perfection. These two approaches were adopted by the Rambam and the Ramban, respectively. Rav Kook put forward an innovative approach, that this describes the difference between the souls of Yisrael and those of the other nations (Olat Re'iyah volume 2, page 256).

If we look at this matter without any prior opinions, we cannot ignore the fact that there is in mankind a constant tension between two types of identity. On one hand, I am pulled to my natural animal outlook, which is called "dust of the earth" and a "serpent" in the Torah. On the other hand, I encounter within me a personality, a "me" which cannot be reduced to a biological machine, and it constantly thirsts for the metaphysical and for moral values. This can be called "the living soul" or "a part of G-d above." The encounter between these two elements creates the actual man: "a living soul."

This leads almost automatically to the division in the levels of the soul that was described by the masters of Kabbalah: Nefesh (soul), Ruach (air), and Neshamah (spirit), which are described by the sages (Bereishit Rabba 14). The nefesh, which is combined with the body (see the Zohar: "body and soul are one"), is identical to the revealed "me," and it accompanies man from the first moment of his own awareness. The neshamah represents the most noble and ideal dimension of mankind, and it is buried deep within his identity. The ruach represents the changing relationship between the nefesh and the neshamah. This is the least stable element of mankind, where the labors of his life take place. A parallel can be drawn between the triple nefesh-ruach-neshama and the times: past, present, and future. The nefesh is involved in the past and the neshama is related to the ideal of the future, while the ruach is the present in which man operates.

Who, then, is the man about whom we discuss the nefesh, the ruach, and the neshamah? We cannot allow ourselves to view mankind as nothing more than an assembly of separate

parts. We must assume that man has a self-consciousness which precedes these three characteristics. This is what is called: "chayah" – an "animal." It represents the general life, which is the essence of mankind.

Every soul (neshamah) is an expression of the Divine will and serves as part of the general plan of G-d. We can thus say that every soul is related in some way to infinity – and this is called "yechidah" – a unique unit.

## NATURE AND THE TORAH PORTION

### Olive Oil

*By Dr. Moshe Raanan, Herzog College and the Jerusalem College for Women*

"And you shall command Bnei Yisrael, that they should bring to you pure olive oil, beaten for the light, in order to light the lamps constantly" [Shemot 27:20].

Olives were grown in the ancient world mostly for their oil, and that is why the Torah lists "olive oil" as one of the seven species for which Eretz Yisrael is praised (Devarim 8:8) and not simply "the olive." We find the same idea in the words of Rav Shakeh to the besieged people of Jerusalem: "Until I come and I will take you to a land like your own – a land of grains and wine, a land of bread and vines, a land of olive oil and honey, and you shall live and not die" [Melachim II 18:32].

That is also how the Maharsha explains a passage in the Talmud: "Just as for the olive, which produces its best only at the end, so Yisrael will flourish only at the end" [Menachot 53b]. He writes, "The product, which comes at the end, when it is transformed into oil - for the olive as it is produced gives no benefit until the oil is produced..."

### A Major Product

The main use of the oil was for food, both for flavoring bread and frying. The oil was also used for anointing, for health treatments, and for light. Various alternative uses of the oil can be seen in a passage in the Talmud which discusses the blessing for olive oil. "Rav Yehuda says in the name of Shmuel, and the same was also said by Rabbi Yitzchak in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: The blessing for olive oil is 'He who creates the fruits of the tree.' What is this in detail? If you suppose that he drinks it – Will this not cause him harm? ... One who anoints himself with oil of teruma... The answer is that he eats it with bread... and he drinks it with the drink called *anigron*..." [Berachot 35b].

In another place, the use of olive oil in cosmetics is mentioned: "Rabbi Yehuda says, an pakon is olive oil from olives which did not reach more than a third of their final growth. Why is it used for anointment? It removes hair and softens the skin." [Menachot 86a].

Olives were a central agricultural product in Eretz Yisrael, very important in economic terms. This is the reason for Rabbi Yochanan's advice: "You will be blessed in the field" [Devarim 28:3] – Divide your possessions into three parts: One third grain, one third olives, and one third vines" [Bava Metzia 107a].

### Tekoa, in the Gallil

The main area for olive production was in the Gallil, as is implied by a passage in the Talmud about the heritage of Asher, who draws oil as if from a spring, and from the description of a large business deal that somebody from Ludkia arranged in Gush Chalav:

"**Mishna:** Tekoa is best for oil; Aba Shaul says, second to it is Regev, across the Jordan River... **Gemorra:** 'And Yoav sent messengers to Tekoa and he took a wise woman from there' [Shmuel II 14:2]. Why is Tekoa different? Rabbi Yochanan said: Since they often use olive oil, they have many wise people there. The rabbis taught us: 'And he dips his foot in oil' [Devarim 33:25] – This refers to the heritage of Asher, which produces oil like a fountain.

It is said that one time a man in Ludkia needed oil. He hired an agent and told him, go and bring me oil worth a hundred myriads. He went to Jerusalem, but they told him to go to Tzor. He went to Tzor, and they told him to go to Gush Chalav. They said to him, go to this man in that field, and he found the man breaking up the earth around his olive trees." [Menachot 85b].

The heritage of Asher spread out over the valleys of the north, the lower Gallil, and the western Gallil (Gush Chalav is identified today as being in the upper Gallil). The name "Tekoa" as the source of the best oil (see the Mishna above) evidently does not refer to Tekoa in the area of Yehuda, which was near Beit Lechem on the border of the desert, mentioned in the following verse: "They rose early in the morning and went to the desert, to Tekoa" [Divrei Hayamim II 20:20]. Rather this seems to be Tekoa in the Galil, not far from Miron. This is mentioned as a place whose olives ripen at a late date: "... if there are some that ripen after these, then they can still be eaten, and in other lands the same is true for olives and for dates. Olives can be eaten until the last ones disappear from Tekoa. Rabbi Li'ezer Ben Yaacov says, the same is true for Gush Chalav." [Tosefta Shevi'it 7:15]. Evidently this is a town in the Gallil (near Gush Chalav) whose fruit ripens at a relatively late date and not a town on the edge of the desert, which would have a hot climate and where the fruits would ripen early.

### Medical Benefits

The ancients (like modern researchers) attributed many positive health benefits to olive oil. In the passage of the Talmud quoted above the olive oil is described as enhancing the wisdom of the people. Rashi writes in a manuscript as follows: "Olive oil makes the heart madder." Another passage implies conflicting effects on memory: "We have been taught: Five things make one forget what they have learned... one who is used to eating olives... Five things bring the memory back: Wheat-enriched bread (and certainly the wheat itself); one who eats a roasted egg without salt; one who is used to olive oil; and one who is used to wine and spices... This supports the opinion of Rabbi Yochanan, who said: Just as olive can make somebody forget what he learned during seventy years, so olive oil can bring back a memory of study seventy years ago." [Horayot 13b].

The above passage can be interpreted in a spiritual fashion, but at least with respect to olive oil it has a basis in fact. The difference between the olives themselves and the oil which is produced from them might stem from that fact that the two materials do not have the same exact components.

## STRAIGHT TALK

### Why should we Destroy an Entire Nation??

*By Rabbi Yoni Lavie, Manager, "Chaverim Makshivim" Website*

#### Question:

Last summer I participated in a trip to Poland. It left me with a very strong impression and deeply touched my heart. After we read and studied about the horrors of destroying six million Jews, to actually go to where it all happened and see it with our own eyes – was an exciting and upsetting experience. And now, here we are at Shabbat Zachor (Remember!), when we read a definite command in the Torah... **Destroy an entire nation!** "From man to woman, from infant to suckling child" [Shmuel II 22:19]. The contrast between the two cases screams out to heaven! How can we contemplate doing such a thing? Certainly, it is written in the Torah – but I still have great difficulty with the morality of such a mission. It simply reminds me of what the Nazis did to us. How can we do the same thing to another nation?? And, how does our belief that we are a "chosen nation" differ from the terrible ideas of the Nazis about them being a superior race?

#### Answer:

The moral difficulty in eradicating Amalek bothered not only us. It bothered the first King of Yisrael. When Shaul was sent by Shmuel to fight Amalek, he underwent an internal tempest.

“When the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Shaul to go and smite Amalek, he replied: Just as for a single soul who is found dead the Torah commanded us to behead a calf for atonement, should we not avoid killing all of those souls? And if the people have sinned, what sins did the animals do? If the adults sinned, what sins did the children commit?” [Yoma 22b].

The doubts about the morality of the mission caused Shaul to hesitate in the performance of the job, resulting in a missed historic opportunity to be able to fulfill the goal of destroying Amalek once and for all. We really must admit that as Jews we find it hard to come to terms with a mitzva of this type. Our good and merciful heart finds it hard to connect to such commands as to “completely eradicate” [Shemot 17:14] another nation, and finds it easier to look for missions such as “open up your hands” [Devarim 15:8] or “help him together with him” [Shemot 23:59] – charity and returning lost items. On the other hand, we cannot and we do not want to eliminate explicit verses in the Torah. Perhaps if we go into the passage in depth we can begin to understand what lies behind it.

### Who is Amalek?

It is certainly much easier to close our eyesight and to imagine that our world consists only of good. All the creatures are good and aspire to make a perfect world. Bad things are a temporary failure, as a result of incidental misunderstandings. But what can we do with the fact that reality is not the same as our fondest dreams? Our world does indeed have evil and cruelty, and it is at a terribly low moral level. Throughout all history (and even continuing to right now), humanity has paid a very high price for its insistence on **denying the dark side** of reality and for its refusal to struggle against it in a definitive way.

The Torah of Yisrael, on the other hand, knew from the very beginning to describe the truth as it is. No matter if it is not popular. Even if it treads on the moral glands of people with sensitive feelings. “Amalek” is the arch-type of **refined evil in the world**. It is an overpowering and cruel force that has run roughshod for hundreds of years, spreading fear through the ancient world. It committed war crimes, took advantage of the weak, and left behind destruction wherever it went. The very same Torah which has taught the nation of Yisrael and the entire world to strive constantly to develop a world that is so pure that “the wolf will dwell with the sheep, and a tiger will romp with a goat” [Yeshayahu 11:6] testifies that Amalek is like a **cancerous growth** in the body of the world. The only way to rescue humanity is to perform an emergency operation to remove the infected limb, giving life to the remaining parts of the body.

Perhaps in Shushan the Capital two thousand and four hundred years ago the same question was asked. Gentle and good Jews found it hard to accept that there is such a type of evil in the world. But then, suddenly, the poisonous serpent lifted up its head and made the decree of the “Final Solution” in its original version: “To destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, from young to old, children and women, on one day” [Esther 7:4]. Why? Because! Merely because they are Jews! From that day on we must remember – if we “have pity on the cruel ones” it will not take very long until Amalek will find an opportunity to suddenly burst forth from his lair and to be cruel to kind people.

### A Jewish Amalek??

It goes without saying that as long as there is hope for mending the situation we are not quick to raise the sword. The Rambam ruled that “We should never wage war against anybody in the world before offering them an opportunity for peace” [Hilchot Melachim 6:1]. And he did not write that Amalek is an exception to this rule. We do not establish death camps for anybody, **we even make an offer of peace to Amalek**. If a person from Amalek wants to convert to Judaism he is accepted (Hilchot Issurei Bi'ah 12:17). And the Gemorra even tells us that “descendants of Haman taught Torah in Bnei Berak” [Gittin 57b]. However, if our offer is met with refusal and it is clear that our enemy is really Amalek of old, who is so well known and horrible – we begin a war of total destruction, in the name of all the good and the kindness, and in the interests of life. This is the most moral and responsible act that can be done.

What about a comparison to the Nazis? We should note one thing: The Jewish concept of a “Chosen Nation” is as far from the Racist Theories of Hitler as heaven is far from the earth. Is there any comparison between an arbitrary decision about a super race which violently takes on itself the right to enslave and trample the entire world under its boots and kill

whoever opposes its rule – and the mission of the nation of Yisrael to act as a moral beacon and a light to the nations, as a channel which will bring Divine light and good to the entire world?

One final word: Today, now that all the peoples of the world have been thoroughly mixed together and no single nation can be identified as Amalek, is this mitzva still in effect? Absolutely! In every struggle of ours against the forces of evil, throughout the world, in mankind, and even within our own self, we continue the historical war of the nation of Yisrael in an effort to eradicate the forces of evil and to bring good into the world.



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