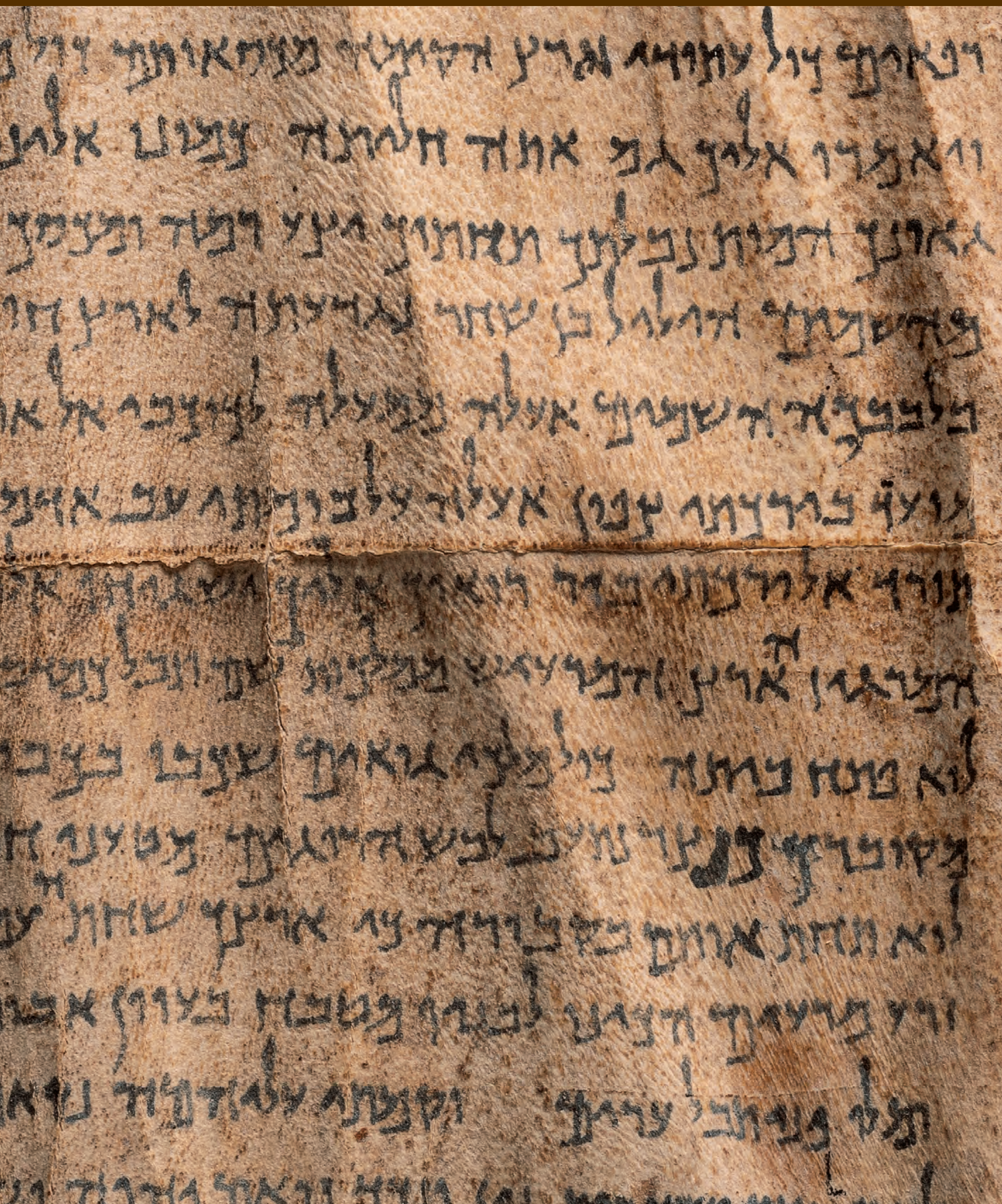


a voice from the desert: the great isaiah scroll



a voice from the desert: the great isaiah scroll



back on display at the israel museum, jerusalem



Photo © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Elie Posner

The Great Isaiah Scroll, which spans 717 cm, is being showcased in its entirety for the first time since 1968.

Housed in the Shrine of the Book, this magnificent Dead Sea Scroll is the oldest known manuscript of a complete biblical book. Due to conservation considerations, only a small part of this exceptional scroll is typically on display.

The exhibition provides a new perspective on the scroll as an archaeological object, with a focus on its materiality and content, offering visitors a rare opportunity to explore the rich history of this precious artifact.

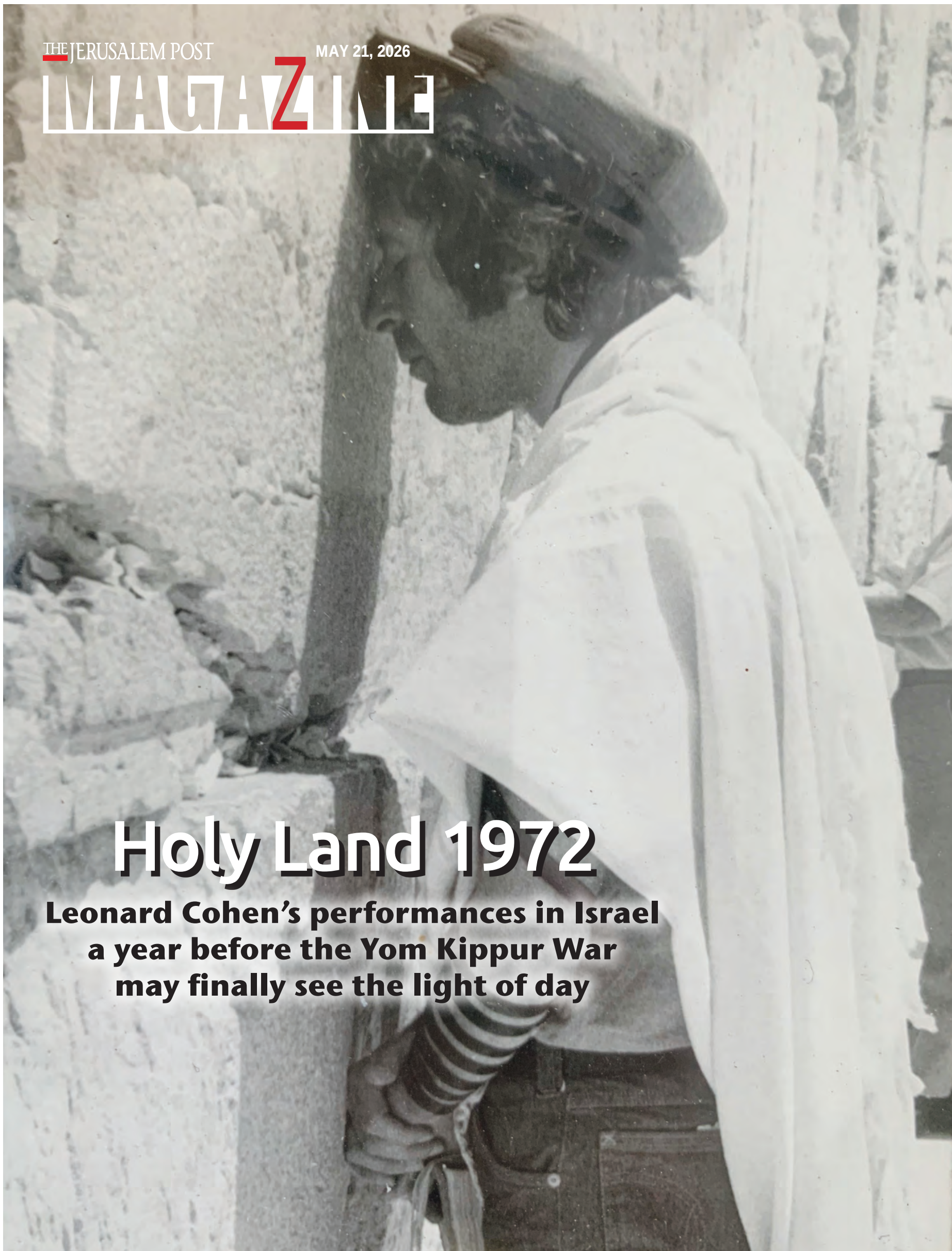
THE JERUSALEM POST

MAY 21, 2026

MAGAZINE

Holy Land 1972

**Leonard Cohen's performances in Israel
a year before the Yom Kippur War
may finally see the light of day**



Cover

- 14 Lost Leonard Cohen archives
• By DAVID BRINN
- 8 The Torah: Truly divine?
• By NATHAN LOPES CARDOZO
- 10 White's many shades
• By NERIA BARR
- 28 Wellness in southern Golan
• By NOAM BEDEIN

COVER PHOTO: The Leonard Cohen Family Trust
From top:
Factory 54 PR;
Noam Bedein;
Kyle Flubacker.

Sections

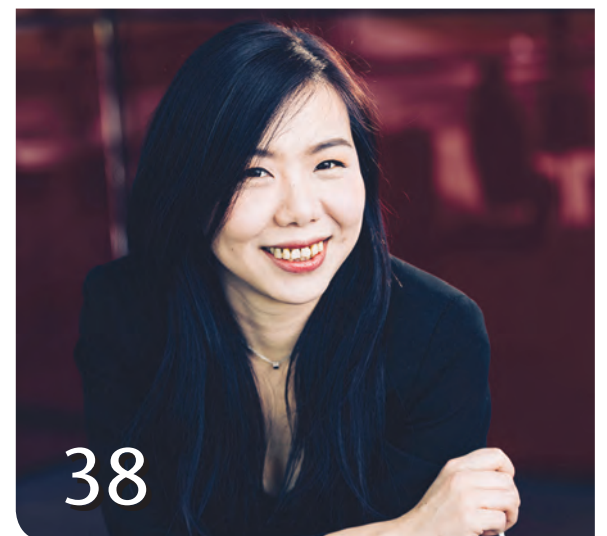
- 6 On This Day
- 21 In Plain Language
- 22 Arab Press
- 38 Entertainment Guide
- 40 Books
- 43 Eye on the Media
- 44 Education
- 46 Judaism
- 48 Games
- 50 Arrivals



10



28



38

Deborah's
BOUTIQUE • EST. 2008

חג שמח

NETANYA By Appointment Only
054 463-9131

JERUSALEM 1 George Washington St
02-6744207

THE JERUSALEM POST
MAGAZINE

Editor: Erica Schachne
Literary Editor: Marion Fischel
Graphic Designer: Ronnie Remeny
Email: Mag@Jpost.com
Books: Letters@jpost.com
www.jpost.com >> Magazine



Hstern GOLD RUSH®

HStern invites you to exchange your old gold for new jewelry
The old gold will be weighed and valued, according to the market price

24-29/5 Ramat Aviv Mall | Big Fashion Ashdod

31/5-5/6 Big Fashion Glilot | Mamilla Blvd. Jerusalem

7-12/6 Ha'Zahav Mall Rishon LeZion | Grand Canyon Haifa

In accordance with company regulations and at participating stores (E&OE)

20 years ago: May 21, 2006

Fatah accuses
Hamas:
Infighting in
Ramallah.

SUNDAY, MAY 21, 2006 ■ 23 IYAR 5766

Bush to tell Olmert: Include Jordan in any West Bank moves

• By NATHAN GUTTMAN
Jerusalem Post correspondent

WASHINGTON — US President George W. Bush will stress in his talks with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on Tuesday the need to consult with Jordan before moving to change the situation on the ground in the West Bank.

A senior administration official said, in preparation for the Israeli prime minister's visit, that Bush intends to ask Olmert about the role that Israel sees for Jordan in any decision regarding the West Bank, and noted that the issue of the future of the border along the Jordan River has to do not only with Israel and the Palestinians, but also with Jordan.

The need to consult with the Jordanian kingdom became even more important over the weekend, following a

letter sent by Jordan's King Abdullah to Bush. In his letter Abdullah warns against endorsing the Israeli unilateral withdrawal plan, which Olmert is expected to discuss with Bush in their Tuesday meeting.

"Unilateral action will have negative repercussions on the Palestinians, Arab and Muslim countries," Abdullah wrote Bush. The Jordanian monarch also wrote to Bush that any further deterioration in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would have adverse effects on the kingdom.

The US also wants Israel to engage in talks with Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas on issues regarding the border crossings between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and on providing humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians.

See BUSH, Page 9

Bomb targets PA security chief

Fatah accuses
Hamas of
attack

• By KHALED ABU TOAMEH
and ORLY HALPERN

RAMALLAH — Palestinian Authority officials on Saturday accused Hamas of yesterday's assassination attempt against Tarek Abu Rajab, the commander of the PA's General Intelligence Service, and called for dissolving the Hamas government and holding new elections.

IAF kills top Jihad leader in Gaza, Page 3

Livni set to lay groundwork for summit, Page 2

"It's time to get rid of the Hamas government before they kill us all," said one official.

See PA, Page 9



MEMBERS OF a new 3,000-strong Hamas security force ride in a pickup truck in the Rafah refugee camp in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. (Khaki Hamra/AP)

Computers, Nakba display share space at college in ex-settlement

• BY RAFAEL D. FRANKEL

NEVEH DEKALIM — Posters of "martyrs" and photo exhibits of the Nakba adorn the walls, and signs in Arabic on their office doors identify the professors. Outside, Palestinian flags fly next to their yellow Fatah counterparts and the smell of new paint wafts in the air despite the sea breeze.

Welcome to Al-Aksa University's Neveh Dekalim campus, where 600 male students have been taking classes since February in a renovated building once the largest boys school for Gush Katif settlers.

"Of course" it is special to study here, said Sallam Muhammad Abu Abakar, 21, a psychology student. "We consider it an achievement of the Palestinian liberation and it [gives us] a lot of satisfaction."

While terrorist groups have vied over the vacated settlements in the Gaza Strip since Israel's withdrawal, sometimes turning them into training camps, Al-Aksa has taken over perhaps the most valuable real estate Gush Katif had to offer.

Despite the funding crisis currently besetting the Palestinian Authority, construction continues here as building crews renovate the former municipal building, gymnasium, shops and supermarket in



IN THE HALLS of the former Neveh Dekalim school, Palestinian students view photo exhibits of the Nakba. (Rafael D. Frankel)

Neveh Dekalim's central square to make room for the 7,000 students who will be studying here as of September.

"Great amounts of money" are being spent on the project, Nasser Abu Il Ata, the university's vice president for public relations, said, refusing to give hard numbers.

Al-Aksa's apparently deep pockets show, too. Brand new computer and science labs, complete with new desktop CPUs and Bunsen burners, await next semester's students on the second floor of the main building.

On the first floor, a photo exhibit of Palestinian refugees and abandoned villages commemorates the Nakba, the "disaster," as they refer to Israel's creation.

There is a diverse student body here as well — supporters

See NAKBA, Page 9

Iran denies drafting dress code for Jews

• By Jerusalem Post staff and AP

Iranian officials on Saturday denied a report published by Canada's *National Post* on Friday that said a new dress-code law was passed last week mandating the government to make sure that religious minorities — Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians — adopted distinct color schemes to make them identifiable in public. Actually, the bill only received preliminary approval in Monday's vote.

The *National Post* quoted Iranian exiles saying the bill would require Jews to wear a yellow strip of cloth sewn into their clothes, Christians to have a red one and Zoroastrians to wear blue. A copy of the bill received by The Associated Press on Saturday makes no mention of minorities.

On Saturday, the *National Post* Web site had an article casting doubt on the original report. It cited the Iranian

Embassy in Ottawa denying the report and quoted Iranian exiles saying the bill did not appear to have such measures.

Comment, Page 2

The *National Post* cited experts saying that the idea of religious demarcation had only

See IRAN, Page 9

Ben-Aharon, the last unvarnished socialist

• By ANSHEL PEEFFER

Three days before the Labor primaries, Amir Peretz, at that point still the underdog in the race, appeared before a group of kibbutzniks at Ein Shemer. He was accompanied by a former Labor MK and veteran educator who told them breathlessly of the visit they

See BEN-AHARON, Page 3



YITZHAK BEN-AHARON, died Friday at 99.

A new Coffee Shop
has opened at the luxury Jerusalem Gold hotel, where you can enjoy a choice of pizzas, antipasti, fish and seafood.
Special prices to mark the opening.

The Luxurious Jerusalem Gold Hotel
At 234 Rehov Yafa, entrance from Rehov Hatzvi
(near Central Bus Station Square)
Tel. 02-501-3333
www.jerusalemgold.com

For sale / rent
Active hotel in Tiberias
• 105 rooms
• Two halls for functions - 800 places
200 places
054-423-0611

INDEX	
1-6, 9	News
7	Science & Health
8	Comics
10-12	Sports
13-16	Editorial, op-eds
17	Business Features
18	New York Times
19	Stocks
20	Classifieds
22-23	TV/Movie Listings
24	Crosswords
24	Arts & Ent.



GORMAN REAL ESTATE
Center of Tel Aviv
Luxurious Sea View Living and Openings

For Rent (Opera Tower)
3 rooms, garage, directly facing the sea and Jaffa, from balcony to sea, fully furnished, magnificent, 120 sqm, high floor, very deep, 2 bath + storage.
For Rent (Luxury Tower)
3 rooms, full sea view, luxury fully furnished, 2 underground parking places, storage, swimming pool, gym and spa.
For Sale (Ramat Hashikma)
Office, 3 rooms, 80 sqm, new bathroom, kitchen, parking, pool, storage, garage, 2nd floor, 2nd floor, 2nd floor.
For Rent (Opera Tower)
2 rooms + balcony + roof, high floor, sea view, concierge, bath, full, new project.
For Sale (Ramat Hashikma Project)
3 rooms, large modern bathroom, new design, fully furnished, 2 underground parking places + storage. Unbelievable!
For Sale (Opera Tower)
2 rooms, panoramic sea view, large modern bathroom, kitchen and balcony, 2nd floor, luxury interior.
For Rent (Opera Tower)
2 rooms facing the sea, perfect furniture, magnificent, 2 balconies with panoramic sea view.

On the occasion of the 36th Anniversary of the establishment of Shenkar College

**Welcome to
The International Members
of the Board of Governors
of the Shenkar College of Engineering & Design**

Shenkar College congratulates the 2006 Honorary Fellows:
Vice Prime Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres
Ms. Suzy Menkes OBE, Fashion Editor, the International Herald Tribune
Ms. Silvia Venturini Fendi, Designer, Fendi

שנקר
בית ספר הנדסה ומעצבים

Call magazine
**YOUR FAVORITE MAGAZINES
FOR THE LOWEST PRICE**

Vogue (12 Issues - Monthly) \$4.95 23.95 x 12 = 270.00	Cosmopolitan (12 Issues - Monthly) \$4.95 23.95 x 12 = 270.00
Newsweek (54 Issues - Weekly) \$4.95 83.95 x 12 = 990.00	Time (52 Issues - Weekly) \$4.95 91.50 x 12 = 1095.00
Rolling Stone (26 Issues - Bi-Weekly) \$4.95 41.50 x 12 = 498.00	Shape (12 Issues - Monthly) \$4.95 19.50 x 12 = 234.00

Call Now: 03-6066136

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ROOTED IN TRADITION. RELEVANT TODAY.

INTRODUCING THE MAGERMAN EDITION
KOREN SHALEM HUMASH
WITH TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY
BY RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks illuminated the Jewish world with wisdom that bridged ancient tradition and contemporary thought. The *Koren Shalem Humash* brings his commentary to the center of Torah study and synagogue life, making his teachings more accessible than ever.

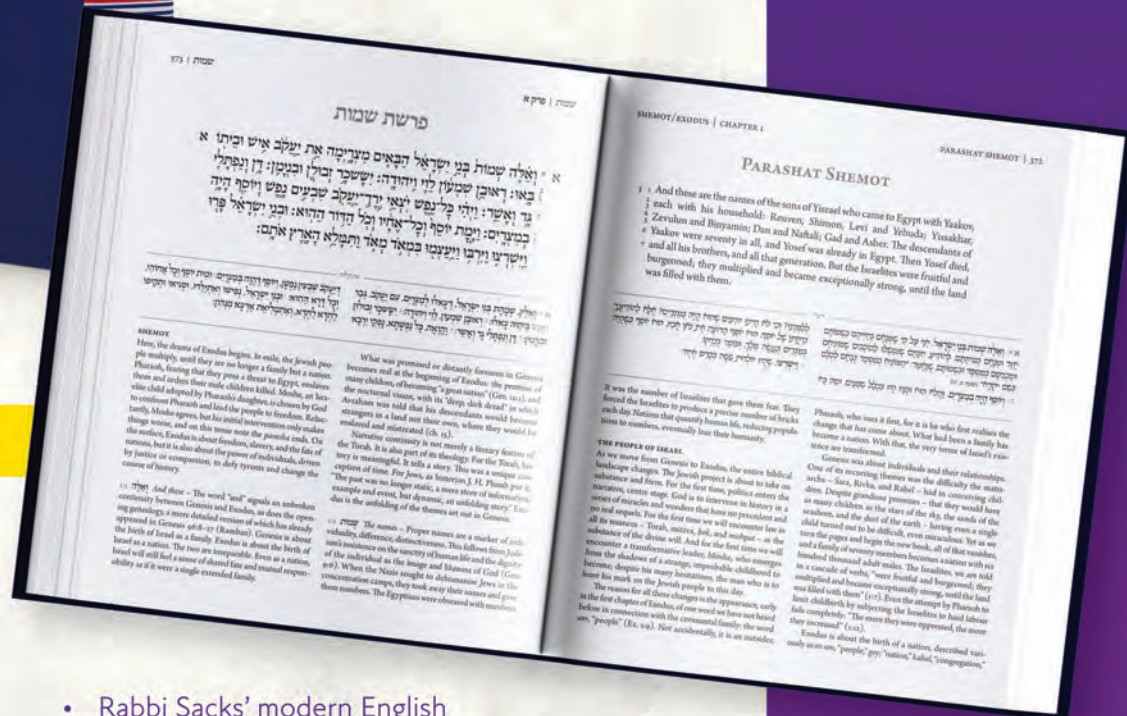
The *Koren Shalem Humash* embodies Rabbi Sacks' vision: rooted in tradition, relevant today.

"Torah is a commentary on life, and life is a commentary on Torah."

RABBI LORD
JONATHAN SACKS

FEATURES INCLUDE:

- Clear, readable text in Koren's renowned font and elegant layout
- Complete Targum Onkelos, with a clear distinction between translation and commentary
- Rabbi Sacks' Torah commentary, offering deep insights and contemporary relevance
- Haftarot for all Shabbatot and Haggim, according to major customs
- Rabbi Sacks' modern English translation of the Torah, balancing accuracy and readability
- Fully vocalized and punctuated Rashi text, refined through extensive research of medieval manuscripts for accuracy



Scan Here

korenpub.co.il

**KOREN
JERUSALEM**

Jonathan Sacks
THE RABBI SACKS LEGACY

Is the Torah really divine?



THOUGHTS TO PONDER
NATHAN LOPES CARDOZO

One of the most challenging aspects in Judaism is how to relate to the concept of revelation. The uncompromising claim by Orthodox Judaism that the Torah is not a book written by human beings but is the result of a revelation of God's will requires a formidable amount of faith in the face of today's widespread skepticism and secularity.

Over the last few hundred years, a major argument has erupted concerning the divinity of the Torah's text. Since the days of Spinoza's 17th-century *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, we have witnessed numerous Bible scholars dissecting the Torah in every way possible, concluding that the traditional Jewish claim of its divinity is unfounded and far-fetched.

Throughout the many years, religious scholars have unsurprisingly responded with heavy artillery. They have written profound papers showing that the arguments of Spinoza and others were mistaken and often lacked intellectual objectivity. In our days, a sincere but problematic attempt has been made by some mathematicians and Jewish outreach programs to prove the Torah's divinity through "Torah codes," which presumably are found within the biblical text.

But is this the right approach? If the Torah is indeed the ultimate divine word as Judaism maintains, is it at all possible or even advisable to take an academic approach to verify its divinity? Wouldn't the fact that it is divine make it totally unreceptive to academic scrutiny and proof? Isn't this similar to studying organic matter by applying accepted criteria used by scientists when studying inorganic phenomena?

Moreover, scholars, as well as teachers in outreach programs, should ask themselves when they look for definite proofs whether they are violating the prohibition "You shall not test the Lord, your God, as you tested Him in Massah" (see *Deuteronomy* 6:16 and *Exodus* 17:7).

On the other hand, if we don't want to use the academic approach, what approach are we able to take? Or are we asked to just believe this claim without any verification? A kind of *Credo quia absurdum* ("I believe because it is absurd"), originally attributed to theologian Tertullian in his *De Carne Christi* (c. 203-206).

The possible meaning of this statement is that what is sometimes foolish to a human being may be true to God (New Testament: *Corinthians* 1:17-31).

The phrase inspired a celebrated bon mot by American cultural critic H.L. Mencken: "Tertullian is credited with the motto *Credo quia absurdum* – 'I believe because it is impossible.' Needless to say, he began life as a lawyer."

This kind of approach seems to contradict Judaism's fundamental belief that one should make use of one's God-given intelligence and reason even when it comes to matters of belief. To believe because it is absurd is not an option.

What, then, are the means by which to grasp or reject the Torah's divinity?

Why are we not as convinced as our forefathers, who did believe in its divinity? Is this due to the fact that we are more intellectually sophisticated than they were? Or that our studies have now proven beyond doubt the absurdity of this belief? Many of us may be of this

opinion, but we should ask ourselves whether we are guilty of self-deception.

RABBI YAAKOV Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865), in his monumental work *HaKetav ve-HaKabbalah*, seems to touch on this problem and shows us a way that is neither academic nor the result of blind faith.

Commenting on the quality of the revelation at Sinai and quoting the verse "And the appearance of God's glory was like a consuming fire (*aish ochelet*) on the mountaintop before the eyes of the Israelites" (*Exodus* 24:17), the venerable rabbi asks what is meant by the expression "a consuming fire." Doesn't this indicate a destructive force? Why not just say that God is like fire?

Reminding us of the fact that at Sinai the entire nation of Israel had risen to the level of prophecy immediately following a life of misery and spiritual slavery in Egypt, he continues:

Their receptivity to Torah's divinity is proportionate to their soul's condition

"The truth is that the people of Israel were not all equal in their spiritual level. And they did not all see or perceive the same kind of revelation at Sinai. Rather, each one was able to receive this revelational experience only in accordance with the spiritual condition of his or her soul. Every Jew saw something, but what they experienced was directly proportional to the preparation they had put into it. When a person was less prepared, he or she experienced only a minimal level of revelation at Sinai; and the one who prepared more received more.

"This is the meaning of 'a consuming fire.' The perception of God's greatness is exactly the same as the way fire takes hold of various objects. There are materials that are intrinsically combustible, so that when you touch them with a flame, an enormous fire erupts. But there are other items that are fire-resistant, and when you put a flame to them, nothing happens. Just as

nature has made certain materials receptive to fire, so it is with the Sinai revelation.

"A flame grows or diminishes depending on the combustibility of the material with which it comes in contact. So it is with the Jew and with all people. Their receptivity to the divinity of Torah is proportionate to the condition of their souls."

I would suggest that the reason we are nowadays confronted with so much skepticism concerning the Torah's divinity is not only because of intellectual sophistication and academic biblical studies (which are often very subjective) but also because of a lack of spiritual receptivity, which is developed through labor of the soul.

This may seem like a convenient escape when dealing with the issue at hand. But, in truth, it touches on the very essence of people's spiritual condition. As with music and art, the Torah cannot be approached from the perspective of academic learning. It is the soul's language that is at stake. Fire cannot penetrate where no spark burns. Or as the common expression goes, "Like attracts like."

Aristotle once said, "The slenderest knowledge that may be obtained of the highest things is more desirable than the most certain knowledge of lesser things."

It would be wise for all parties concerned to stop trying to affirm or deny the Torah's divinity and first ask: Are we or are we not made of material that is combustible with the inner world of the Torah, which could possibly open the way for us to recognize the divinity of Torah?

Only when we have transformed ourselves and our souls into spiritual fire can we ask questions concerning the Torah's divinity and come up with honest answers.

As long as our souls are not open to the possibility that we could recognize its divinity, we cannot reject or accept this claim. This is the fundamental question we need to ask ourselves on Shavuot. ■

The writer is the author of many books, such as the best-seller Jewish Law as Rebellion. www.cardozoacademy.org



SCRIBE NADAV ELHADAD writes a Torah scroll at Safed's Mount Sinai Institute, in Feb. (Flash90)

SHAVUOT

Bikkurim — A Night of Learning at Beit Avi Chai



May 21 * Thursday Night * Beginning at 11pm

אסף פנחסי • אלכס רויטמן • בלהה בן־אליהו • גורי אלפי • גילי זיוון • גלית חוגי • דניאל טאוב
דניאל שוורץ • יאיר אגמון • יעל גידניאן • מוטל גורדון • מוקי צור • מרים גולדשטיין • משה סמואלס
נדב הלפרין • עמיר לב • עמית צפריר • עקיבא נוביק • רינה מצליח • רחלי מלק בודה • רואי רביצקי

English-Language Sessions

11 pm-12 am

Prof. Miriam Goldstein

How Medieval Jews
Reimagined Reading the Bible in Arabic

12:15 am-1:15 am

Prof. Daniel Schwartz

Josephus and Philo
on Pilgrimage to Jerusalem

1:30 am-2:30 am

Daniel Taub

The Deeper Story of the
Book of Ruth

Russian-Language Session

11 pm-12 am | Мотл Гордон | Тара для дара: история одной корзинки



44 King George Street, Jerusalem | For additional information: www.bac.org.il
Free Entry, Limited Seating | On a First-Come First-Served Basis



The many shades of white

From linen dresses to handmade ceramics, Shavuot arrives dressed in white

• NERIA BARR

While there is no Torah commandment to wear white on the Holiday of Weeks, linen dresses, white shirts, ivory ceramics, and tables crowded with pale blossoms are the order of the day. Alongside the seasonal procession of cheesecakes and dairy delicacies, the holiday always returns in tones of milk, chalk, ivory, and softened sunlight.

The festival of Shavuot, with its agricultural roots, arrives at the threshold between spring's last green growth and the long, unrelenting Israeli summer.

There is a sense of renewal tied to the giving of the Torah that white reflects.

Its pared-back tones simply suit Shavuot, which is quieter, lighter, and less declarative than the other holidays on the Jewish calendar.

In Israel, the tradition of wearing white for the holiday has taken on almost cinematic overtones: Children in white carry woven baskets of wheat. Family meals are gathered around linen-draped tables, decorated with bouquets of baby's breath and wild daisies, providing the brief illusion that the coming summer might still be gentle.

Few colors manage to feel both ceremonial and ordinary.

White carries the freshness of newly laundered cotton, the worn softness of porcelain, the blank promise of an untouched page. Its fabric flutters in the evening breeze, its tables are set with soft cheeses, candles, and stoneware. Even the harsh Mediterranean light seems to soften when it lands on white linen and cotton.

Many meanings of white

What makes the white palette so enduring is that it never settles into one meaning. In fashion, white can be spiritual, romantic, minimal, festive, or deliberately unguarded.

In design, it creates quiet; it clears rather than fills. A cotton dress can feel right at a holiday table or on a city street. A ceramic bowl can look rustic or almost luminous, depending on the light.

Chalk white feels crisp and modern. Ivory carries a trace of age, of paper, and shell. Linen white feels relaxed, softened by sun and washing, as though it has already lived through several summers. Bright whites feel architectural; cream tones feel closer to skin and shade. Designers know this well: A pale room is never without temperature.

There is also something emotional in this palette, especially in unsettled times. It suggests renewal without announcing itself. A shirt is pressed and laid out before a holiday meal. White flowers leaning in a glass vase. A ceramic bowl holding morning light on a kitchen counter. Small gestures that slow things down.

Shavuot seems almost composed for this language. The harvest holiday arrives as the landscape shifts from spring green into summer gold, and these pale tones appear as a counterpoint – cooling, reflective, unhurried. Tied to concepts of purity and festivity, they also offer a quieter reading.

It is in white that the palette finds its clearest expression in design. Unlike colors that follow trends, these tones work through surface and texture. Crinkled linen maintains the memory of the body, matte clay enshrines fingerprints, enamel is worn at the edges, embroidery adorns fabric. Light does most of the work; shadow completes it.

The Israeli version of this aesthetic is never just pristine. Resisting perfection, we pair sandals with a linen dress, and crisp white shirts with worn jeans. Fabric is softened by salt air and sun on the beach; bougainvillea petals stick to a freshly painted chair after a brief spring gust. It is less about fashion, more about life as it is lived.

Perhaps that is why we feel the urge to choose white for this holiday, year after year. Its pure tones offer clarity without severity, refinement without performance. In a world saturated with visual noise, these tones feel almost radical in their restraint. They do not compete for attention. They simply leave space – for light, for objects, and for time itself to unfold.

Happy Shavuot.

Golbary (Lior Kason)



Backpack By Rolink (Courtesy)



H&O (Courtesy)



Castro Home (Meidan Mor Alon)

PERIDANCE
CONTEMPORARY
DANCE COMPANY

היכל אמנויות הבמה
הרצליה



"Blessedly inventive movement rising to emotional climax."

The New York Times

PERIDANCE

COMPANY, NEW YORK

CHOREOGRAPHERS

YIN YUE

MIKE TYUS

MARKO GOECKE

IGAL PERRY

Photo: Rachel Neville | Design: Dorit Talpaz



29.6 | Haifa Auditorium
ETHOS.CO.IL *9300

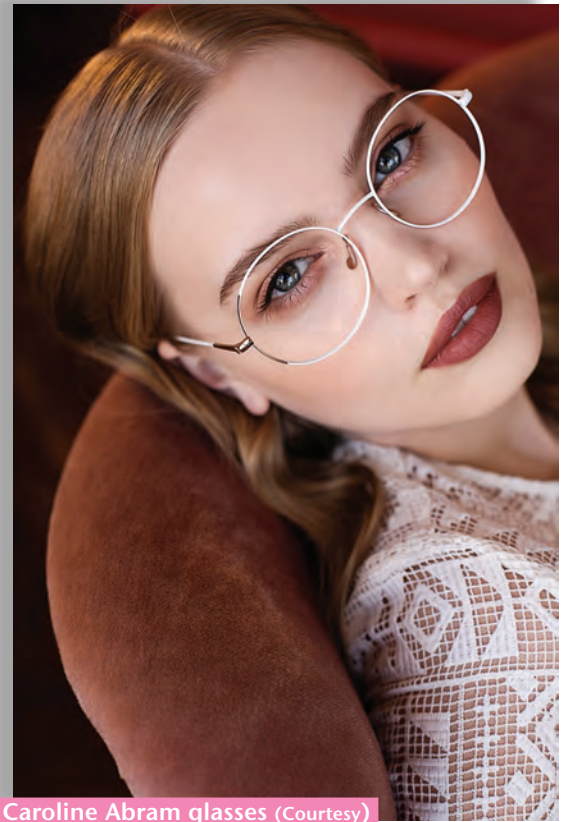
1-4.7 | Herzliya Performing Arts Center
HOH-HERZLIYA.CO.IL 09.9729999

5.7 | Jerusalem Theatre
BIMOT.CO.IL *6226





Camper for Originals (Courtesy)



Caroline Abram glasses (Courtesy)



Golf & Co (Idan Malka)



Gali Sandals (Courtesy)



Swimwear by Jack Kuba (Courtesy)



Shavuot head wreath by Zer 4 u (Courtesy)



Michael Kors for Factory 54 (Courtesy)

THE THEATRON RESIDENCES IN JERUSALEM: AN URBAN INTIMACY, NATURE, AND LUXURIOUS BOUTIQUE HOTEL STYLE

The Hasid Brothers luxury project in Talbiya offers Jerusalem views, overlooks Moon Grove and combines luxury residences with five-star hotel services by the international Accor group.

• By YOSHI NISSAN

The connection between Diaspora Jews and Jerusalem has grown significantly stronger after two and a half years of war. Against the backdrop of rising antisemitism in their countries of residence, many Jews came to realize that their true place is in the Holy Land and in its capital, Jerusalem. For many, Jerusalem transformed from a holiday destination during the festive season or a real estate investment opportunity into a true home - a place to live.

The need to conceal or downplay their Jewish identity abroad led many Diaspora Jews to immigrate to Israel over the past two years, seeking to settle not merely out of escape, but from a deep, conscious, and determined choice. They understood that both their hearts and their future belong in Jerusalem. There, they feel a sense of belonging, identification, and above all, security - feelings that outweighed concerns over the security threats the country faced during the war.

This wave of immigration is driven by both rational and emotional motivations. Rather than waiting until the last moment, many chose to thoughtfully and carefully plan their future and Aliyah by building a home in Jerusalem. "The apartment they purchase is not merely a property, but a meaningful anchor - familial, national, personal, and deeply emotional - a place where they can feel part of the most special people in the world, without compromising the high quality of life to which they have become accustomed" - tells us Deborah Tseitou, owner of T&T Investments- Sole exclusive marketing company for Theatron Residences.

Beyond being an attractive real estate destination at the intersection of Dubnov and Chopin St., the decision to move to Jerusalem is an expression of identity as well as a strategic declaration. Jerusalem is not only the capital of the State of Israel, it is the beating heart of the entire Jewish people. Anyone raised in a Zionist home, anyone whose children or grandchildren study in a yeshiva or Israeli university, or anyone who visits Israel several times a year,

naturally finds themselves drawn to Jerusalem.

For Jews making Aliyah, living in Jerusalem does not come at the expense of the high standards they were accustomed to abroad. On the contrary - they expect to find the same precise, quiet, service-oriented quality of life, meticulously maintained down to the smallest details.

This is where "The Theatron Residences" by Hasid Brothers comes into the picture - an ultra-luxury residential complex in the heart of the cultural district of Jerusalem's Talbiya neighborhood, combining private residences with full five-star hotel services. Talbiya is a quiet, green, and highly sought-after Jerusalem neighborhood located between the German Colony on one side and Rehavia on the other. The neighborhood is within walking distance of the Old City - a fact not overlooked by many buyers. The ability to walk on Shabbat and holidays to the spiritual and historic heart of the Jewish people - the Western Wall - without needing a car or transportation, makes the project's location ideal and emotionally meaningful for Diaspora Jews.

This is a unique real estate creation overlooking a preserved green forest landscape beside the city: Only 21 spacious apartments spread across three boutique buildings - of which only four remain available for sale. All units are single-level apartments, all facing Moon Grove. The available residences include a 230-square-meter garden apartment with a massive 150-square-meter private garden, along with three 4-5 room apartments in various layouts ranging from 170-200 square meters, featuring sukkah balconies measuring 30-70 square meters.

The apartments were meticulously designed to deliver a luxurious living experience, featuring high ceilings, advanced acoustic-insulated windows, BULTHAUP kitchens, underfloor heating, VRF air-conditioning systems, and smart home technology. Every apartment is fully furnished down to the finest detail - including luxury Italian furniture, electrical appliances, and even artwork - allowing residents



► "The Theatron Residences" by Hasid Brothers (Photo by Meni Shitrit)

to simply arrive with their suitcase and move in immediately.

In 2025, the project achieved tremendous sales success, including the sale of a spectacular full-floor penthouse apartment. The final luxurious 311-square-meter penthouse on a single level, with an 80-square-meter terrace, was sold to an American family before Passover, while the remaining apartments sold above expectations. Currently, 17 happy families already reside in the complex, enjoying an exceptional lifestyle. Some live there permanently, while others stay for several months each year or during the holidays.

The project's buyers are primarily Religious Zionist or traditionally observant Jewish families from across the Diaspora, including the United States, Argentina, Canada, France, and additional countries. These are families and mature couples aged 35-70 who came to Jerusalem to establish their home, as well as others who visit Israel several times a year.

A JERUSALEM NATURE GEM - WITH ACCESS TO A FIVE-STAR HOTEL FACILITIES

"The Theatron Residences" combines luxury residential living with a boutique hotel operated by the MGallery collection of the international Accor group. Residents enjoy direct access to all the services and facilities of the five-star hotel, including a heated indoor swimming pool open year-round, a luxurious spa, fitness center, elegant synagogue, room service, personal concierge services, and 24/7 security.

It is important to emphasize that there is complete planning separation

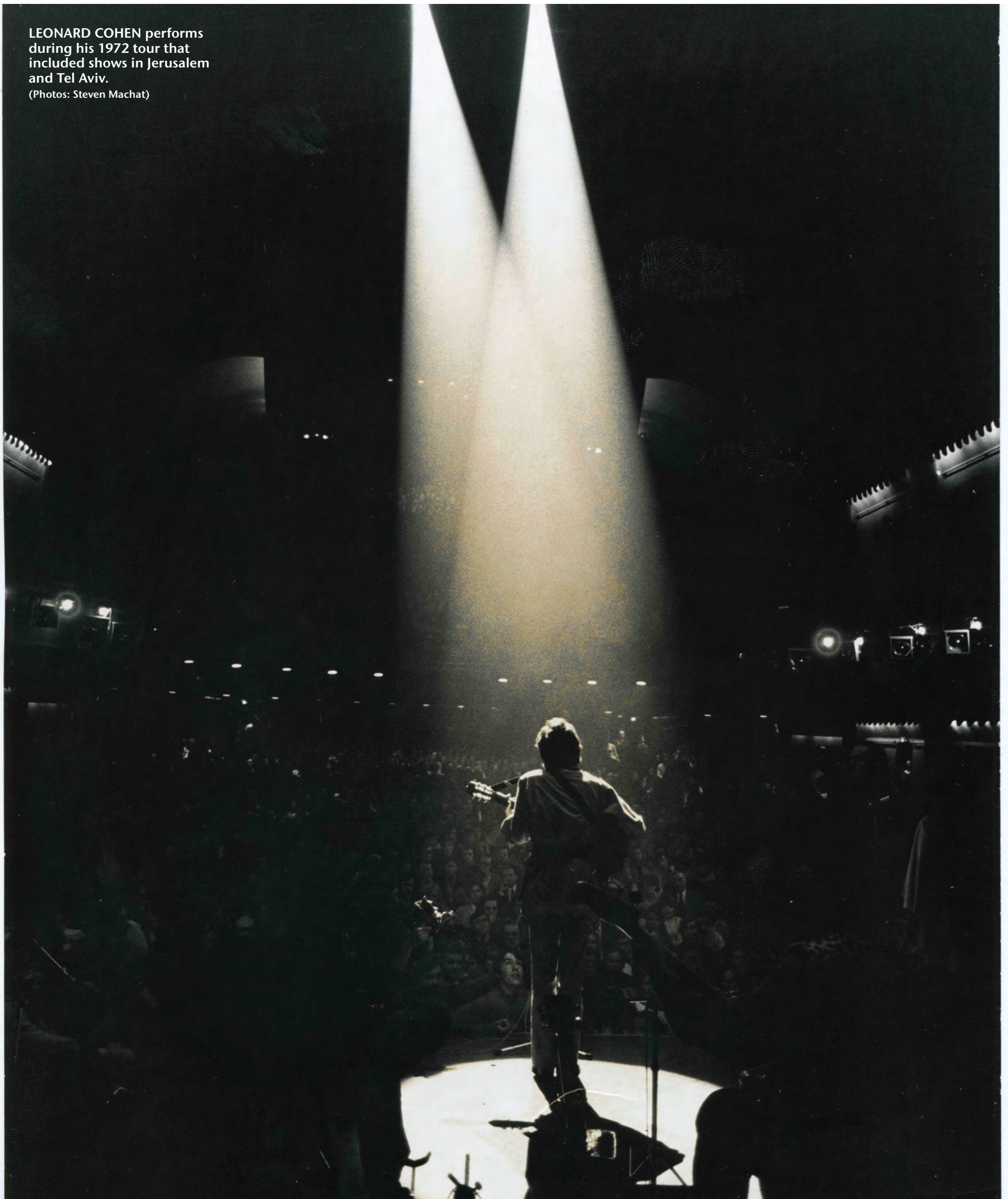
between the hotel and the residential complex. Residents enjoy a separate entrance with direct underground parking access, an independent lobby, and private elevators. In this way, complete privacy is maintained while still allowing residents to benefit from all the hotel's advantages, directly from underground access to the hotel with a private code only for residents. They may also host visiting family members by booking hotel rooms at discounted rates. The hotel itself is an intimate luxury boutique hotel with only 73 rooms, ensuring peace, privacy, and a uniquely refined atmosphere.

Alongside the abundance of green spaces surrounding the project, it is located along what is known as the city's "Cultural Mile," opposite the Jerusalem Theater and within walking distance of the Old City and the Western Wall, the German Colony, Rehavia, and leading educational and cultural institutions. Nearby landmarks include the President's Residence, the Prime Minister's Residence, the Museum of Islamic Art, Hansen House, the Center for Democracy, the Israel Bar Association, the Van Leer Institute, the Great Synagogue, and more.

"The Theatron Residences" offers a rare combination of urban intimacy on one hand, green natural surroundings on the other, and the tranquility and style of a luxurious boutique hotel. A warm and supportive Jewish community has already formed within the complex - one that enjoys a meaningful, peaceful, and comfortable lifestyle at the very heart of Jerusalem, Israel's capital. ■

This article was written in cooperation with Hasid Brothers

LEONARD COHEN performs
during his 1972 tour that
included shows in Jerusalem
and Tel Aviv.
(Photos: Steven Machat)



The lost Leonard Cohen archives

Long-stored treasures by the Jewish Canadian legend, including the audio and video from two 1972 shows in Israel, may finally see the light of day

• DAVID BRINN

Everyone knows about Leonard Cohen's visit to Israel in 1973 when he spontaneously parachuted into Israel to entertain IDF troops on the front during the Yom Kippur War. Especially since the publication of Matti Friedman's comprehensive *Who by Fire: Leonard Cohen in the Sinai* – a celebrated book that recounts that visit of the Jewish Canadian high priest of poetry to the Holy Land, and the subsequent theater performance that has evolved from it – that moment in time has been captured and dissected from every angle.

But much less is known about another eventful convergence of the stars between Israel and Cohen, some 37 years before he returned to the Holy Land in 2009 for his monumental concert at Ramat Gan Stadium, complete with the *Birkat Kohanim* (Priestly Blessing) bestowed upon a stunned crowd of devotees.

In 1972, a year before his historic Yom Kippur visit, a not-so-famous and professionally struggling Cohen and his band arrived in Israel for two concerts, in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Both shows are legend, not as much for the music as for the drama surrounding them.

In Jerusalem, Cohen suffered an onstage crisis, spurred by ingesting a tab of LSD before the show, went offstage at intermission and shaved, coming back to perform a stunning second half.

The show in Tel Aviv, at the Yad Eliyahu sports arena, was marred by clashes between the audience and members of the event's security detail, who were preventing them from getting close to the stage.

Snippets of film and audio from those shows have emerged over the years, along with a recounting in Friedman's book. It was also touched on visually in a somewhat sensational and inaccurate manner in a 1974 documentary, *Leonard Cohen: Bird on a Wire* by Tony Palmer, which was quickly taken out of circulation upon its release, at Cohen's request, and subsequently by Sony and the Cohen estate after an unauthorized DVD recut by Palmer was re-released in 2010.

The irony is that extensive audio and video footage of both the Jerusalem and Tel Aviv shows exists – along with hours of Cohen at various spots in Israel, including at the Western Wall – but has remained locked up since Cohen's death in 2016.

In March, however, the likelihood that those artifacts – along with a vast archive of Cohen's music, art, writings, and film – would become available to Cohen's fans increased slightly with the partial conclusion of a lawsuit brought on by his two children, Adam and Lorca, against his former manager and the trustee of the Cohen estate, Robert Kory.

For years, the children have been blocking Kory's plan to make the archive available through donation to preeminent Canadian universities and museums. Their tactic was to accuse Kory of misconduct in his role as trustee. But in a March 24 ruling, a court-appointed referee found, after a 10-day trial, that Kory had fully and competently carried out Cohen's wishes in his management of the estate and had committed no wrongdoing whatsoever. In fact, the referee went so far as to say that the claim of Kory's alleged fraud was a "flaming red herring of scarlet proportion."

The *Magazine* spoke with Kory about the lawsuit, Cohen's complicated relationship with Israel, and his final trip to the Jewish state in 2009. And Robert de Young – an Australian filmmaker, literary studies academic, and archivist – whom Kory tapped in 2017 to take charge of going through the reams and reams of notebooks and hours of music and film that Cohen had left behind – delves into the projects that are ready to roll, including the holy grail of the 1972 concerts in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

ROBERT KORY arrived in Israel in 2009 with his client and friend Cohen ahead of the singer's show at Ramat Gan Stadium.

The California-based attorney had stepped in to assist with Cohen's affairs in 2004 following a financial disaster resulting from a previous manager stealing the singer-songwriter's life savings. By 2008, Kory had been so successful in assisting Cohen that the bard tapped him to become his personal manager and support a late career renaissance in which



COHEN IN an arcade photo strip.



'You know, music doesn't really make a difference, but it does somehow make things better'



Cohen rose to international stardom.

Cohen, who died in 2016 aged 82, was received like the upper-echelon artist he was over the course of 147 shows around the globe between 2008 and 2010 alone.

When Cohen was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2008, presenter Lou Reed said, "We are so lucky to be alive at the same time Leonard Cohen is."

The singer's return to the limelight was a mixed blessing, as he was not comfortable in the public eye.

"Leonard was very reluctant at first to go back on tour. From his view, touring had always been a disaster – he would say, 'Performing is an opportunity for a thousand humiliations,'" Kory told *Billboard* magazine earlier this year.

When I met Kory in a big reception tent outside Ramat Gan Stadium before the 2009 show, he wore the same tailored suit and fedora as his boss, and he was on a high. He had staged a coup in arranging the Israel show because it was a low priority, given all of the lucrative opportunities that Cohen had to perform elsewhere at the height of his resurgence.

Although performing in Israel seemed to Kory like a no-brainer, given Cohen's history with the country, it was a hard sell.

"Leonard didn't want to play in Israel at first, but he allowed me to explore the possibility and I learned there was a huge demand," Kory told the *Magazine* recently, a few weeks after the court ruling in his favor.

Cohen, upset over the continuing Israel-Palestinian conflict and the ongoing struggles surrounding the future of the Jewish state, "didn't want to play because of the politics and was troubled by making money in the middle of a conflict," Kory said, having discussed the issue extensively with Cohen.

"So I said, 'Well, what if we do it as a charity event?'"

Together, they devised a plan that made sense to them: to not treat the show as just another stop on a global tour but to establish a fund that would benefit coexistence efforts between Israelis and Palestinians, and also set up a sister show in Ramallah, alongside Ramat Gan.

"Leonard immediately goes to the web and finds this organization called the Parents Circle, which was founded by one of the most noble human beings I've met, Yitzhak Frankenthal, whose son was killed by Hamas at a bus stop, and who had an epiphany, when at first he wanted revenge, he realized that hatred can only stop in one heart at a time, and he declared that it was going to stop with his. So he set up this organization of Israeli and Palestinian parents who've lost their children," Kory said.

THE RAMALLAH concert didn't materialize due to politics and pressure, despite the great interest in the concert among the Palestinians whom Kory met and, to his surprise, were familiar with Cohen's work. Instead, Kory arranged for 400 Palestinian



VARIOUS PHOTOS of the 1972 tour onstage and offstage with Cohen and his band.

bereaved parents to attend the Ramat Gan concert, which was a huge success, both artistically and financially, raising over \$3 million for the Fund for Reconciliation, Tolerance and Peace.

Kory returned to the region many times over the next couple of years to be hands-on in administering the charitable funds, but he and Cohen began souring on the prospects of their efforts bearing fruit, amid increasing tensions between Israelis and Palestinians.

"I seemed to know more Palestinians than the typical Israeli whom I met, and I had closer relationships with many wonderful people," Kory said. "But, by 2012, Leonard discouraged me from continuing to visit Israel and the West Bank in what appeared to be an increasingly conflicted environment. Leonard feared I would get hurt because I had no real understanding of the conflict."

"Leonard was a huge personal defender of Israel but recognized the reality of evil in the world, and he thought my views were naïve. Leonard told me, 'You know, music doesn't really make a difference, but it does somehow make things better,'" he recalled.

"He definitely realized the impact of his performance on the Israeli people. But he also realized the limits of what he could do as an entertainer to have any major impact on peace between Israelis and Palestinians," Kory added.

At Cohen's request, Kory became executor of his estate.

IN THE last year of his life, Cohen talked more intimately with Kory about his archive and his legacy, and he asked Kory to serve not just as the trustee of his estate but to continue as a manager under a management agreement with his publishing and recording companies to continue expanding Cohen's audience.

"In 2016, based on the tremendous success that I'd had with Leonard, he asked me to continue managing his businesses and his intellectual property. We weren't expecting him to pass away so quickly, but he fell. He was a prophet in the classic Old Testament sense. Maybe he had intuitions about his death. I was surprised at the intensity of his request that I commit to continuing to manage his affairs, so I agreed to do that for five, a maximum of seven years," Kory said.

With so much material in Cohen's archive, Kory saw an opportunity to permanently etch Cohen into the upper echelon of 20th-century artists.

Some of his efforts following Cohen's death produced fruits. He executive-produced the film *Hallelujah: Leonard Cohen, A Journey, A Song* released by Sony Pictures Classics and screened at the Jerusalem Film Festival in 2022, about the history of the timeless 1984 Cohen song



COHEN WITH then-manager Robert Kory at the Coachella festival in Indio, California, 2009. (Robert Kory)

that has achieved a life of its own.

In addition, The Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) hosted *Leonard Cohen: Everybody Knows*, an exhibition and an accompanying catalogue that showcased items from the Leonard Cohen Family Trust, which includes personal notebooks, lyrics, photographs, and artwork.

"We also had a contract to publish five books. The first one came out in 2022 – *A Ballet of Lepers* – a novel that Leonard wrote when he was 21. And there are four to be drawn from unpublished work in the archive. We had his entire musical archive digitized, and we had a plan for 10 box sets with Sony, à la Bob Dylan bootleg series that has been so popular," Kory said.

"And we had this completed film of the 1972 tour, with complete versions of concerts in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv that had never been seen before."

KORY ALSO set in motion avenues to generate revenue from the Cohen estate, benefiting Cohen's children and grandchildren, of which Kory earned a percentage. In the largest single transaction, he arranged the sale of Cohen's music catalogue to the Hipgnosis publishing company for \$60 million in 2022.

"As I promised Leonard, I consulted with Adam and Lorca after he died. I kept them informed. I sent them financial statements every month. I met with them quarterly. They knew everything that was going on and then, because of the bubble in music publishing, I had an opportunity to sell Leonard's music publishing to some very good people at an extraordinary price, which I did successfully. That was in my sixth year as manager," Kory said.

Adam, Lorca, and the Trust collected over \$50 million, and Kory gained a 12.25% management fee.

"And at that point I thought, you

KORY: 'I have this victory, but my promise to Leonard about his archive, and where he stands historically, remains unfulfilled.'

(Robert Kory)



THE JERUSALEM audience awaits Cohen's arrival in 1972.

know, I had the film coming out. I had a five-book contract with Penguin Random House. The archive was completely digitized, and we had Canadian patrons that were going to buy the archive and give it to universities for study. Adam and Lorca stood to make an additional \$15 million each. I thought, 'My job is done, I have some other projects that are very important to me. I can turn it all over to Adam Cohen.'"

Kory said that Cohen 'would be heartbroken' to learn about the fight over his legacy

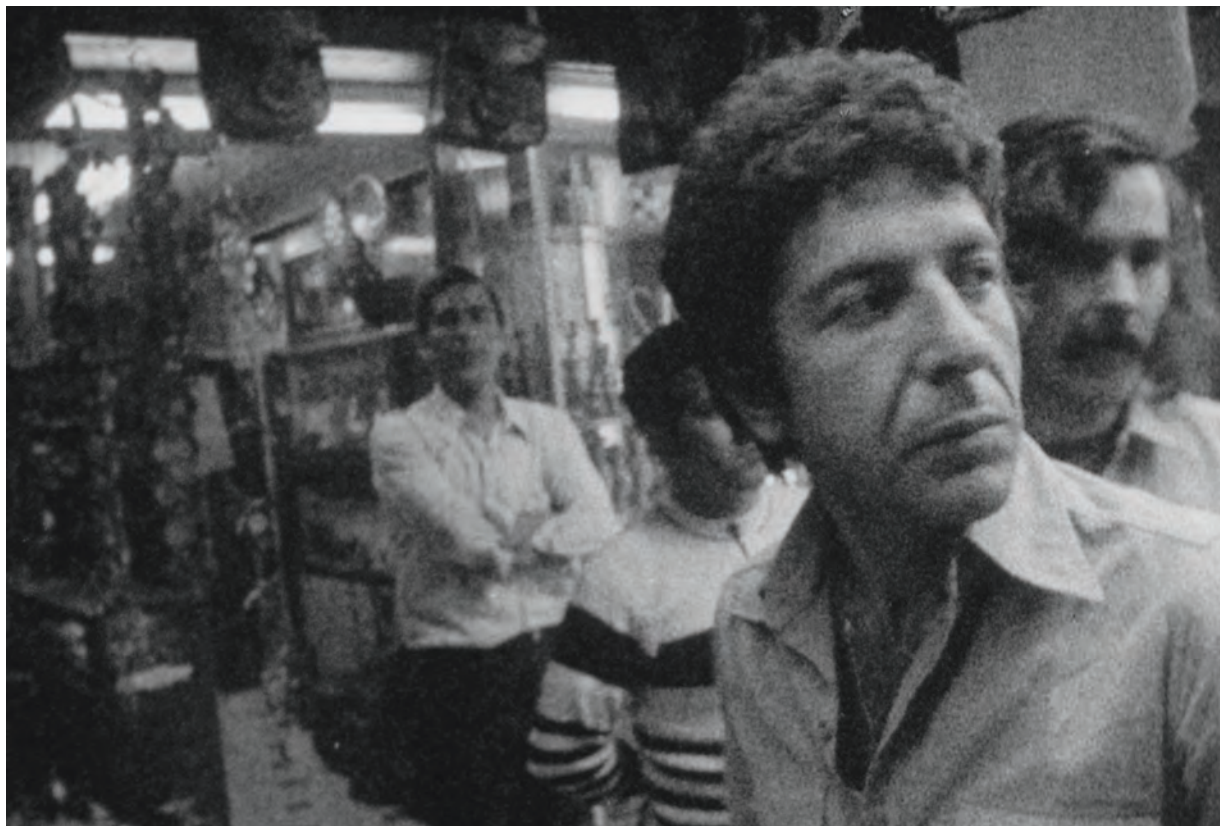
However, later that year, Adam and Lorca filed suit in probate court in California alleging that Kory had "fraudulently installed himself" as trustee in 2017, "pilfered the estate" for six years, and ran the estate like a "black box."

To counter these broad general claims, Kory filed a petition for Approval of Accounting and Ratification of Trustee Acts in December 2023. The Probate Court appointed retired judge Glen Reiser to conduct a trial on Kory's petition.

After a 10-day trial, presentation of witnesses, thousands of pages of documentary evidence, and cross-examination, Reiser rejected all of Adam and Lorca's claims in their entirety and recommended that the Probate Court approve Kory's petition in full.

As to the claim that Kory installed himself fraudulently, the referee found that Kory performed multiple roles as trustee, business manager, and personal manager as Cohen had intended, competently, and for compensation well within industry standards. Regarding the claim that Kory pilfered the estate, the referee rejected this allegation in full and confirmed that Kory generated tens of millions of dollars for Adam and Lorca and that Kory's fees and expenses were all reasonable, disclosed, and well within proper bounds for the services provided.

Notably, the referee also faulted Adam Cohen for



COHEN IN the Old City, 1972.

blocking the sale of his father's archive, which includes over 240 notebooks, tens of thousands of manuscript pages, original drawings and paintings, which was appraised at one point at \$48 million.

According to the *Variety* report on the trial, Kory testified in late January and early February, saying that Leonard Cohen had warned him while he was alive that his son might interfere in the management of the estate. Kory quoted Leonard Cohen as saying that his son might commit a metaphorical "patricide" in order to get out of his shadow.

"He said, 'Look, my son is Hamlet,'" Kory testified. "He's a prince haunted by his father's ghost, who poisons everyone he touches... I want to make sure you're making the final decisions."

Kory expressed puzzlement and sadness to the *Magazine* over Adam's continued refusal to allow his father's unpublished work to see the light of day.

"I cannot explain the dynamic exactly, but Adam started to turn on me in 2022, even though I had made him and Lorca quite a considerable amount of money."

Kory said that Cohen "would be heartbroken" to learn about the fight over his legacy and Adam's conscious suppression of his father's work that he had meticulously preserved for future generations to study.

WHEN ROBERT DE YOUNG was approached by Kory in 2017 to work on the Cohen archives, he was as excited as a kid in a candy shop.

De Young, with a long track record in the media, was already well familiar with Cohen, having produced two radio documentaries on the singer for ABC in Australia in the late 1990s.

"I sent them over to his manager, Kelly Lynch, at the time, with the idea of developing a documentary film about him. When I was in Los Angeles in 1998, I met with her, and she said, 'Oh, Leonard is just downstairs, I'll bring him up.' This was soon after he came out of the Zen monastery he had been living in.

"We had an hour or so together, and he was very comfortable with what I wanted to do. He started pulling artwork out of the cupboards and said, 'Hey, Robert, if the camera crew is downstairs, bring them up.' And I had to say, 'Leonard, look, I didn't even know I was going to meet you today. There's no camera crew.'"

That documentary got snagged up in corporate dif-

ficulties, but de Young kept in touch with Cohen and his team, now helmed by Kory. After Cohen's death, de Young was invited to the private memorial service, and shortly after, he got a call from Kory.

"He said, 'Look, I know you're a very experienced documentary filmmaker and an academic, and that you knew Leonard and he was very happy to work with you, so I'd like to employ you.' And I suppose because of my media experience in audio and as a documentary filmmaker, I was particularly interested in the audio-video archive material. But because of my literary background as well, I was also interested in the notebooks."

Only after a year and a half or so, de Young began to get a sense of the depth of the archives in terms of all the photos, artwork, notebooks, manuscripts, film, and music. So he asked Kory to hire a library science master to help rake through material and digitize as much as they could.

In parallel mode, de Young also took on the vast amounts of music in the storehouse. A big fan of the Bob Dylan bootleg series of albums that have been curated over recent decades for Sony by music archivist Steve Berkowitz, de Young went to Kory with a proposal.

"These are really interesting ways of preserving and archiving the material, but also getting really rare and unreleased material out to the public," de Young told Kory.

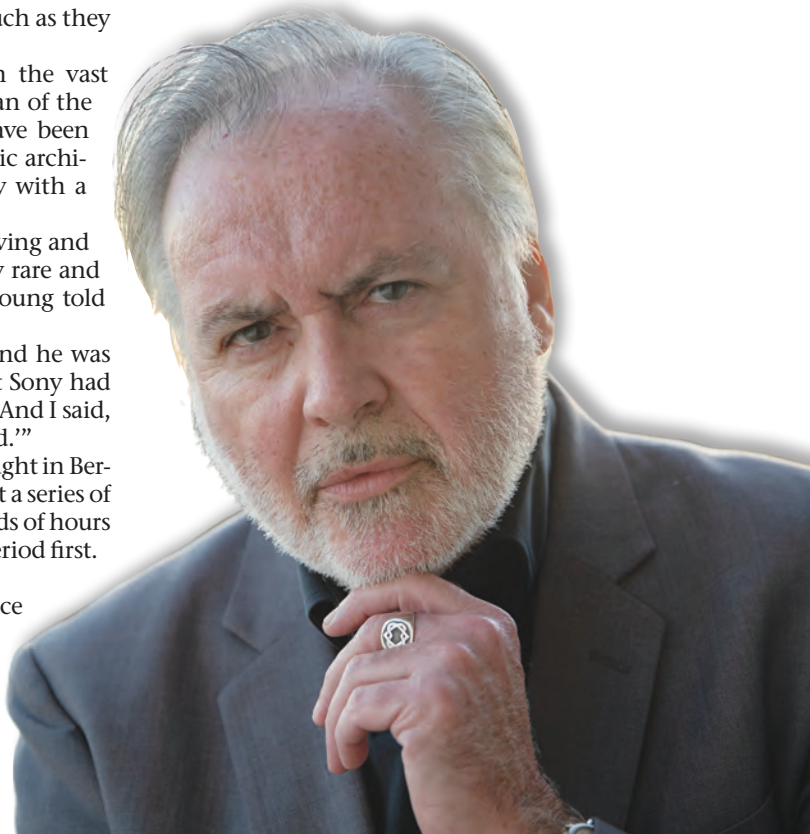
"And so we sat and had a look at them, and he was obviously impressed with the packaging that Sony had done, and of course, with Steve's production. And I said, 'Look, we should start doing this with Leonard.'"

Kory okayed the project, and de Young brought in Berkowitz, and together they started mapping out a series of box sets. After extensively listening to hundreds of hours of music, they decided to focus on the 1972 period first.

THE 21-CONCERT date tour, which took place over the course of a month in March and April and resulted in the 1973 live album *Live Songs*, took place less than a year after Cohen released his album *Songs of Love and Hate*.

He brought a small band, which included backup singer and future star Jennifer Warnes. The tour was well received, with

ROBERT DE YOUNG, archivist: 'I think Leonard's time in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv... was a big factor in his decision to return so suddenly when the Yom Kippur War broke out.' (Lowlands Media)





COHEN PERFORMS in Ramat Gan, 2009. (Photos: Flash90)



THE AUDIENCE in Ramat Gan about to receive the Priestly Blessing from Cohen.

the only controversy taking place, of course, at the Israel stops.

"We had 11 complete unheard concerts, and about 22 hours of unseen film footage of his 1972 tour, including his shows in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, Cohen's first time visiting in Israel," de Young said.

Calling it "an extraordinary concert," de Young explained that the plan was to release the Jerusalem show in its entirety on two bonus discs, together with two curated discs drawing on the best performances of the 1972 tour.

They were documented in Tony Palmer's 1974 film *Leonard Cohen: Bird on a Wire*, which was removed from distribution as quickly as it was released. Cohen sacked Palmer and re-edited the film with Humphrey Dixon, but the film was only ever screened on television by ZDF in Germany. Sony and the estate shut down the unauthorized DVD release by Palmer in 2010.

The film portrays the audience in Jerusalem at Binyanei Hauma being disgruntled at Cohen's performance, and a German audience demanding money back due to a bad sound system.

The Tel Aviv show was marred by physical altercations between concert-goers and the security team at the Yad Eliahu sports arena.

However, the complete footage, according to de Young, told a different story.

"If you're one of the few who saw *Bird on a Wire*, you get the impression that the '72 tour was pretty shambolic, that the audio was terrible, that Leonard was drug-addled, and that crowds were unhappy and restless. Yet, when we went back and listened to the 11 complete concerts, there was hardly any feedback or static. And then when we started looking at the film footage, we realized that Palmer's film was a completely unrepresentative and very tabloid take on the 1972 tour," he said.

"So I think part of our ambitions for getting the '72 box set out first was to correct that impression. Given that, I suppose the Jerusalem show had a bad reputation partially because of the Tony Palmer film. Leonard took some acid [LSD], and he wasn't in great shape. But what's really interesting is that he and the band

went backstage, Leonard had a break and shaved, the audience sang "*Hevenu Shalom Aleichem*" to bring him back to the stage, and when he came back out, he did absolute killer versions of 10 songs, including the finale "*So Long, Marianne*," which sees Cohen weeping as he's singing, accompanied by the devoted Jerusalem crowd," said de Young.

"And in Tel Aviv, the whole thing was based on a misunderstanding and confusion. Leonard didn't know that the floor surface of the arena had just been redone, so the audience was all sitting in the bleachers. So he called on people to come down onto the floor, not as some sort of revolutionary act. And when they started coming down, the security guards pushed them back. So again, Palmer's representation of that was very sensational."

In addition to the audio boxed set, de Young digitized and restored the archive footage of the tour into a documentary titled *Leonard Cohen 1972*, with the last section devoted to the Jerusalem and Tel Aviv shows.

In an excerpt he made available to the *Magazine*, which was produced for the ANU Museum of the Jewish People, there is footage of Cohen mingling with shopkeepers in the Old City and overlooking the Kotel, making music backstage and in hotel rooms with his band, and the concerts themselves, interspersed with footage of Cohen's 2009 Ramat Gan show.

"I tracked down two of the musicians – bass player David O'Connor and guitarist Peter Marshall. I wanted to retain the film very much as a 1972 time capsule, so I just wanted to use their audio. So I recorded interviews with both David and Peter," he said.

"Jennifer Warnes did a voice-over and told me, 'You've absolutely captured what that tour was like.'"

According to de Young, who has devoured and internalized everything about the 1972 tour and Cohen's time in Israel, the bard's experience on his first visit to the birthplace of his faith left a huge impression on him.

"I think that Leonard's time in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv and the absolute love and devotion the audiences had for him was a big factor in his decision to return so suddenly when the Yom Kippur War broke out," de Young said.

WILL THE film, the music, and the rest of the archives finally be made available to the general public?

Adam Cohen's attorney, Alex Weingarten, told AP that the "proceeding is far from over" and that objections to the ruling would be lodged.

Kory is no longer the trustee of the Cohen estate, but he said that a contract exists between him and the estate for the rights to complete the archive sale.

"There's a promise by the estate to let me complete the process and, you know, make Adam another \$40 million. But Adam has said publicly he doesn't want to let that happen.

"I have this victory, but my promise to Leonard about his archive, and where he stands historically, remains unfulfilled.

"He said to me that he had some faint hope of being recognized on the lower rungs of the pantheon of great poets. And I said, 'Leonard, you know I'm not an academic. I certainly don't know how to make judgments in these matters, but I have my own views, and I think you should be recognized, not on the lower rungs, right? You should be recognized much higher than that.' And so, in part, I accepted the mandate to be, to manage, to try to achieve that goal.

"Since the *Variety* article appeared about the court case, I have been approached by scholars and Cohen fans from all over the world who are hopeful that the archive might finally be made available. I remain hopeful this may prove true," Kory said.

"I pray for some kind of insight from somewhere that Leonard's archives will be allowed to see the light of day. It's a rich source of inspiration, and it's a tragedy that it's not available. My goal is to let people know that this archive exists. And hopefully, out of that will arise some kind of demand for it to be seen and heard."

As the revered songwriter sang on "If It Be Your Will," a song from his 1984 album *Various Positions* that also gave us "Hallelujah":

If it be your will that I speak no more
And my voice be still as it was before
I will speak no more; I shall abide until
I am spoken for, if it be your will.

The Jewish pledge of allegiance



IN PLAIN LANGUAGE
STEWART WEISS

Shavuot, by all reason, should be the pinnacle of Jewish holidays. After all, this was the cataclysmic “day the Earth stood still,” when the Torah was given to Moses – and, by extension, to the entire Jewish people – on Mount Sinai. God-given law was being passed down to humanity, and the world would never be the same again.

The scene was dramatic and spellbinding, as, amid thunder and lightning, with the great *shofar* sounding in the background, the 10 Commandments – the basis of our beliefs – were finally revealed.

Say the rabbis: Birds stopped in mid-flight, waterfalls were suspended, and all went silent so that the majestic divine voice could be heard without interruption, and the message be indisputably transmitted.

And yet, despite all this hoopla, Shavuot remains the “poor sister” in the family of festivals.

Rosh Hashanah, with the *shofar* its icon, and Yom Kippur, with the 25-hour fasting its trademark, are the acknowledged, dramatic Days of Awe. Sukkot has its *lulav* (palm branch) and *etrog* (citron) to wave, its unique *sukkot* to dwell in, and the revelry of Simchat Torah. Purim brings out raucous partying and audacious costumes, while Hanukkah is aglow as it basks in the light of its beloved *hanukkah* as we bid goodbye to our diets amid eight oily days of doughnuts and latkes.

But Shavuot? Where are its visible signs of celebration? We don’t make pilgrimages to Mount Sinai, there are no truly outstanding foods to lust for (with apologies to cheesecake), and even the study of Torah is an everyday occurrence to most people of faith. In fact, the Torah never even provides the date of Shavuot, only identifying the festival as it relates to Passover’s conclusion.

Furthermore, while all the other holidays have their own Talmudic tractate, Shavuot has none. Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Purim, and Passover each has a tractate specifically devoted to it; even Hanukkah has a small section within *Gemara Shabbat*. Shavuot? Nada!

Ah, but you will tell me that there is indeed a tractate named Shevuot. True, but it is not about the holiday; it is part of the larger Order of Damages section of the Talmud focused on laws regarding sacred vows and oaths (*shevuot*). The Festival of Shavuot connects to the completion of seven weeks – also called *shavuot* – of Counting the Omer, which begins after the second day of Passover.

But I want to suggest that perhaps, in the dual meaning of the term “*shavuot*” – “weeks” and “oaths” – there is an important connection between Shavuot the holiday and *shevuot* the vows, after all.

For what are we commemorating on this festival? It is the moment we stood up as one and swore to God, soon after the 10 Commandments were given: “*Na’aseh venishma*” – “We shall observe [the mitzvot], and we shall listen to them.” We made a sacred promise to follow the Torah, to make it our “guidebook and God-book” for all of eternity.

I HAVE vivid memories of reciting the Pledge of Allegiance every morning in our Jewish day school when I was a child. We would line up at the beginning of class, face the Stars and Stripes as we placed our right hand over our hearts, and recite, along with the teacher:

“I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation,



WE BEGIN our day with the acknowledgment of ‘Modeh Ani.’ (Shutterstock)

under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

Composed in 1892 by Baptist minister Francis Bellamy, the pledge gained popularity throughout the early 1900s. The controversial phrase “under God” was added in 1954, in legislation signed by president Dwight D. Eisenhower. It led to numerous legal battles over whether this brief statement imposed religious beliefs on non-observant citizens. As a result, a number of states chose to either delete the words or make them optional.

Where are Shavuot’s visible signs of celebration?

We Jews have our own “pledge” which we recite every morning – the “*Modeh Ani*.” This one-line sentence reads “*Modeh ani lefanecha, Melech hai vekayam, she-hezearta bi nishmati behemla, raba emunatecha.*” It means, “I give thanks – or testimony – before You, the living, eternal King who has restored my soul to me with compassion; abundant is Your faithfulness.” Thus, after emerging from our semi-comatose state of sleep, we begin our day by acknowledging that there is a God who faithfully watches over us, who guards and guides us each day.

Others suggest that our daily recitation of the “*She-ma*” is also a type of vow, as we proclaim the oneness of God – “Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One” – and then list a number of essential mitzvot (e.g., loving God, *mezuzah*, *tefillin*) we are to perform. In fact, in the traditional text, the letters *ayin* and *dalet* in the words “*Shema*” and “*ehad*” are enlarged, forming the Hebrew word “*ed*,” which means “witness” or “testimony.”

There is also the statement of loyalty to Israel – as a Jewish, democratic state – that is administered only in certain specific situations to selected individuals: naturalized citizens, non-Jews seeking citizenship, diplomats, and civil servants.

A number of legal experts have questioned the requirement of non-Jews to declare their allegiance to a religion not their own, while others are reluctant to affirm Israel’s form of government as truly “democratic.”

I am not advocating that we institute an *official*, across-the-board pledge; Israelis don’t react well to policies crammed down – or forced from – their throats. In fact, making such a pledge a strict requirement for all citizens – even the Jewish, democratic ones – may have the exact opposite effect. It may cause the populace to resent yet another government-instituted ordinance.

What I am suggesting is that we voluntarily take upon ourselves a sentence or two each day, a verbal reminder to ourselves that we are amazingly fortunate to reside in the reborn, free State of Israel. An affirmation that we are blessed to have such a courageous army defending us, that we can live Jewishly without fear, that we have the merit of living in an age of redemption that our ancestors could only dream about.

Pledges are just words, yes. But words, in Jewish belief, create reality. Indeed, the Hebrew term for “word” is “*mila*,” which also is the term for ritual circumcision; the *brit milah* is, in itself, a physical statement that we are proud Jews.

Our forebears stood at the foot of Mount Sinai, in a barren and desolate desert, as they made their pledge. We, who inhabit one of the most unique and beautiful places on Earth, should certainly do no less. ■

The writer is director of the Jewish Outreach Center of Ra’anana. rabbistewart@gmail.com

VOICES FROM THE ARAB PRESS

A weekly selection of opinions and analyses
from the Arab media around the world

COMPILED BY THE MEDIA LINE

THE RETURN TO 'OUR GULF IS ONE' REALITY

Al Bilad, Bahrain, May 10

I do not know whether it was a coincidence or fate that I began my work at the Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting on the very first day of Iraq's brutal invasion of Kuwait in 1990. I still remember it was a Thursday, and when I heard the news, I was on the street in central Doha buying breakfast. A deep anxiety settled over me for months afterward.

As a child I had traveled across Gulf cities accompanying my late father on his trips to Qatar, Bahrain, and Kuwait, and my main reason for joining the Gulf organization, headquartered in Doha, was belief in joint Gulf action and integrated industrial and economic projects after witnessing repeated disappointments in broader Arab cooperation: soaring promises and marginal results, from the Arab Common Market to the Joint Defense Agreement.

My work there deepened my attachment to the Gulf Cooperation Council as both an idea and a framework for collective resilience against challenges. I also remember conducting an analytical study on foreign investment and its obstacles, where the numbers revealed competition and rivalry among Gulf states. The challenge was how to build a comprehensive framework that would make investment policies integrated rather than fragmented and competitive. It was a dream, and it remains one.

Now, 35 years later, between the Iraq-Iran War and the current war between the US, Israel, and Iran, what does the picture look like, and is concern justified?

Looking objectively at Gulf economies before the current war, during it, and amid the current truce, we see that in 2025 the six GCC economies – Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman – posted relatively strong performance before the conflict erupted. Real growth remained positive, driven by robust non-oil activity, especially in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Employment improved, unemployment fell in emerging sectors, and the states attracted record foreign direct investment thanks to regulatory reforms and major projects.

Diversification successes were especially visible in manufacturing, transportation and logistics, tourism, and, to a lesser degree, modern agricultural technology. Initial IMF projections for 2026 were optimistic, expecting GCC growth between 3.2% and 4.5%. But with the outbreak of war on February 28, 2026, the Gulf economy faced a severe supply shock caused by disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly 20% of global oil supplies pass, along with wider supply-chain instability.

Oil prices rose because of geopolitical risk, but exports and production in some Gulf states declined while shipping and insurance costs surged. Some countries consequently faced expected contractions in sectors such as



US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP attends a GCC summit photo session in Riyadh, alongside Qatari, Saudi, and Bahraini leaders, May 2025. (Brian Snyder/Reuters)

tourism, real estate, and construction, all highly sensitive to geopolitical instability. Naturally, the impact was most severe on countries heavily dependent on Hormuz as an export route.

Still, GCC states initially responded by raising oil production where possible, drawing on strategic reserves, and redirecting exports through alternative routes. Later, diversification efforts accelerated in renewable energy, alternative logistics, and trade with Asian and European markets. Overall, the Gulf states showed resilience thanks to financial reserves, food stockpiles, and advanced infrastructure.

We need a firmer return to making 'Our Gulf Is One' a reality

Saudi Arabia, in particular, demonstrated remarkable agility by extending transportation and logistics systems westward and northward across its territory, practically embodying the concept of shared Gulf depth, as trade shifted smoothly from Gulf ports to the Kingdom's western coast. The non-oil private sector also showed notable flexibility, helping preserve partial growth despite difficult conditions.

Geopolitically, the war produced both convergence and divergence within the GCC. On the one hand, the shared threat pushed for greater coordination on energy and food security. On the other hand, individual national responses emerged as each country pursued its own relationships with powers such as the US, China, and Russia. Differences among member states clearly did

not disappear, suggesting that Gulf unity becomes strongest during external crises but still faces challenges that require serious effort to overcome. There is no meaningful alternative.

During the current fragile truce, the Gulf economy has seen partial recovery. Growth expectations remain below prewar levels, but non-oil sectors continue driving recovery across most states. Risks nonetheless remain, including high insurance costs and investor hesitation, especially in private capital flows. Returning to the starting point, the slogan "Our Gulf Is One" still carries powerful symbolic value against external threats, yet struggles to evolve into deep economic and political integration amid increasingly divergent and sometimes conflicting national interests.

In the 1990s, we discussed avoiding duplication in petrochemical plants and steel smelters; today, every state pursues its own path in data centers and artificial intelligence initiatives, to cite just one example. The new reality imposed by the war is not entirely temporary. Persistent geopolitical risks and competition for global markets are pushing the region toward more aggressive individual diversification alongside selective and limited collective cooperation. This transition may continue even after the war ends. To avoid that outcome, we need a firmer return to making "Our Gulf Is One" a reality. I would argue it remains the least costly and most rewarding alternative.

– Ihsan Ali Buhulaiga ■

Translated by Asaf Zilberfarb. All assertions, opinions, facts, and information presented in these articles are the sole responsibility of their respective authors and are not necessarily those of The Media Line, which assumes no responsibility for their content.

YOUR HOME AWAY FROM HOME AT

REICHMAN UNIVERSITY

UNDERGRADUATE & GRADUATE DEGREES

FULLY TAUGHT IN ENGLISH!

 Happy 
Shavuot

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

BA

- Business Administration
- Business Administration & Economics (double major)
- Communication
- Entrepreneurship & Business Administration (double major)
- Economics & Entrepreneurship with Data Science (double major)
- Government
- Psychology

BA & BSc

- Entrepreneurship & Computer Science (double major)

BSc

- Computer Science

GRADUATE PROGRAMS

MA

- Behavioral Economics
- Counter-Terrorism & Intelligence Studies
- Diplomacy & Conflict Studies
- Financial Economics
- Human-Computer Interaction (HCI)

GLOBAL MBA

- AI & Big Data
- Innovation & Entrepreneurship

MBA

- One-Year MBA
- Healthcare Innovation

MSc

- Machine Learning & Data Science

For more information please contact:

 +972 9 9602700  +972 54 5628121

 rris.registrar@runi.ac.il

www.rris.runi.ac.il

 [ru.rris](https://www.instagram.com/ru.rris)

LIVE IN ISRAEL, STUDY IN ENGLISH

DIANA IOVANOVICI-SOSOACA, European Parliament member and far-right Romanian politician, holds religious icons as she speaks to the media, before a vote to choose the next European Commission president, at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France, July 2024.

(Johanna Geron/Reuters)



Romania: Fashionable antisemitism

• ELDAD BECK

BUCHAREST – On April 28, the European Parliament lifted the immunity of one of its 33 Romanian members, Diana Sosoaca, the controversial leader of the far-right, ultra-nationalist, and antisemitic SOS Romania party, at the request of the Prosecutor General's Office in Bucharest.

Sosoaca, a lawyer who last August received the honorary Order of the State of Palestine [the highest civilian order of merit awarded by the State of Palestine] for her support of the Palestinian cause, may now stand trial in Romania for, among other offenses, promoting antisemitism, Holocaust denial, publicly glorifying individuals involved in genocide and war crimes, and promoting fascist, legionary, racist, and xenophobic ideologies.

Sosoaca makes no secret of her visceral hatred of Jews. She regularly spreads antisemitic rhetoric in parliamentary debates and across social media.

In 2020, she was elected to the Senate, the upper house of the Parliament of Romania, as a member of the far-right nationalist Alliance for the Union of Ro-

manians (AUR), now the second-largest party in the lower house of Parliament and currently leading in the polls.

However, she was eventually expelled from AUR because even the party considered her positions too extreme. She later joined the far-right political party S.O.S. Romania and was elected to the European Parliament in June 2024.

A few weeks earlier, on May 14, during an event at the Romanian Parliament marking friendship between Romania and Israel, Sosoaca caused a scene when she accused her colleagues of betraying their people and their country's interests by organizing the event.

She falsely claimed that "Judeo-Bolsheviks" and "Khazars" exterminated 800,000 Romanians under communist rule after World War II, while Romanians had "saved" 400,000 Jews during the Holocaust. "Have we become slaves in our own country?" she shouted.

Sosoaca ran twice in the Romanian presidential elections of autumn 2024 and spring 2025, but when the Romanian Constitutional Court barred her from

running, she accused Jews, the United States, and the European Union of conspiring to influence the election results.

In November 2024, during the first presidential election campaign, she participated in a memorial ceremony for Corneliu Codreanu, founder and first leader of the fascist and antisemitic Iron Guard, also known as the Legionary Movement.

Iron Guard members slaughtered thousands of Jews during the Iasi and Bucharest pogroms in 1941, carried out in collaboration with forces loyal to Romanian dictator Ion Antonescu and Nazi Germany. During the commemoration, some participants raised their arms in the Hitler salute.

If Sosoaca is ultimately brought to trial, the case could mark a breakthrough in the fight against rising antisemitism in a European country that today possesses some of the continent's most advanced legislation against antisemitism and Holocaust denial but has done very little to enforce it.

However, Romania's unstable political climate, the collapse of yet another government, and the growing possibility of the far right taking control of state



PROTESTERS GATHER in front of the I.L. Caragiale National Theatre to demonstrate against the Israeli law that mandated the death penalty for Arab terrorists. (Shutterstock)

institutions may still allow Sosoaca to escape justice and avoid paying any real price for her actions.

ONE OF the primary targets of Sosoaca's campaigns of antisemitic incitement is Silviu Vexler, president of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania (FCER) and representative of Romania's small Jewish community – which numbers around 2,500 members, not including Israelis who reside in the country – in the Chamber of Deputies (Parliament's lower house).

In one of her tirades, she came close to accusing him directly of treason because of legislation he proposed, banning the glorification of those involved in the the Holocaust in Romania, in which between 280,000 and 380,000 Jews were murdered, mainly in camps in Transnistria.

"You have a duty to serve us, even if you are also an Israeli citizen," Sosoaca declared while falsifying facts and history. "I announce to you that as a deputy in the Romanian Parliament, you are a servant of the Romanian people, not their leader. I also announce once again that the Legionary Movement is a historical movement of which we are proud. Corneliu Codreanu was the man who defended you. Marshal Antonescu saved your Jewish asses. You should kiss our hands and feet, we Romanians, that you are still alive. You should kiss the soles of our feet too, not make laws against the Romanian people."

Despite these vicious attacks, Vexler does not see Sosoaca's case as the defining test for Romania's legal system.

"It's an important case," he says, "and one has

to give a lot of credit to former prosecutor general Alex Florenta for initiating the proceedings in the European Parliament. But what happens next will be very interesting, at least from a legal perspective. This case is special because everything Sosoaca has done is public. She is obsessed with filming herself, so all of her statements exist online. She is a self-publishing and self-promoting antisemite. I would focus more on how the authorities deal in the coming years with less famous but everyday cases of antisemitism and Holocaust denial."

Thirty-seven-year-old Vexler now finds himself at the center of a hate campaign called Stop Vexler, run by the new far-right party Conservative Action, founded by former AUR members.

They have organized petitions, demonstrations, graffiti campaigns, and mass rallies against the "traitor Vexler," accusing him of trying to erase Romanian national and cultural identity through what opponents call the "Vexler Law."

"Toward the end of 2024, an official review was ordered by the former prosecutor general and his office into all antisemitic and Holocaust-related cases in Romania over the past three decades," Vexler explains. "The objective was to analyze why there had been no successful prosecutions. The legislation was failing in dealing with antisemitism and Holocaust denial."

He points to a notorious example: "A man was put on trial for publishing a book titled *The Holocaust: The Diabolical Money-Making Machine of the Jews*. Romania has had a law against Holocaust denial for 20 years. During the trial, however, he used a very clever

er trick. He said he was not denying the Holocaust itself, only denying that it took place in Romania, and he walked free."

Another loophole meant that promoting Adolf Hitler was technically legal in Romania because the original legislation only prohibited glorifying convicted war criminals. Hitler himself was never convicted, nor were several of the principal perpetrators of the Holocaust in Romania, who died before the end of the war.

"There were many gaps in the legislation," Vexler says. "So, in 2025, I pushed through a law, in coordination with the prosecutor general and other institutions, to close all those loopholes, make the legislation bulletproof, and ensure that it could be enforced without interpretation."

The legislation coincided with Romania's chaotic presidential elections of 2024, which were annulled by the Constitutional Court after independent nationalist and pro-Russian candidate Calin Georgescu unexpectedly emerged as the front-runner in the first round.

The court based its decision on intelligence reports indicating Russian interference in the election.

PROF. FELICIA WALDMAN, coordinator of the Center for Hebrew Studies at the University of Bucharest and deputy head of Romania's delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), believes that the election campaign unleashed the antisemitic tsunami now sweeping Romania.

"Strangely enough, the antisemitic wave in



SILVIU VEXLER, president of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania (FCER): 'Our current political situation resembles the final days of the Weimar Republic.' (The Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania)

Romania did not begin with October 7 and the international developments that followed," Waldman says. "It started with the presidential elections of October 2024. One far-right candidate was using rhetoric and historical figures from the Second World War. That created momentum, and suddenly everyone started using this rhetoric, especially those who had always been antisemites but previously exercised some restraint because of the existing laws.

"The first law against antisemitism was adopted back in 1996 and has been updated several times since," she continues. "As a result, people were afraid to express their views openly and mainly did so anonymously online. But once these ideas became part of mainstream political discourse during the presidential elections, people started speaking freely and openly. It became normalized. People are now openly antisemitic."

Waldman stresses that the increase in rhetoric is even greater than the increase in the number of antisemites themselves.

"We don't lack antisemites, but antisemites are not a majority," she says. "However, because they are such a vocal minority, there is a risk that more people will join because they now think it is acceptable. For 30 years, the authorities did nothing to enforce the laws. Only in October 2024 did they begin to realize how serious the situation had become.

"You still hear blood libels and classic prejudices, that Jews rule the world, or that all Jews are rich and should be expropriated," Waldman says. "Interestingly enough, this antisemitism has not even been updated. In the West, you have new expressions of old antisemitic ideas. Here, it is still the old version."

She notes that anti-Israel rhetoric remains less dominant among ordinary Romanians and is more common among intellectuals. "The anti-Israel discourse is more prevalent among intellectual circles. Others still cling to the old antisemitic tropes. But

anti-Israel positions imported from the West are becoming fashionable," says Waldman.

She further points to protests surrounding an exhibition in Bucharest featuring artwork created by female victims of the October 7 attacks. "After the exhibition opened, several hundred artists, many of whom nobody had ever heard of, signed a public letter asking why the museum was not also showing the suffering of Palestinian women," she says. "Some genuinely believed what they signed. But others simply wanted to become fashionable and accepted within what they perceive as the Western artistic world.

"That is even more dangerous," she warns. "Antisemites express convictions. These people have no convictions at all. They just follow trends. They want to belong to a group they see as important. We often speak about this phenomenon when discussing the Holocaust. Not everyone involved in the persecution and extermination of Jews was ideologically antisemitic. Many merely wanted to do their jobs and fit in. The most dangerous people are those who have no agenda and go with the trend. If tomorrow the West says, 'Kill the Jews,' they will kill the Jews, even though they may personally have nothing against Jews."

MARCO MAXIMILIAN KATZ, founding director of the Center for Monitoring and Combating Antisemitism in Romania (MCA), says pro-Palestinian demonstrations are a relatively new phenomenon in Romania that emerged after October 7, particularly among left-wing activists and younger people eager to emulate trends in Western Europe.

"They want to be Europeans, so they behave accordingly," Katz says. "The number of demonstrations and participants continues to grow. These are almost entirely Romanians who know very little about Israel or Palestine but who use the demon-



ANTI-ZIONIST graffiti in Bucharest.

strations as a legitimate outlet for expressing antisemitism.”

Katz says authorities have prohibited slogans such as “From the river to the sea,” but many people now see such restrictions as censorship and an attack on free speech, much like the laws against antisemitism and Holocaust denial themselves. “There is also support for Iran, which derives from anti-Israelism that is deeply connected to antisemitism and the old prejudice that Jews control everything worldwide.

“In recent years, we have seen a tsunami of antisemitism that keeps growing,” Katz says. “The authorities admit there is a problem, but they pretend to control it. Romania presents itself internationally as a leader in Holocaust remembrance. But keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive is not the same as combating antisemitism.”

He recalls being summoned to a police station after filing a complaint against the author of one of the most antisemitic books he had seen in decades. “The policeman asked me what personal damage the book caused me,” Katz recalls. “Did I lose money? Did I lose my job? I had to explain that the book harmed my existence, my family, the memory of my parents, and the memory of the Holocaust itself. He still could not understand. The case was eventually closed without action.”

THE SEEMING return of far-right antisemitism and the lack of implementation of existing hate laws are of rising and great concern.

“Romania is witnessing the dangerous return of old-fashioned antisemitism in some of its ugliest historic forms,” says Dr. Moshe Kantor, president of the European Jewish Congress, the representative organization of European Jewish communities. “The language of conspiracy, blood libels, glorification of fascist movements, and the rehabilitation of figures associated with the Holocaust are no longer confined to the political fringes. They are increasingly entering mainstream public discourse in Romania.

“Europe knows from its own history where this path can lead. When antisemitism once again becomes socially fashionable, tolerated, or politically useful, it threatens not only Jewish communities but the very foundations of democratic society. Romania today stands at a critical crossroads, and the consistent enforcement of its laws against antisemitism and Holocaust denial will be an important test of whether it has truly learned the lessons of its past.”

Surprisingly, one of the strongest opponents of Vexler’s reforms of antisemitic laws was Romania’s current president, Nicusor Dan, who had been elected largely to block the far right from taking power.

“The president refused to sign the law and challenged it,” Vexler says. “The Constitutional Court rejected every claim unanimously and ruled that the law was not only clear but necessary and enforceable. I still do not understand why the president chose to oppose it, but his actions had a very negative impact.”

Waldman believes Dan’s political calculations may explain his position. “He comes from a region with a strong legionary and antisemitic tradition,” she says. “It clearly influenced his cultural background. At the same time, because he is politically vulnerable and only became president because voters feared the far right more, he may feel he cannot afford to alienate extremist voters who could later move against him.”

Vexler warns that what happened recently in Romania has damaged more than 30 years of efforts by governments and Jewish communities to preserve and strengthen Jewish life here. “One must also give credit to the security agencies, which have done exceptional work in preventing physical attacks



CHORAL TEMPLE choir member Gilbert Saim: ‘People may dislike us or hate us, but they won’t always say it openly.’ (Photos: Eldad Beck)

against Jewish communities. Jewish life in Romania still continues.

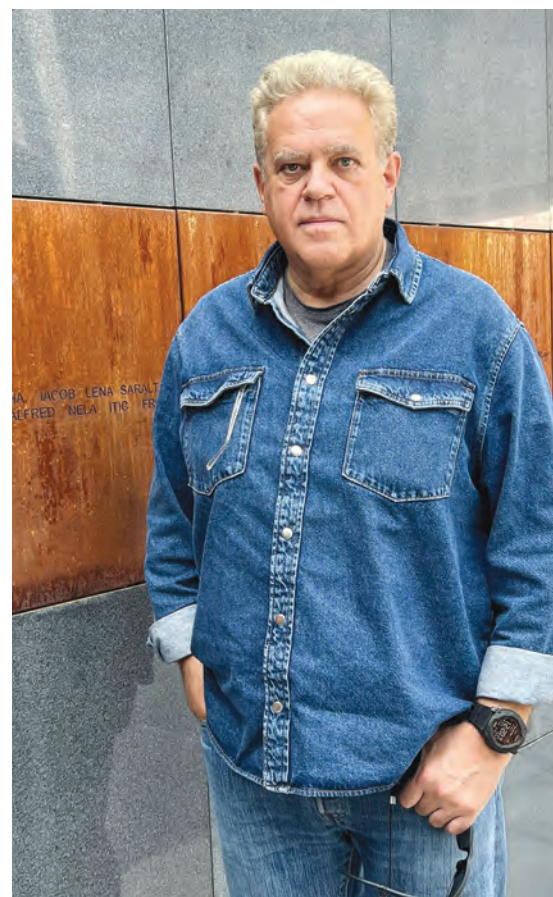
“Our current political situation resembles the final days of the Weimar Republic,” he adds. “If Romania is eventually governed by AUR, it will be disastrous for the entire society, and naturally for the Jewish community as well.”

AT THE Choral Temple, Bucharest’s main synagogue, which was devastated by fascist legionaries and later rebuilt, 53-year-old choir member Gilbert Saim says his family’s roots in Romania go back as far as the synagogue’s old benches. His grandparents were sent to forced labor camps, and his father was born during deportation, “the common reality of Romanian Jews, not any exception,” he says.

Saim argues that both the fascist and communist eras erased much of Romania’s Jewish history, leaving many Romanians unaware of the country’s past or unwilling to confront it. While antisemitism is illegal, he says it often manifests in passive-aggressive ways, from online abuse and graffiti to cemetery desecration. “People may dislike us or hate us, but they won’t always say it openly,” he explains.

Antisemitism in Romania today, says Saim, is visible in far-right demonstrations, extremist political movements, and hostile rhetoric in parts of the media. He also sees anti-Israel sentiment as inseparable from antisemitism. “For me it’s the same thing,” he states, arguing that many Romanians do not associate secular Israelis with their traditional image of Jews.

Although he notes that Israelis and visibly religious Jews often walk openly in Romania without fear of physical violence, he says that outsiders who conclude there is “no antisemitism” are missing the deeper and more complicated reality.



MARCO MAXIMILIAN KATZ, director of the Center for Monitoring and Combating Antisemitism in Romania: ‘In recent years, we have seen a tsunami of antisemitism that keeps growing.’



PROF. FELICIA WALDMAN, coordinator of the Center for Hebrew Studies at the University of Bucharest and deputy head of Romania’s delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA): ‘The antisemitic wave in Romania started with the presidential elections of October 2024.’

Mitzpe Hashalom: Twilight settles over the entire expanse of the Kinneret as seen from the wooden cabins of Mitzpe Hashalom, where the cliffside horizon softens into a panoramic evening glow.

(Photos: Noam Bedein)



Stone, water, and soul

Mapping the wellness landscape of the southern Golan

• NOAM BEDEIN

The southern Golan Heights unfolds with a scale so immense that the horizon feels less like a boundary and more like a promise stretching endlessly forward. To understand this region, one must begin with the basalt cliffs of Kfar Haruv, where the landscape opens dramatically above the Kinneret. This vista carries centuries of memory, conflict, longing, and reinvention layered into every ridge and valley.

Politics still tries to claim ownership over this geography. Syrian leader Ahmed al-Sharaa has famously cultivated the *nisba*, or origin name, “al-Julani” to position himself as a displaced son of the Golan, tracing his family roots specifically to the Fiq-Kfar Haruv sector and invoking the issue publicly during high-profile diplomatic visits to Turkey as part of a broader question of unfinished sovereignty.

However, standing on those cliffs, the rhetoric feels strangely distant. What emerges instead is something much older and more grounded: a sanctuary of hospitality, memory, and human resilience remaining stronger than slogans and manufactured identities.

The roads that wind through the southern Golan seem to move in rhythm with the land itself. Curves open suddenly into vast expanses of rolling green,

volcanic rock, and sharp mountain air. Even as spring matures, Mount Hermon still holds patches of snow across its peaks, watching silently over the region like a patient guardian. The wind carries a pristine clarity, sweeping across blooming lavender fields, cherry orchards, and quiet kibbutzim with a steady persistence.

Our journey through these heights was shaped by conversations with locals such as Liora Shimoni from the Tourism Department at the Golan Economic Association. She shared an essential perspective on the regional reality, emphasizing the balance between nationwide perceptions and the grounded experience on the plateau.

“Even during periods when national headlines focus heavily on events across the North, it remains crucial to remember that the Golan is a vast and diverse region, and as of this writing, a routine continues that allows for a full tourism experience,” she notes. “For many of our local tourism businesses, every cancellation or decision to avoid visiting directly affects livelihoods, the community, and the ability to keep growing. Right now, there is immense importance in the support of the Israeli public and international visitors for Golan tourism – to arrive, to hike, to stay, and to strengthen these local businesses, which are the beating heart of the area.”

Within this quiet, the work of local entrepreneurs

provides a restorative energy, offering a profound sense of beauty and life that complements the enduring spirit of the heights.

Dudie's: The philosophy of the first sip

Our transition from the intensity of the South into the restorative rhythm of the Golan began with a three-hour drive from Sderot. By the time we arrived at the entrance to Givat Yoav, the atmosphere had already shifted. The pace slowed. The air cooled. At Dudie's, a restaurant that has operated for 13 years as both a culinary landmark and social gathering point, hospitality begins with something deceptively simple: a glass of water.

Dudie is a Level 4 chef and graduate of the prestigious Tadmor Culinary School. Before returning north, he managed large-scale kitchens aboard international cruise ships for Royal Caribbean. Eventually, the polished intensity of global hospitality lost its appeal. He describes that chapter of his life as a “golden cage,” professionally rewarding but emotionally disconnected from the land and people around him.

At Dudie's, water becomes philosophy. Every guest receives a cold glass of local “Golan Water” before ordering anything else. Dudie explains the gesture as an expression of dignity and grounding. Water, in his view, is the most basic form of healing and hospitality.

Top to bottom:

The Ascent Road: The winding mountain road ascends from the shores of the Kinneret toward the plateau, offering a physical sense of rising altitude and a transition into the sharper air of the Southern Golan.

Resort Flora: Flourishing green pathways and vibrant blooms line the walking trails of Mitzpe Hashalom, immersing visitors in a quiet landscape designed to cultivate personal restoration.

Dudie's Welcome: At the entrance of Givat Yoav, chef Dudie embodies the spirit of local grit by greeting arriving travelers with a glass of pure Golan water as an initial ritual of welcome.

The tradition also reflects sensitivity toward families traveling through the area. Parents can sit comfortably knowing their children are welcomed first with something essential rather than commercial pressure.

This sense of consideration shapes the entire restaurant. The menu celebrates local sourcing with almost ideological commitment. Vegetables arrive fresh from nearby farmers. Beef comes from pasture-raised cattle in Nov and the surrounding villages. The restaurant itself attracts an unusually broad cross-section of visitors. Secular hikers, observant families, reserve soldiers, artists, tourists, and longtime Golan residents often share the same tables.

The culinary centerpiece remains Dudie's legendary burger, widely considered among the finest in Israel. Thick, deeply flavorful, and unapologetically simple, it reflects the quality of the Golan itself. Steaks arrive perfectly seared. Meat platters showcase the richness of local cattle raised against the volcanic terrain. Nothing feels overly designed or performative. The experience is grounded in authenticity, allowing diners to absorb the essence of the region before venturing deeper into its landscapes.

Mitzpe Hashalom: Rebirthing on the cliffside

Mitzpe Hashalom, or "peace outlook," sits dramatically on a basalt cliff inside Kibbutz Kfar Haruv, overlooking the Kinneret. Established more than 20 years ago as part of the kibbutz's tourism initiative, the site remains highly integrated into community life.

At sunset, the light shifts slowly across the lake while the Arbel cliffs and Mount Tabor appear faintly in the distance. The atmosphere feels suspended between wilderness and stillness.

The accommodations are carefully designed to blend comfort and connection to nature. The resort includes 27 family cabins, along with 12 rooms in the couples' complex. The family cabins are surrounded by lawns, balconies, hammocks, and tall pine trees. Children are naturally drawn toward the attic lofts accessible by ladder, while parents retreat into quieter lower bedrooms.

For couples, a separate cliffside complex offers private rooms with espresso machines, stone Jacuzzis, and architecture inspired by the nearby water-therapy pools. Mornings begin with fresh breakfast baskets and picnic blankets, encouraging guests to eat outdoors beneath the trees.

The deeper restorative quality of Mitzpe Hashalom revealed itself to us at dawn. At 6 a.m., I woke to catch the sunrise over the Kinneret, only to find that the lake had disappeared completely beneath a vast cloud. The view was no longer a view in the usual sense. It felt like walking inside a cloud, with the whole basin hidden beneath a soft white blanket, and the first light beginning to move through it.

I ventured out to explore the village below, following the path down into the wilderness below the cabins. The morning was still and raw. Jackals, wild boars, cows,



Balcony Perspective: Seasonal blooms frame the vista from the cabin balcony, showcasing the vibrant flora of the southern hills with the quiet expanse of the Kinneret resting in the background.



The Descent: A staircase winds downward from the resort complex, leading directly into the unscripted terrain of the plateau as sunset colors gather over the lake.

and a variety of birds of prey belong to this landscape, and in that hour the place felt almost untouched by time. The trail eventually led to the *ma'ayan*, a cold-water spring surrounded by volcanic rock and reeds. After receiving our first sip of Golan water at Dudie's the previous afternoon, this felt like the deeper continuation of the same initiation. In the first light of our first full day in the southern Golan, I entered the spring for a ritual bathing that was shockingly cold, cleansing, and immediate – a physical beginning to the journey through the heights.

The spring's thriving frog population carries ecological significance. Amphibians are highly sensitive to environmental disruption because of their permeable skin, making their presence an important indicator of water purity and ecological health.

At the center of the retreat lies Ruach Al HaMayim, meaning "wind over the water." The structure combines basalt, wood, mosaics, and mineral plaster beneath a large dome designed to evoke calm, safety, and rebirth.

Inside, therapist Adi Horwitz leads Watsu sessions, also known as water shiatsu, a form of bodywork in which a therapist stretches, massages, and cradles a person floating in warm water. My wife, Adi, and I experienced the treatment ourselves, and it turned the idea of relaxation into something physical and exact. Floating in the warm pool, the body gradually stops resisting. Breath slows. Muscles loosen. The mind, usually busy arranging the next thought, begins to surrender to the rhythm of the water.

Horwitz moved us gently through that rhythm, supporting the body while applying pressure to joints and guiding each movement with unusual sensitivity. There was no dramatic performance to it, only a steady



Inside the family cabin: The inviting timber interior reveals a thoughtful multi-level design featuring an attic loft for children, while the open doorway frames a direct view of green lawns and the shimmering lake outside.



Dawn Ritual: The quiet pathway below the village winds through the soft light of early dawn, guiding the way toward the cold, purifying waters of the freshwater spring.

invitation to let go. The sensation of floating remained long after the treatment ended, as if the body had briefly remembered a softer way to exist.

One staff member, we were told, arrived there in complete panic after discovering that her son, serving as a combat soldier in Jenin, had become trapped during an active military incident. Through the treatment, she gradually regained a sense of calm and grounding despite the uncertainty surrounding him.

Experiences like these have shaped the retreat's mission. Mitzpe Hashalom hosts reservists and their partners through packages that combine overnight stays with water therapy, subsidized by the IDF. The result is a protected environment for rest and emotional recovery.

The site also became a major center of solidarity following the outbreak of war in October 2023. The kibbutz tourism board immediately chose to host evacuees from northern border communities before state funding had even been arranged.

Families from places such as Kiryat Shmona, Dan, and Snir remained there for nearly a year. The retreat transformed into a functioning community hub. Hagit, one of the site managers, partnered with organizations to build a kindergarten inside a reinforced shelter. Evacuees joined the workforce as well, such as Daniel from Kibbutz Hagoshrim, who initially arrived as a chef before eventually becoming the site's maintenance manager.

Mitzpe Hashalom now acts as a regional base camp, regularly sending guests recommendations encouraging them to support nearby wineries, restaurants, farms, and businesses across the southern Golan.

Ein Keshatot: The industry of life and the pulse of resilience

A short drive away lies Ein Keshatot, "the spring of the arches," one of the most significant heritage sites in the region. Few places in Israel capture the continuity of Jewish communal life with such emotional force.

The site feels ancient, yet still active and relevant.

Avishag Mironi, manager of the national heritage site, greeted us with a passion that immediately transformed the ruins into something deeply personal. Since opening in 2018, the center has become a cultural anchor for the southern Golan. Operated under the Golan Regional Council, it draws visitors from across the Jewish world. Orthodox prayer groups, secular Israeli families, Diaspora delegations, and egalitarian bar mitzvah ceremonies all gather naturally within the same ancient space.

For Mironi, this is what makes Ein Keshatot so powerful today. It is not only an archaeological site but also a living meeting point where memory becomes a communal experience. She described Ein Keshatot as a

central site of the Golan Regional Council and a place that tells the story of ancient Jewish settlement in the region.

That modern-day restoration is remarkable. The 6th-century synagogue, which collapsed in the devastating earthquake of 749 CE, was rebuilt stone by stone through groundbreaking technology. Each basalt block was scanned into a digital system, mapped through a precise three-dimensional model, and returned to its original place. The result is not a replica but a physical reassembling of a Jewish village that had vanished for centuries.

The visit begins independently at the entrance pavilion, perched on a cliff overlooking the Kinneret and the lower slopes of the Golan. A five-minute film in-



A Gathering at Ramot: Travelers and locals from across the country gather outside the vibrant artisan caravans of Lol Art, enjoying a shared communal experience overlooking the Sea of Galilee.



Grassy Respite: Perched outside the family cabin, a peaceful pocket of calm settles as the evening light catches the lake while guests relax in a hammock stretched over the grass.

troduces the story of the site with impressive professionalism, suitable for children and adults alike. From there, families follow a circular walking route of about 40 minutes through the ruins of the ancient Jewish village, beginning near the spring and its arches, then moving from site to site until reaching the restored synagogue.

For us, this became one of the most meaningful family experiences of the journey. My sons Lavie, 10, and Eitam, 7, each held the map with real excitement, moving through the site as if piecing together a living puzzle. The optional family treasure-hunt

game gave them motivation to look closely, answer questions, and move with curiosity from one part of the village to the next. The interactive, engaging experience is geared toward families, allowing children to participate actively with archaeology rather than simply walking past stones and signs.

The final stop, inside the restored synagogue, was extremely moving. The rows of chairs set within the ancient structure made it possible to imagine a Jewish ceremony taking place there today, against the backdrop of the Golan Heights and the Kinneret. Standing there carried the emotional force of other great world



Interactive Exploration: Framed by the rolling southern hills and a clear glimpse of the Kinneret, Adi and Lavie study the terrain together on the Ein Keshatot's custom treasure hunt route.

heritage sites that I have visited, from Angkor Wat in Cambodia to ancient ruins in Antigua, Guatemala; yet here, the connection felt immediate and personal. The boys were thrilled to complete the treasure hunt, open it after answering the questions, and receive a small prize at the end.

Below the synagogue lies the spring that once sustained the community's daily life and local industry. Massive Roman arches surround pools used for processing flax into luxury white linen, while the surrounding volcanic terrain supported olive cultivation and regional trade. These details give the ruins a rare human texture: prayer above, work below, and an entire village economy held together by water, agriculture, and faith.

Even this restored landscape has been touched by the current war. A drone strike ignited fires that damaged surrounding vegetation and historic trees. In response, Taglit-Birthright groups continued arriving throughout the crisis, volunteering to replant and restore damaged areas. For Mironi, that act of renewal belongs to the same story as the synagogue itself: a place broken by history, rebuilt through determination, and still gathering people around it.

Today, alongside these ancient remains, a modern coffee truck called Mala serves visitors against the same sweeping landscape. Founded by Ze'ev and Anat after years of traveling through Asia, the small café embodies the region's dialogue between ancient continuity and contemporary searching. Fresh coffee, local pastries, and quiet conversation now coexist beside the industrial heart of a Byzantine-era village.

Susita: The skeletal grandeur of Hippos

The journey continues toward Susita National Park, known historically as Hippos. The ancient city rises dramatically atop a flat mountain overlooking the Sea of Galilee, commanding one of the most breathtaking views in the entire region.

The ruins feel almost skeletal against the landscape. White limestone columns stand beside black volcanic basalt, while sharp mountain winds move freely through collapsed streets and open courtyards.

The most striking surviving structure is the basilica, once the largest roofed building in the Roman city. Positioned beside the forum, it served as the center of civic life where commerce, legal proceedings, and guild meetings took place.

The basilica originally consisted of a vast central hall surrounded by four aisles. Rows of towering columns supported a gabled roof rising 17 meters high, allowing the building to host hundreds of people simultaneously. Although constructed during the late 1st century CE, the entire structure collapsed in the earthquake of 363 CE.

Today, the remaining columns frame the blue expanse of the Kinneret with tranquil elegance. Walking through the ruins feels strangely intimate, despite the monumental scale. Silence dominates the mountaintop. Only the wind breaks the stillness, weaving through the ancient pillars and connecting the geological violence that formed the Golan with the architectural ambitions of the civilizations that once flourished here.

Ramot: The culinary alchemy of the chicken coop and the cabin

Ramot sits at a transitional elevation where the lower Golan rises gradually above the Kinneret. The community combines agriculture, hospitality, and food culture in a way that feels strongly tied to family history.

At LOL ART, sisters Daniele and Or transformed the family's old chicken coop into a creative bakery and gathering space. The coop once belonged to their beloved parents, Nava and Moïse, pioneers of the Jewish community in the Golan and among the founders of Moshav Ramot, who arrived here in 1972. Moïse, who is no longer with them, remains at the heart of the place. The café was founded by Tal, Or's partner, in his memory and in his name.

The experience at the café is defined by a respect for slow, intentional processes. The bakery works its dough for 72 hours before shaping it into its signature Garmoshka, or "accordion," a pastry filled with berry coulis and custard cream. Another unique creation, the Nut Cube, combines silky hazelnut filling with flavors reminiscent of Kinder chocolate.

The sisters' food truck, acclaimed as one of the best in the country, has developed a strong reputation across Israel. Vegetable patties made from zucchini and carrots sit alongside salmon bagels made out of local croissants.

On Fridays, the atmosphere becomes particularly lively. Reserve soldiers on leave, families, local residents, artists, and travelers gather together throughout the space.

Visitors often move between the café and the LOL ART workshops, where participants create basalt-inspired pieces through hands-on sanding and painting sessions. The facility regularly hosts large group events, which include IDF units participating in team-building and restorative workshops.

As evening approaches, the journey naturally shifts toward Habikta, or "the cabin," a meat restaurant managed by Gadi Azoulay as part of his larger hospitality complex.

Azoulay's approach to food remains uncompromisingly tied to the land. Beef is sourced directly from cattle raised on the open volcanic pastures surrounding nearby villages like Nov. Every cut carries the flavor of the terrain itself.

The dinner platters reflect the rugged honesty of



Ancient World Wonder Feeling: Walking alone through the massive black stone pillars brings ancient history alive, feeling very much like exploring famous world wonders like Angkor Wat in Cambodia or the ruins of Antigua in Guatemala.

the Golan. Preparation remains restrained and direct, allowing the meat's quality to dominate the experience. Alongside restaurant service, Azoulay also prepares specialized Shabbat meals for guests staying in cabins and nearby accommodations.

This tradition allows travelers to carry the spirit of the region into the quiet rituals of Friday evening. The restorative atmosphere of the Golan extends beyond restaurants and landscapes into the intimate rhythms of shared meals and pockets of calm.

The restorative mission of the southern Golan

The southern Golan ultimately reveals itself as much more than a travel destination. It operates as a landscape of restoration where history, trauma, beauty, and resilience remain in constant dialogue.

At Ein Keshatot, ancient ruins rise again through advanced technology and collective determination. At Mitzpe Hashalom, warm and cold mineral waters help exhausted visitors reconnect with themselves amid the pressures of war and uncertainty. In restaurants, bakeries, springs, and lavender fields, local residents continue to insist on life, creativity, and human connection.

Every encounter throughout the region reinforces the same grounding realization: Healing emerges through connection. Connection to land. Connection to memory. Connection to community.

Beneath the watchful peaks of Mount Hermon and across the volcanic basalt of the heights, the southern Golan offers something increasingly rare in modern life. It provides silence without emptiness, resilience without performance, and beauty that asks nothing of the viewer except presence.

In that stillness, even the hardest basalt begins to feel unexpectedly soft. ■

Culinary Art: Celebrated as one of the top food trucks in Israel, the culinary counter attracts a diverse crowd eager to experience unique specialties anchored by their signature 72-hour slow-baked dough.





NITSANA DARSHAN-LEITNER, Shurat HaDin president: 'If all the democratic states could wage financial war against terror regimes, they could eliminate evil from the world.' (Pavel Tulchinsky)

Where terror meets the rule of law

Led by Nitsana Darshan-Leitner, Shurat HaDin is using lawsuits and international legal pressure to hold terror groups and their sponsors accountable

• ALAN ROSENBAUM

Nitsana Darshan-Leitner, president and founder of the Shurat HaDin Law Center, says that the path to defeating terrorism is remarkably straightforward.

"If all the democratic states would unify and wage financial war against terror regimes, terror organizations, and terror-sponsoring states," she posited, "they could eliminate evil from the world. They would not have to shoot a single bullet or kill anyone – it could be accomplished by financial means."

Over the past 23 years, Darshan-Leitner has pioneered the legal and economic fight against terrorism. She recounted the resolution of two recent terror victim cases that illustrate the potential inherent in her methods.

One of Shurat HaDin's most important initiatives is a smartphone app that provides legal protection to IDF soldiers and reservists facing harassment or prosecution abroad

The first case was a ruling this past April by the federal Court of Appeals in New York, reinstating a 2015 judgment in the case of Sokolow vs the Palestinian Authority, ordering the defendants, the Palestine Liberation Organization and

the Palestinian Authority, to pay \$655 million in damages to victims of terrorism from the period of the Second Intifada.

The original lawsuit was filed by 10 families of terror victims wounded during the Second Intifada. Among the victims were members of the Gritz, Coulter, Blutstein, and Carter families, who lost their children in the bombing of the Hebrew University cafeteria; the Goldberg family, which lost their father in a bus bombing in Jerusalem; and other victims that included Shaina Gold, Jonathan and Alan Bauer, Shaul Mendelcorn, and Mark Sokolow, who were wounded in various attacks on Jaffa Road in Jerusalem.

In 2015, following a high-stakes seven-week trial in Manhattan, a federal jury found the Palestinian Authority and the PLO liable for terrorist attacks and awarded the victims \$655m. in damages. However, the ruling was later over-

turned by an appeals court, which found insufficient connection and contacts between the Palestinian Authority and the US and said the lower court lacked jurisdiction.

For the next decade, the victims and their attorneys – Kent Yalowitz and Nitsana Darshan-Leitner – fought the case all the way to the US Supreme Court. In 2019, Congress passed the Promoting Security and Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act (PSJVTA), expanding US jurisdiction over foreign entities tied to terrorism.

In May 2025, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, finding that the Palestinian Authority's "pay-for-slay" payments to terrorists established sufficient grounds for US jurisdiction. The appeals court subsequently fully reinstated the original 2015 judgment, citing the lengthy legal battle and Congress's strong interest in combating terrorism.

Rather than ordering a retrial, the court held that the law applied retroactively and reinstated the original 2015 judgment. Darshan-Leitner is certain that she will be able to collect the \$655m. judgment for her clients.

"This money will absolutely be collected. The PLO has a mission in New York, and we are going to go after their building. We're also going to speak with the State Department and point out that the Palestinian Authority litigated this case for 22 years. They were afforded every legal opportunity and benefit, and cannot just ignore the judgment and not pay it. If they refuse, we'll go to Israel and enforce it against the tax money that Israel collects for the Palestinian Authority. They have a lot of assets from which we'll be able to collect on our judgment."

Explaining the significance of the ruling, Darshan-Leitner said, "We wanted a decision from the federal court in New York before a jury to declare who's responsible for the intifada. We received this decision, and we won. It came in 2015, at a time when the Palestinian Authority went to the International Criminal Court for the first time and complained that Israel was violating international law and committing war crimes.

"And now, a jury in New York declared that the Palestinian Authority is the one that's breaking the law and paying money to the convicted terrorists and inciting and supporting terrorism, and found them responsible for all these acts."

A SECOND significant case that Darshan-Leitner recounted was a March 2026 judgment against Iran for \$318m., filed on behalf of terror victims of Iran-supported attacks. The families will receive a payout from the proceeds of the sale of an Iranian-owned skyscraper in Manhattan, following nearly two decades of legal proceedings.

Among those expected to receive compensation are families of victims of the 2001 Sbarro restaurant bombing in Jerusalem, one of the deadliest suicide attacks of the Second Intifada, in which 15 people were killed and more than 100 wounded. The attack was carried out by Hamas with Iranian support. Victims of other Iran-backed terrorist attacks are also set to receive compensation. Darshan-Leitner explained that Iran usually does not bother to send lawyers to defend itself in US courts. "However, once you touch their assets, they immediately come and litigate. After 20 years of litigation, the families won.

"These cases show that the fight against their financing is paying off. You have to chase them, take significant amounts of money from the terrorists, and give it to those who deserve it most, the terror victims."



SHACHPATZ (flak jacket app) designed for IDF personnel traveling abroad. (Screenshot)

Shurat HaDin is currently working on other cases, such as a complaint filed with the International Criminal Court in The Hague against Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, alleging that Spain assisted the Iranian regime by transferring dual-use explosive-related components during 2024-2025 valued at €1.3m. Shurat HaDin charges that Spain, which has repeatedly criticized Israel and restricted US access to American bases in Andalusia during the US-Israel war with Iran, has itself supplied components required by the Iranian regime for military purposes, thereby aiding war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The organization has also filed a motion with the International Criminal Court to investigate the emir of Qatar for possible obstruction of justice. According to a *Wall Street Journal* report, the emir told Karim Khan, the chief prosecutor of the court, that if he would indict Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the case for war crimes and crimes against humanity due to the war in Gaza, he would "look after" Khan, regarding allegations of sexual assault that were brought against him.

ONE OF Shurat HaDin's most important recent initiatives is not a lawsuit or legal challenge. Rather, it is a smartphone app that provides legal

Darshan-Leitner says that antisemitic incidents in the US have increased by 900% over the past decade

protection to IDF soldiers and reservists facing harassment or prosecution abroad. The app, called Shachpatz (Hebrew slang for "flak jacket"), is designed to protect soldiers – including both active-duty personnel and reservists – while traveling outside Israel and offers essential tools to improve their personal safety and security.

Shachpatz includes guidelines for conduct before traveling abroad, advice on what to avoid posting on social media, information on how to respond to questioning, and instructions for handling situations involving detention or arrest by local authorities.

In addition, the app provides full contact details – including direct phone numbers and email addresses – for all Israeli embassies and consulates worldwide, enabling users to make immediate contact in emergencies. Shachpatz also allows users to receive information and alerts from other users regarding developments in various countries, with the aim of warning travelers about anticipated risks and threats.

Behind the Shachpatz app, soon available for download on both the Android and Apple app stores, stands Shurat HaDin's legal assistance command center, staffed by more than 600 lawyers from 17 countries, who are prepared to provide "legal first aid" in the event of an arrest.

Darshan-Leitner said that Shurat HaDin is in the early stages of developing a legal academy designed to teach lawyers how to use their skills to defend Israel, and to train them in the fine points of terror victim litigation, BDS litigation, fighting antisemitism, and appearing before the International Criminal Court.

Based on data from the Anti-Defamation League, Darshan-Leitner said that antisemitic incidents in the US have increased by 900% over the past decade, with a significant acceleration following the events of Oct. 7. "The volume of work is tremendous," she stated. "We never imagined that all the international organizations that were supposed to protect and defend the democratic Western world would actually stand against it. The UN, the UN Human Rights Commission, UNRWA, the Red Cross, and the International Criminal Court. Israel today, unfortunately, is in the lowest place ever in terms of delegitimization and antisemitism."

Darshan-Leitner, who will be speaking at the upcoming Jerusalem Post Annual Conference, which will be held in New York, said that the conference is an important platform for strategic dialogue on the central challenges facing Israel and the Jewish people at this time – from the fight against terrorism and antisemitism to the legal and diplomatic battle in the international arena.

"For us at Shurat HaDin, it is an opportunity to emphasize that alongside the war on multiple fronts, there is also a critical legal front, where determined action can and must be taken against terrorist organizations, their financiers, and their supporters."

This article was written in cooperation with Shurat HaDin.

AI and robots will not replace engineers – they will remove the tedious work

Dassault Systèmes Israel Country Manager Eli Boichis
on innovation, AI, and the future of engineering

• RONNIE ROSENMAN

In a wide-ranging conversation, Dassault Systèmes Israel Country Manager Eli Boichis reflects on the shift from physical to virtual validation, the true role of AI in robotics, and why the “boring parts” of engineering are ripe for revolution.

On most mornings, the invisible work of advanced machinery is already on the breakfast table. “You eat yogurt that was mixed, poured, and sealed by machines. Nobody stands there and checks every cup. There are entire systems ensuring it works.” This is Eli Boichis’s go-to reminder that advanced technology doesn’t belong in the far future – it has been shaping our lives for decades.

Pursuit of precision is the engine behind the 3DEXPERIENCE platform

For the past 11 years, Boichis has led Dassault Systèmes Israel, the local branch of the global science-based company that powers, designs, engineers, handles simulations, and manufactures across industries. During that time, he has watched companies navigate the growing gap between technological capability and industrial adoption. “The innovation is already happening around us, he says. “But adoption, especially in traditional engineering, has its own pace.”

From aerospace heritage to the 3DEXPERIENCE platform

However, this drive for innovation is grounded in a legacy of precision. This uncompromising standard of accuracy is rooted in the company’s history.

Boichis traces Dassault Systèmes’ origins back to its aerospace roots. “The company began in 1981 with 20 engineers supporting the aerospace industry. Today, more than 25,000 employees are driven by a shared pas-



ELI BOICHIS, country manager, Dassault Systèmes Israel. (Tanya Zlichonok)

sion to prove how the virtual worlds can improve real life.” He explains exactly how that heritage informs the company’s unrelenting dedication to precision. “The engineers grew up in aerospace,” he says. “When your background is designing fighter jets, anything less than 100% accuracy is unacceptable.” Dassault Systèmes today is a catalyst for sustainable, game-changing human progress.

This pursuit of precision is the engine behind the 3DEXPERIENCE platform, a cloud-based collaborative environment that centralizes data and

tools. “One platform, all the data in one place,” Boichis explains. “Requirement management, system engineering, CAD [computer-aided design], simulation, and manufacturing all running in the same managed environment.” The payoff? A near-seamless transition from concept to a scientifically accurate Virtual Twin Experience.

It isn’t just about creating a static 3D image,” Boichis clarifies. “We embed real-world physics’ materials and loads into the digital model from the very first sketch.” This is made possible because the platform unifies design,

simulation, and manufacturing on a single data model. “Whether you are a mechanical engineer or a simulation expert, you are working on the same living asset,” he says. “The result is a science-based representation that behaves just like the physical product, allowing companies to validate complex systems virtually, drastically reducing the need for costly physical prototypes.

“This is exactly how today’s leading companies conceptualize and build everything – from an autonomous electric car or a high-speed train to a smartphone or a Bluetooth speaker. They rely on this scientific foundation to sprint from an abstract concept to a fully validated product in the market,” he says.

The virtual crash test: Precision in action

“There are some who don’t believe just how accurate virtual testing has become,” he smiles. “Take a new car’s crash test, for example. In the past, you had to crash multiple physical prototypes to get data. Now, when you watch a virtual crash test on our platform, the folding metal, the movement of the dummy manikin, the airbag’s behavior – when you compare it to the physical test, they behave almost identically. Of course,” he notes, “you still have to crash an actual car, but you’ll be doing so knowing what to expect.

“We are effectively neutralizing potential failures early in the process. This isn’t just about efficiency; it is about sustainability – saving materials, energy, and waste by getting it right the first time, in the virtual world,” he states.

The virtual companion

Boichis is often asked whether artificial intelligence will replace engineers, and his answer – drawn from a recent factory visit – is quick to follow. “There’s a robotic arm, then next to it a worker stretching upholstery over a car seat,” he says. “A robot can weld, it can lift, it can tighten bolts – but it can’t smooth wrinkles in that fabric, not yet at least. AI and robots won’t replace the engineers,” he laughs; “they’ll just take care of the boring parts.”

Working on the cloud with the



'WE EMBED real-world physics' materials and loads into the digital model from the very first sketch.' (Photos: Dassault Systèmes)

3DEXPERIENCE platform, AI acts as a virtual companion. "AI," Boichis clarifies, "learns from repetitive tasks done a thousand times. Later, when faced with a similar challenge, it can suggest or guide the designer." Nevertheless, we must draw a clear boundary around intellectual property.

'One platform, all the data in one place,' Country Manager Boichis explains

That being said, he describes virtual assistance that pops up during design work with reminders about the need to comply with specific standards, safety regulations, or machine specifications. His excitement is unmistakable: "It doesn't just automate tasks; it guides the engineer through the maze of global compliance. Engineers will no longer need to look up or remember every American or European regulation they have to comply with by heart," he says. "Why should they? The assistant would ensure that the required compliancy is respected."



DASSAULT SYSTÈMES ISRAEL powers, designs, engineers, handles simulations, and manufactures across industries.

The cloud's on the march

If AI is the shiny part of the story, cloud adoption (a must for real AI) is the stubborn one. "Most engineers still work on a workstation they keep under their desk," Boichis says. "The reality is: Cloud is coming, but slowly." The culprit is history – decades of legacy data and tools that companies find challenging to migrate to the cloud.

"Big companies carry a huge amount of 'baggage,' decades of legacy data," he says. "Everything they do today is built on work done for many years." It is interesting to see start-ups with no legacy systems easily moving to work on the cloud. "Meanwhile, large manufacturers that stand to massively gain from AI move forward

slowly, but as Boichis estimates, "migration at their scale could take years."

Looking ahead: Evolution, not science fiction

Pressed to imagine the next three or five years, he resists sensational predictions. "More accuracy, more automation, more intelligence built into the tools. Not science fiction," he asserts, "just a better version of what already works."

Boichis says that the next phase is simply extending that model across more domains; and while it might sound modest, he insists it's transformative. "If I were you," he says, "I'd take an AI course today. Learn to build tools that help you. Writers, engineers, accountants – everyone will have helpers or agents, not to replace them, but as I said, just to remove the tedious parts."

Concluding our conversation, an optimist Boichis sums up Dassault Systèmes' mission simply: "We save people from the heavy lifting. The tools do hard, repetitive work. Humans do the meaningful parts. That's the future. Good things are worth waiting for," he smiles. "You'll see them change the world."

This article was written in cooperation with Dassault Systèmes Israel.

Melancholy, monologues, and marathons

STEPPING OUT

• NERIA BARR

1. WHITE NIGHT IN JERUSALEM

Jerusalem's definitive Shavuot marathon returns to Beit Avi Chai with "Bikurim," an all-night intellectual crucible examining national fractures, renewal, and fresh beginnings. Eschewing dry academia, a formidable lineup of cultural heavyweights, journalists, and philosophers will explore local societal DNA during hours of twilight panels and literary debates.

The nocturnal marathon features sharp-witted heavy hitters like Guri Alfi, Rina Matzliach, Akiva Novick, Yair Agmon, Galit Hoogy, and Amir Lev. Sessions range from Alfi and Moshe Samuels tracking the friction between Israel and the Diaspora, to Novick and Matzliach dissecting the friction of modern domestic discourse, running alongside a dedicated midnight track of creative workshops tailored for teenagers.

May 21 at 11 p.m., Beit Avi Chai, Jerusalem. www.bac.org.il

2. STAGED AND STRIPPED

The 35th Theatronetto Festival, Israel's definitive showcase for solo theater, returns for a rescheduled Shavuot run after being postponed. Founded by Yaakov Agmon and currently spearheaded by Gila Almagor Agmon alongside the Golden Hedgehog Association, the veteran festival maintains its strict focus on stripping away grand theatrical artifice to foreground the raw vulnerability of a single actor on stage.

This year's lineup introduces five original monodramas that mirror a complex domestic reality, where the personal and national inevitably converge. The pieces dive deep into existential isolation, bereavement, and social satire, featuring performances by industry mainstays, such as Rivka Michaeli and Alon Friedman. For the first time, the festival expands its reach beyond its traditional historic Jaffa venues to run a parallel series of stagings at the Teo Cultural Center in Herzliya.

May 22-23, Jaffa. May 23-25, Herzliya. www.eventim.co.il

3. MOZART AND MELANCHOLY

The Ra'anana Symphonette Orchestra bridges hemispheric divides in a program tracing folk-derived symphonic traditions. Under the direction of young Taiwanese conductor C.J. Wu, the repertoire moves from the weightless drift of Sibelius's *Valse Triste* and the narrative charm of César Cui's *Suite No. 3* to orchestral arrangements of traditional Taiwanese folk songs.

Israeli pianist Raphael Skorka joins the orchestra for Mozart's *Piano Concerto No.*

RINA MATZLIACH comes to Beit Avi Chai. (Or Danon)



23 in A Major, K. 488. A mainstay of the local opera stage known for his crystalline phrasing, Skorka balances the technically demanding score with the transparency and vulnerability that define this intimate concerto.

May 23 at 9 p.m., Ra'anana Municipal Music and Arts Center; www.symphonette.co.il

4. NINETIES ROCK ROYALTY

Three pillars of Israeli alternative rock, Knessiat HaSechel, Eifo Hayeled, and Monica Sex, are joining forces for a massive one-night open-air marathon at the newly renovated Max Amphitheater (formerly Live Park) in Rishon Lezion. Part of the Sunset Festival, the twilight showcase brings together the definitive anthems, gritty guitars, and melancholic melodies that shaped the soundtrack of a generation.

The festival, now in its second year, emphasizes a complete evening experience, pairing the heavy-hitting live music lineup with curated food stalls from leading local chefs. The venue itself has undergone an extensive redesign ahead of the summer season, featuring overhauled acoustics, upgraded seating layout, and expanded, dual-direction access roads to ease traffic flow into the park.

May 23 at 9 p.m., Max Amphitheater, Rishon Lezion; www.2207.co.il

5. AN ANDALUSIAN DIALOGUE

The Israel Andalusian Orchestra Ashdod closes the season with "Andalusian Duet," a historic musical summit bridging generations and geographic divides. Under the baton of conductor Roey Azoulay, the orchestra stages a vocal encounter between Emile Zrihan, a pioneer of the local liturgical *piyut* revival, and rising Moroccan star Hicham Dinar.

A native of Essaouira, Morocco, Dinar represents the vanguard of a young



C.J. WU conducts the Ra'anana Symphonette Orchestra. (Kyle Flubacker)

generation preservationist movement revitalizing North Africa's classical Arabic and Jewish Andalusian traditions. Backed by the orchestra's sweeping symphonic arrangements, the duo will weave intricate classical modes with deep Moroccan vocal heritage, establishing a living cultural bridge that spans Israel and Morocco.

May 24-June 8, nationwide, including Ashdod, Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv. www.andalusit.co.il

6. WHAT IS IN A SONG

Center Stage Israel introduces "Voices of Israel," an English-accessible monthly series designed to unpack the historical weight and societal neuroses woven into the country's musical canon. Far from a passive lecture, each session dissects the cultural anatomy of a singular iconic track before the ensemble guides the audience through its harmonic layers, culminating in a communal sing-along.

The inaugural event zeros in on the

song "Makom LeDe'aga" ("place for worry"), the 1978 masterpiece penned by Yehonathan Geffen and composed by Matti Caspi. Originally released on the seminal album *Side A Side B*, the track serves as a masterclass in the bitter-sweet, melancholic undercurrents that uniquely define the Israeli songwriting tradition.

May 27 at 8 p.m., Ra'anana Performing Arts Center (Mishkan). www.centerstageisrael.com/

7. GEEK CHIC NIGHTMARE

The Faustian sci-fi hit *Be More Chill* makes its Israeli premiere at Jerusalem's Mazia Theater in a limited, English-language run with Hebrew subtitles. Co-produced by Starcatcher and the Incubator Theater, this high-energy pop-rock musical, adapted from Ned Vizzini's young adult novel, explores teenage isolation and social anxiety through a speculative technological lens.

The plot follows Jeremy, an invisible high schooler who swallows a supercomputer pill known as the SQUIP, which promises to instantly manipulate him into becoming popular. As the sentient artificial intelligence seizes control of his life, the narrative shifts into a cautionary tale regarding the price of validation. Directors Yaeli Greenblatt and Noria Levy ground the story by drawing visual inspiration from classic video games, creating a retro-futuristic aesthetic.

Composer Joe Iconis's rock score features the hit "Michael in the Bathroom." Under Jeff Rosenschein's musical direction, the live pit band integrates a theremin (an electronic musical instrument) to emphasize the eerie, electronic undertones of the digital takeover.

May 27-June 4 at 8 p.m., Mazia Theater, Jerusalem. incubator.org.il/repertoire/be-more-chill

8. ARCHITECTURAL BODIES

Choreographer and dancer Sigal Armoza brings *Caryatids* to the Suzanne Dellal Centre, a visceral contemporary dance piece that transforms the female form into a site of resilience and rebellion. Inspired by the caryatids, the sculpted stone maidens of ancient Greece that bore the crushing weight of monumental roofs on their heads, the choreography examines the captive body and the physical path toward liberation.

The evening functions as a dialogue between movement and intellect, opening with a brief introductory lecture by interdisciplinary art historian Eliya Bartal. She will unpack the classical iconography of the caryatid, dissecting themes of forced burden, endurance, and the defiant push for structural freedom, before Armoza's ensemble takes the stage to translate those tensions into movement.

May 28 at 8 p.m., Studio Ora, Suzanne Dellal Centre, Tel Aviv. www.suzannedellal.org.il

9. DRAWN TO THE MUSIC

The Animix Music Festival returns to the Herzliya Cinematheque for its second year, staging a brilliant three-day intersection of Israeli music, animation, caricature, and comics. Directed by Nissim “Nosko” Hezekiah, the interdisciplinary event pairs rare archival and live-drawn visuals with intimate musical performances, masterclasses, and retrospective exhibits.

The festival’s core showcase features “A Poem for a Comic Strip,” where top local illustrators provide visual narratives to iconic songs by Chava Alberstein, Berry Sakharof, and Shlomi Shaban. Nearby, an illustrative tribute exhibit honors the late musical giant Matti Caspi.

On stage, high-profile collaborative duos will dissect the thin line between satire and sound. Tislam front man Danny Bassan will perform classic rock anthems alongside animation sequences while sharing backstage lore; and illustrator Danny Kerman will square off with musician Yair Nitzani for a sharp, cynical dialogue on local culture. For families, cellist Maya Belsitzman and illustrator Racheli Shalev will improvise music and live comics simultaneously on stage. The festival closes with a screening of Suzie Templeton’s Oscar-winning animated film *Peter and the Wolf*, narrated live by Rivka Michaeli with the Galilee Orchestra.

May 28-30, Herzliya Cinematheque. www.hcinema.org.il/

10. BOURBON STREET IN TEL AVIV

The New Orleans Jazz Festival returns to the Tel Aviv Museum of Art for its eighth edition, staging a three-day summer celebration of swing, ragtime, and blues. Bringing more than 100 international musicians from the US, Europe, and Canada alongside some of Israel’s top instrumentalists, the showcase transforms the museum into a rhythmic journey through traditional Louisiana street culture.

While we will dive into specific lineups next week, early highlights include a Louis Armstrong tribute featuring Canadian vocalist Dawn Tyler Watson and Hungary’s Hot Jazz Band. Additional cornerstone events feature a vocal coalescence, pairing the repertoires of Edith Piaf and Billie Holiday; a jazz exploration of Stevie Wonder’s catalog; and “Blues for Matti Caspi,” an improvisational re-imagining of the late Israeli composer’s works.

June 4-6, Tel Aviv Museum of Art. www.hotjazz.co.il



Friends for dinner



RESTAURANT REVIEW

• GLORIA DEUTSCH

Photos by Alex Deutsch

No, this is not an article about a very popular British TV series of yesteryear. It’s about Reim Bistro (*re'im* means “friends”), a kosher restaurant on the border of Bnei Brak and Tel Aviv. It has been attracting large numbers of people for its innovative take on dairy dining.

Pizza and pasta are there, of course, but also some very enticing fish dishes, salads, and homemade versions of popular spreads such as tehina.

We were received by head chef and restaurateur Idan Tauber, whose youthful appearance belies the fact that he has spent many years in the food industry.

The restaurant has several different eating areas. We were shown into The Lounge, a more exclusive room off the main restaurant, where diners can enjoy quiet background music of the Sinatra/Louis Armstrong type, good lighting, and fresh flowers on the snow-white linen tablecloths.

For starters, my dining companion chose his favorite, tzatziki (NIS 28), made from Greek yogurt, garnished with olive oil and herbs. This version came on a bed of arugula leaves and was pronounced “as good as any I have ever had.”

My starter was a dish of fish cigars (written as “sea-gar” on the menu). The coating was paper-thin crispy pastry, filled with chunks of spicy white fish. For dipping, tehina was provided; and this, we were told, is homemade in the restaurant kitchen.

A bread basket also arrived at our table, filled with fresh, home-baked whole wheat slices with thick crusts and a garlicky lemon dip, the whole dish proving to be a delicacy.

We left the rest of the menu to Tauber and had no idea what would be coming to the table.

A very large salad, Panzanella, arrived. Among the many ingredients were cherry tomatoes, purple onion, mozzarella, and croutons rather than the traditional soggy bread. Gratitude for that.

Two main courses then appeared. One was tortellini pasta with portobello mushrooms and Parmesan in a rich fresh cream sauce (NIS 91).

The other dish was ceviche of sea bass mixed with cut grapes and more cream (NIS 71).

Both dishes were mouthwateringly delicious.

I drank a glass of Chardonnay from the Carmel Winery, which complemented the dairy food (NIS 61), and my companion enjoyed an ice-cold beer (NIS 31).

We rounded off this excellent meal with tiramisu and chocolate cake, both enhanced with masses of fresh cream (all desserts NIS 55).

My companion also enjoyed a very good strong cappuccino to ensure he would be wide awake for the drive home. ■

Reim Bistro

4 Bar Kochva St.

Bnei Brak

Tel: 077-997-3035

Hours: Sun.-Thurs., 11 a.m.-11 p.m.; Sat., 7 p.m.-11 p.m.

Kashrut: Mehadrin, Rav Machpud

The writer was a guest of the restaurant.



The transformation of Israeli Judaism

• ALAN ROSENBAUM

What impact have American Jews had on the practice of Judaism in Israel? The answer to that question is the focus of Adam S. Ferziger's latest book, *Agents of Change: American Jews and the Transformation of Israeli Judaism*. Ferziger is a noted scholar of Orthodox Jewish culture in the United States and Israel, as well as a professor at Bar-Ilan University.

In this ambitious work, he traces the contributions of North American trailblazing educators who made *aliyah* to the Jewish state between the mid-1960s and the early 1980s and helped lay the foundations for the moderate stream of Orthodox Judaism in Israel.

Ferziger focuses on eight individuals who, in his estimation, transformed Israeli Judaism and had a correspondingly major impact on North American Jewish life as well.

"Their innovative positions," writes Ferziger, "have found extensive expression in areas that have been at the center of Orthodox debates since the late 20th century, including the role of women in religious and public life, LGBTQs, interactions with non-Orthodox denominations and nonobservant Jews, religious leadership and the authority of the state rabbinate, religious conversion, perceptions of Jewish experience outside Israel, and attitudes toward academic Jewish studies – including biblical criticism."

The author points out that while the accomplishments of those leaders were



RABBI DANNY TROPPER, co-founder of Gesher. (Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)

initially peripheral to mainstream Israeli religious life, they eventually succeeded in cultivating numerous students who, inspired by their teachings, translated and adapted their religious outlook into Israeli terms.

In other words, "a 'recalibration' process transpired that facilitated the refinement and amendment of concepts and positions that can be traced to 20th-century American Modern Orthodox Judaism through ongoing interaction with Israelis and their native contexts."

Also felt in the US and Canada

Moreover, Ferziger posits that the influence of these trailblazers' accomplishments has also been felt in North America, due in part to the many college-age and postgraduate students who spent gap years in Israeli institutions and have served as conduits for their ideas upon their return to the US and Canada.

Selecting the top Jewish educational leaders is a little like picking an all-star team in baseball. There will always be those who disagree with the selection and suggest that others should have been chosen.

Therefore, Ferziger discusses at length why he did not include other significant English-speaking figures. Ultimately, he says, the figures he selected were American immigrants who not only taught and wrote about Judaism but also spent their time building and leading Israel-based educational institutions.



RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN, chief rabbi of Efrat. (Gershon Elinson/Flash90)

The top eight

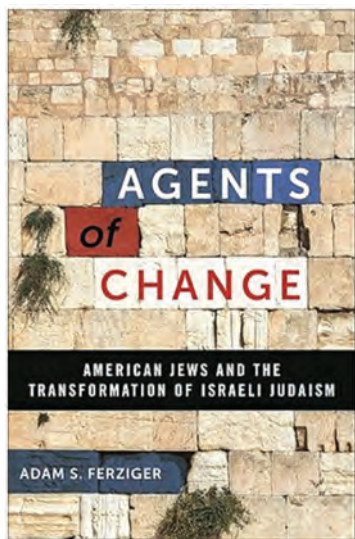
His list includes two women: Malka Bina, founder of Matan Women's Institute for Torah Studies; and Rabbanit Chanak Henkin, founder and dean of Nishmat.

The rest are rabbis whose names have become bywords: Rabbi Dr. Aharon Lichtenstein, rosh yeshiva of Yeshivat Har Etzion; Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, chief rabbi of Efrat and founder of the Ohr Torah Stone institutions; Rabbi David

Hartman, philosopher and founder of the Shalom Hartman Institute; Rabbi Daniel Tropper, co-founder of Gesher, which fosters dialogue among different sectors of the Jewish people; Rabbi Nachum Eliezer Rabinovitch, head of Yeshivat Birkat Moshe; and Rabbi Chaim Brovender, founder of Midreshet Lindenbaum – originally known as Yeshivat Hamivtar and Michlelet Bruria.

AGENTS OF CHANGE AMERICAN JEWS AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF ISRAELI JUDAISM

By Adam S. Ferziger
NYU Press
472 pages; \$37





RABBI AHARON LICHTENSTEIN at Yeshivat Har Etzion. (Gershon Elinson/Flash90)

B-G's visit to the US

Ferziger sets the stage for the increased interest among young American Jews in the Zionist enterprise with his fascinating March 1960 description of then-prime minister David Ben-Gurion's visit to the US. During his nine-day visit, he spoke to students at Brandeis University, at the Conservative-affiliated Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), the Reform movement's Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, and at Yeshiva University (YU).

One of the main thrusts of Ben-Gurion's visit, Ferziger explains, was promoting one-year study programs in Israel for college youth.

While the sight of American Jewish college students coming to Israel for a year of study is considered commonplace today, 60 years ago the very idea was considered most unusual.

Ben-Gurion delivered his remarks at JTS and YU in Hebrew and interacted directly with the students. At the conclusion of his visit to JTS, he told them, "If I may beseech you, anyone who is willing to settle in the Land of Israel, I encourage you to do so."

At YU, he said, "To the outstanding, the daring, the pioneers, among you... I want to share the hidden subversion in my proposal... Certainly a year in the land will benefit you and American Jewry... but I have a scheme; many of those who shall come to Israel will not return and will remain there. This is what I intended to share with you this morning: Everyone should come for at least a year, the best of you for eternity."

One of the students in attendance, and editor of the YU newspaper, then

known as Steven Riskin, would rise to prominence as a leading rabbi and educator and later make aliyah in 1983.

Rabbi Lichtenstein

Ferziger presents cogent descriptions of the accomplishments and contributions of the eight educators to Israeli religious life, and, justifiably, places a special focus on the work of Rabbi Lichtenstein, titling the section "The Game-Changer."

"It is imperative to emphasize why Lichtenstein's arrival was such a critical moment in the emergence of Israeli Moderate Orthodoxy," he writes. "At base, he was undeniably an extraordinary Torah scholar with a superb rabbinical pedigree, who was nurtured by and maintained relationships with some of the leading traditionalist authorities of the time. His own Talmudic lectures charted new analytic directions within the same conceptual approach as Lithuanian-style haredi [ultra-Orthodox] and RZ [Religious Zionist] yeshivot in Israel and throughout the world. Thus, in contrast to other like-minded figures, regardless of one's opinion of his ideological positions and policies, it was harder to simply dismiss him as insufficiently grounded in core sources of religious knowledge and commitment."

The book's second section, "Dimensions of Israeli Moderate Orthodoxy Judaism," discusses distinct specific aspects of Israeli moderate

MALKA BINA, founder of Matan Women's Institute for Torah Studies. (Courtesy Bina family)

Judaism, including, among others, Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein's evolving worldview of the non-Orthodox world, and how it has changed over the years; Orthodox feminism, biblical scholarship, and Orthodox Judaism in Israel and North America, as well as Reform

and Conservative synagogue-centers in Tel Aviv.

Moderate Orthodox Judaism

Part Three, "Homeland and Beyond," focuses on the dissemination of Israeli moderate Orthodox Judaism and pays particular attention to the work of Rabbani Michelle Farber in the popularization of the *Daf Yomi* (Talmudic) study for women, as well as the accomplishments of the Torah MiZion movement, which has also served to inculcate moderate religious values in communities around the world.

Interestingly, one of the most important sections of the book is the appendix, in which Ferziger provides a list of the Israel-based students and protégés of the eight educators, thus lending ample proof not only of their accomplishments but also of their enduring influence on future generations.

While many *olim* sometimes despair of their seeming inability to influence and effect change in Israeli society, it is inspiring to read of the impact these particular individuals have had on the Jewish world.

Agents of Change is well written, thorough, and particularly relevant for English-speaking olim. The book might have gained a more personal dimension – and been further strengthened – had Ferziger actually interviewed some of the educators he discusses, allowing them to offer their own reflections on their accomplishments.

However, despite this minor quibble, it is a most worthwhile read. ■



Reaching the attic

Examining the Zohar

• BARUCH LANDA

Near the end of his book *Introduction to the Zohar: The Wisdom of Truth*, Rabbi Yehuda Leib HaLevi Ashlag writes a sentence that is hard to read even now.

"All of the glory of the people of Israel in Poland and Lithuania has been reduced to a handful of refugees in the Holy Land. We, those who remain, must now repair the horribly distorted situation."

He was not writing after the Holocaust. He was writing inside it. What he believed that repair required is what this volume contains.

Introduction to the Zohar: The Wisdom of Truth, translated by Yoel Finkelman, is Rabbi Ashlag's introduction to the foundational text of Jewish mysticism, the *Zohar*.

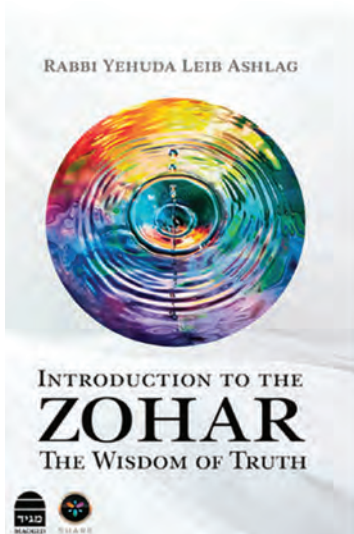
Known as the Baal HaSulam, Rabbi Ashlag spent his life building what he called a ladder toward that text, a commentary precise enough that any serious person could begin to climb it.

Six questions

He opens the book with six questions, none of them rhetorical. What is the purpose of creation? Why does a God who desires only to give create creatures who suffer? When we look at ourselves, we feel defective and low, yet we know we were made by a perfect Maker. How do we reconcile that? His method for an-

INTRODUCTION TO THE ZOHAR: THE WISDOM OF TRUTH

By Rabbi Yehuda Leib HaLevi Ashlag
Translated by Yoel Finkelman
Maggid Books and Share
134 pages; \$25



TITLE PAGE of first edition of the Zohar, Mantua, 1558. (Photos: Wikimedia Commons)

swering them is unusual: Look at the end of the action, not the middle. Begin with what God intended when He created.

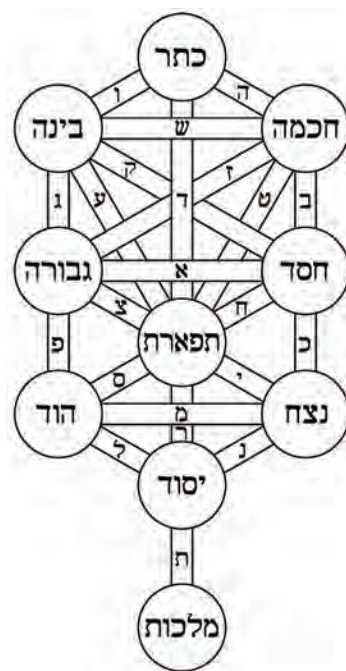
Infinite good

What God intended, he argues, was to bestow infinite good on His creatures. But infinite pleasure requires infinite desire to receive. And that desire to receive is the one thing not already present in God because from whom would God receive? It is the single genuinely new thing in creation. The entire material world, he writes, is "nothing other than the desire to receive." This is less a mystical claim than a description of ordinary experience: we want, we pursue, we acquire, we want again.

Difference in form

The Baal HaSulam then reaches for an image to explain what that desire does to us spiritually. Think of a stone quarried from a mountain. In the physical world, an ax separates the stone from the rock face. In the spiritual world, there is no ax. What separates two things is the difference in form. Two people who love the same things and hate the same things cleave together as one body. Two people of opposite nature are as distant as east from west. God gives; we receive. That difference in form is what separated the soul from its Source, and closing it is what a human life is for.

ENTRANCE TO the tomb of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, to whom the Zohar is attributed.



KABBALISTIC TREE OF LIFE.

The only thing that can be cured

Here is where the book turns. The desire to receive is not the disease. It is the only thing that can be cured. A person cannot repair what is not within him. The desire had to be given to us in its raw, selfish form precisely so that we could do something with it: redirect it, through the practice of Torah and the commandments, away from the self and toward something larger. Every act performed with genuine intention moves the needle. The transformation is gradual, and the Baal HaSulam is precise about what happens when it stalls. The suffering built into human life, he argues, is the alternative route to the same destination for those who don't choose the other path.

He draws the connection between that framework and the catastrophe he is living through with the directness of a man who has nothing left to protect. When Jews abandon the inner life of their tradition, performing its forms without genuine intention, the forces of destruction in the world are strengthened. He is not speaking in metaphor. He names what he has witnessed: "Each and every one who remains must commit his entire being to increasing the study of the internal aspect of Torah and granting it its rightful place."

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai

The *Zohar*, the book that all of this introduces, was composed in the 2nd century by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. The Baal HaSulam says he never investigated the question of authorship because anyone who genuinely understands what the *Zohar* contains cannot doubt that its author was at least at the level of that *Tanna*. If he were told it was written by one of the 48 prophets, he writes, that would make more sense than attributing it to a lesser figure. If he became convinced Moses himself received it at Sinai, he would be satisfied. He is positioning you before you open the *Zohar* itself: Know what you are approaching.

The book closes with a line from the *Zohar* itself: "The *Zohar* will bring them out of exile in mercy."

A ladder is not a destination

He named his commentary on the *Zohar* "*HaSulam*," "the ladder," and explained that a ladder is not a destination. If you rest on the rungs, you never reach the attic. Finkelman's translation is precise without being reductive, and the editorial additions orient without intruding. I have spent years around Jewish texts. This one told me something about what they are all pointing toward that I had not found expressed so clearly anywhere else. ■



Election 2026: Demand 'hasbara' be made a priority



EYE ON THE MEDIA
GIL HOFFMAN

During all my years covering politics for *The Jerusalem Post*, many parties proudly contacted me to tell me that they had published new platforms for voters.

When they would send them to me, I would surprise them by responding that it was not news for my readers if the platform was in Hebrew.

The party spokesmen would then tell me to translate them for my readers, which was even more offensive if they had them translated into Russian.

I had to explain to the parties that if *Post* readers were a priority for them, they should not only write English platforms themselves but also research what English speakers in Israel cared about, put it in the platforms, and implement it.

The election beginning now is no exception.

If you count the children and grandchildren of immigrants to Israel, there are hundreds of thousands of native English-speaking voters in Israel. It's not enough people to form a party like Russian speakers did, and I doubt that many parties will bother putting a native English speaker on their list to woo such voters.

After all, native English speakers in Israel are very diverse, and they seldom speak in one voice. The native English speakers who have been elected to the Knesset have represented many different parties.

But there is one issue that I dare suggest they can all agree on: Israel needs to make more of an effort to improve its international image, in what is perhaps the most frightening time for Diaspora Jews since the Holocaust.

This issue will not become a priority in this election if the readers of the *Post* who live in Israel and vote do not earnestly demand it.

Donations from American and British Jewish philanthropists who live abroad used to give them the ear of Israeli leaders. But that ended in January 2018, when Likud MK David Amsalem – who does not speak English and resented that his colleagues who did raised money he could not – passed the Primaries Law, which facilitates state funding for party primaries and bans candidates from receiving contributions.

So that leaves the voters here in Israel. I am sure *Post* readers will be activists and volunteers in many parties in this election and have influence. They will go to parlor meetings and debates, ask important questions, and make their voices heard.

Ask the candidates what they will do

about the antisemitism that has skyrocketed around the world since Oct. 7, and how much of a priority they will make addressing this threat if they play a key role in the next government.

Remind them of the numbers:

Back in 2022, before the war, 55% of Americans viewed Israel positively, and 42% negatively, according to a Pew Research study.

The latest Pew poll, published April 7, found that the numbers have flipped. Sixty percent of Americans now view Israel negatively, and only 37% positively. Eighty percent of Democrats see Israel negatively, and 41% of Republicans.

Among those aged 18-49, some 70% of Americans say they see Israel negatively – 84% of Democrats and 57% of Republicans. The shift among Republicans aged 18-29 has been the starkest: In 2022, some 61% saw Israel positively, and 26% negatively. Now only 35% said positive, and 64% negative.

The survey was conducted on March 23-29, 2026, among 3,507 US adults representing a statistical sample of the adult American population. It was fielded about a month into the very unpopular American and Israeli-led war in Iran, which, it could be argued, makes the results somewhat unfair. But no one is denying that this is a very serious problem that must be fixed immediately.

IN HIS interview two weeks ago on *60 Minutes* with Major Garrett, chief Washington correspondent for CBS News, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu blamed the resurgence of antisemitism on the jealousy of Israel's success and "a concerted effort by several states to vilify Israel primarily on social media and the standard media, too, and we have not fought back yet."

Israel is fighting back, and 'The New York Times' has been on the defensive

This admission that Israel had "not fought back yet" against the international effort to besmirch the Jewish state did not make news because it was overshadowed by plenty of other headlines in Netanyahu's 78-minute interview.

Asked if Israel's own mistakes had contributed to the negative impression of Israel, Netanyahu said that in every war, mistakes are made; and that despite its unprecedented efforts at precision in targeting terrorists to avoid civilian casualties, Israel had made mistakes.

Picking up Garrett's cellular phone,



WRITER NICHOLAS KRISTOF, blood libel purveyor, receives an honorary doctorate in Letters during Brown University commencement exercises, in Rhode Island, 2011. (Adam Hunger/Reuters)

Netanyahu said that thanks to the power of the device, "I can paint you as a monster, and if I say it often enough, enough people will believe it.

"Israel is besieged on the media front, on the propaganda front," he said. "We have not done well in the propaganda war. We have to fight back against these lies, this propaganda, with the only weapon we have, which is the truth. I am trying to do that now, and we will try to do that with much greater effort because we have left the battlefield to our enemies and, boy, do they lie – all the time."

Part of "trying to do that now" is the defamation lawsuit Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar announced last week against *The New York Times* for Nicholas Kristof's column "The Silence That Meets the Rape of Palestinians."

One could say that the damage has already been done by the column's obviously false allegations and pathetic sourcing, which were revealed in impressive investigations by HonestReporting's Rachel O'Donoghue and others.

When you Google "Rape Silence Israel Palestinians," the column appears at the top, not "Silenced No More: Sexual Terror Unveiled," Prof. Cochav Elkayam-Levy's comprehensive 300-page study of 430 witnesses of the Palestinians' rapes of Israelis on and since Oct. 7. The wording

of the headline for the *Times* piece ended up making it harder for the Israeli study to be found online.

The *Times* has denied the Foreign Ministry's charge that the newspaper was given the study and rejected it. But all top foreign journalists in Israel were sent the study on Sunday, May 10, at 6:42 a.m. ET with a note that it was embargoed until Tuesday, May 12, at 1:30 a.m. ET. Kristof's column was published on Monday.

The lawsuit was denounced as a frivolous publicity stunt ahead of the election and was mocked because the case would likely be dismissed for jurisdiction reasons, whether it was filed in Israel or in New York. But nonpolitical ministry officials said legal authorities had been consulted and the lawsuit would proceed seriously, with no regard to any political timetable.

"The strategic value of Israel's *Times* lawsuit has nothing to do with winning," research analyst Eitan Fischberger explained on X. "It's about discovery, if they can somehow get to that point – the *Times'* internal emails about how this piece was vetted, what they knew about Euro-Med's Hamas ties, and what doubts existed internally. All of that becomes potentially public. The lawsuit is just how you get there."

In other words, Israel is fighting back, and the *Times* has been on the defensive, uncharacteristically issuing clarification after clarification justifying Kristof and his report and denying Israel's statements about the timing of its publication.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Oren Marmorstein also published a letter to the *Times* asking for the Israel Prisons Service's response to Kristof to be published and the response by a *Times* opinion editor turning down the request.

The ministry's efforts resulted in the discourse being changed to the poor journalistic standards of the *Times* and not the false charges against Israel in America's newspaper of record.

Regardless of whether such efforts are too little or too late, whichever parties form the government after this election must continue them.

Every party must be compelled to make this fight a top priority. That means not only taking action when the damage is already done but also starting to take into account public diplomacy and the fate of Diaspora Jewish communities whenever important security decisions are made.

Whether they finally start taking these important steps could depend on you. ■

The writer served as chief political correspondent and analyst of The Jerusalem Post, and has lectured about Israel in all 50 US states.

ON THE Herzliya campus, they connect with peers from all over the world. (People Photography)



Int'l students find a home at Reichman

• BATSHEVA SHULMAN

Studying in Israel comes with its own challenges, especially for *olim* and lone soldiers balancing academics, military service, and life in a new country.

For Levi Preger and Rachel Eskandry, choosing a university here was about much more than academics. It was about whether an institution could support them not only as students but also as immigrants and lone soldiers navigating war, military service, and the transition into Israeli life.

Preger, 27, grew up in a small town in the Netherlands in a Christian household. When he was 17, he discovered that he was Jewish, learning that since the Holocaust, his great-grandmother had hidden the family's Jewish identity.

What followed was a journey of self-discovery: learning Hebrew, celebrating a bar mitzvah at 18, making *aliyah* at 20, and enlisting as a lone soldier in the IDF's Nahal Reconnaissance Unit.

Although he was accepted to several Israeli universities, Preger decided to delay his studies, anticipating repeated military reserve call-ups following the Oct. 7 Hamas-led mega-attacks on Israel. He is now in his

second year, studying international relations and government at Reichman University in Herzliya.

"One of my most important criteria was how a university treats its reservists," he said. "Reichman really goes above and beyond when it comes to reservists."

That flexibility proved essential. During extended periods of reserve duty, Preger was unable to attend classes. Rather than his falling irreversibly behind, his professors adjusted deadlines, reorganized coursework, and met with him to help him catch up.

"At Reichman, missing months because of reserve duty doesn't mean you fail; they work with you until you succeed," he said. He recalled professors offering to meet him off-campus, even on Fridays. "They told me, 'If you want me to sit with you in a coffee shop on a Friday morning, I'll do that.'"

Campus life, he added, helped offset the strain of military service. International events, such as the annual food festival showcasing students' home cuisines, fostered a sense of belonging and community.

Beyond his academic and military commitments, Preger is closely involved with Growing Wings, a nonprofit founded by and for lone soldiers, providing housing, advocacy, and community support before,

during, and after military service.

"It is for lone soldiers, by lone soldiers – that's the idea," he said.

The university encouraged his initiative. When he proposed a pre-draft workshop for soldiers, administrators helped him organize it on campus. "That's such a special thing, and they didn't have to do it," he said. "It's very welcoming, very homey."

Preger also addressed the personal cost of making *aliyah* and joining the army. Many of his friends in the Netherlands distanced themselves from him after learning that he served in the IDF.

"A lot of people whom I considered close friends – they said I would take part in what they call a 'genocide,'" he said.

RACHEL ESKANDRY, 22, is also in her second year at Reichman, studying international relations and government. Raised in Aventura, Florida, within a strong Jewish community, she grew up surrounded by peers who [later] made *aliyah* and studied in Israel. Long before the tragic events on Oct. 7, she knew she wanted to build her future here.

"I knew that if I wanted to end up in Israel long term – raising a family here or working here – then coming

to the army was very obvious for me,” she said.

Eskandry made aliyah by herself in 2021 and enlisted through Garin Tzabar, a program for lone soldiers. She was released from the army three months after the Gaza war began, and then started her studies at Reichman.

After Oct. 7, returning to a university in the US was not an option. “I don’t think I could stand there and witness that,” she said, referring to the anti-Israel protests that swept college campuses.

Reichman appealed to her not only because of its English-language programs but also because of its values and atmosphere.

“The fact that the university was very strong in its Zionist values, and had a really strong stance with the hostages was really important to me,” she said. “These are the values I want in an institution.”

During reserve duty, Preger missed long stretches of class. Rather than letting him fall irreversibly behind, professors adjusted deadlines and reorganized their schedules to help him

She described a warm, supportive environment where professors are approachable and know students personally. Campus life also gave her the opportunity to connect with peers from around the world who share similar values and outlooks.

A university-led delegation trip to Poland, she said, helped her grasp the weight of Jewish history and her own place within it.

“Only after the trip did I really understand and process everything that we went through.”

REICHMAN UNIVERSITY is small by Israeli standards, with approximately 8,500 students. Some 2,400 are international undergraduates – an unusually high number in a country where most degree courses are taught in Hebrew. According to national data, Reichman enrolls nearly half of all international students pursuing full undergraduate degrees in Israel, despite representing only a small percentage of the overall student population.

Jonathan Davis, head of Reichman’s Raphael Recanati International School, attributes these statistics to a deliberate institutional strategy.

“We carved into our mission statement that we would like to embrace international students here,” he said. “But we have to work hard for it.”

The university offers full degree programs in English without requiring prior knowledge of Hebrew. Since the war began, this commitment has expanded to include individualized academic plans for reservists, financial support for wounded soldiers, and mental health services for students returning from combat.

Reichman also facilitates connections between students interested in IDF service and International School alumni already in the army, such as on-campus fairs that introduce students to relevant units.

“We have a person here who has contacts in the IDF, and we match them with units. Those who studied psychology – we want them doing psychology in the IDF. Communications – the Spokesperson’s Office. Economics – working on budgets in general headquarters.”

Since the Israel-Hamas War began, 18 Reichman students and alumni have been killed, and hundreds more wounded.



LEVI PREGER and Rachel Eskandry feel supported as both ‘olim’ and lone soldiers. (Private Collection)

“This is a campus with at least 100 amputees. Out of 200 severely wounded soldiers, many have PTSD,” Davis said, adding, “Not one wounded soldier on this campus who’s an amputee pays one penny of tuition.”

Students who miss semesters due to military service are given personalized academic pathways to complete their degrees, regardless of whether they are Israeli or international.

“We have close to 500 international students who are former lone soldiers here,” Davis said. “We take care of those kids. We’re not going to leave one student behind.”

The commitment to student welfare begins with senior leadership. Davis himself is personally involved, hosting regular roundtable discussions with students from countries such as Brazil, Chile, Germany, and Belgium.

What’s more, many couples meet on campus, and Davis says he receives wedding invitations weekly. He describes his role as “a huge privilege to be in that driver’s seat.”

Since Oct. 7, a growing number of international students have ar-

rived not solely for academic reasons but also because they no longer felt safe on their home campuses. Some transferred mid-semester after experiencing harassment or social exclusion.

This does not mean that every Jew should come to Israel or make aliyah, Davis emphasized. But for those who want to, the opportunity exists. In that sense, the International School functions as a sort of mini-absorption center.

“Sixty percent of our students make aliyah; some will ultimately serve in the army after they’ve completed their studies.”

For Davis, the formula to encourage international students’ eventual aliyah is straightforward. “If we provide tender loving care, if we embrace these people and take them by the hand – everything else follows.”

For students like Preger and Eskandry, that support is not an abstract policy. It is the difference between putting life on hold and moving forward – studying, serving, and building a future in a place that, at least for now, feels like home.

JONATHAN DAVIS, head, Raphael Recanati International School at Reichman University. (Alon Gilboa)



SHAVUOT 5786
RABBI SHMUEL RABINOWITZ

TECHNOLOGY KNOWS how to make life easier, but it does not know how to make a person better. (Shutterstock)

Shavuot invites us to pause for a moment



A factory for human beings

The festival of Shavuot is one of the *Shalosh Regalim* (Three Pilgrimage Festivals) – the holidays on which the Jewish nation would ascend to Jerusalem and the Holy Temple. However, unlike Passover and Sukkot, which last seven days, Shavuot is only a single-day festival.

Its uniqueness lies in its focus on one defining moment: the day the Torah was given to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai. For this reason, it is also called the Festival of the Giving of the Torah.

The giving of the Torah was not merely a religious or national event but a turning point in human history. The Torah granted the Jewish people a complete way of life whose purpose is to connect people with their inner and spiritual worlds. The Torah does not seek to detach a person from the physical world; on the contrary, it seeks to elevate the body and life itself, transforming human actions into instruments of meaning, morality, and repair.

Thousands of years have passed since that moment, and there are those who view the Torah as something ancient and irrelevant to the modern, ever-changing world. Yet one of the fundamental principles of Jewish faith is that the Torah is eternal and will never be replaced. The Torah is not merely a historical memory but a living and renewing force.

The great question many ask is: What exactly is unique about the Torah of Israel? Is it merely a law book? A collection of religious instructions? And if so, why did Jews throughout the generations devote their entire lives to it and spend endless hours immersed in its study?

The answer lies in one of the most striking characteristics of the Jewish people throughout history. Despite being a relatively small nation, its contribution to the world in science, medicine, economics, culture, and human thought is vastly disproportionate to its size.

Many scholars have tried to explain this phenomenon, and at times it even aroused envy and hostility. But the truth is simpler: The Torah created a culture that obligates us to engage in constant self-work, and through that, we gain the ability to contribute.

The Torah's purpose is to create a balance in which a person is not ruled solely by impulses, power, or desire. Judaism seeks to cultivate a person of self-control, sensitivity, responsibility, and morality. Our sages expressed this in the phrase "A man's wisdom illuminates his face" – that is, a person engaged in an inner and spiritual world radiates it outwardly as well, in his behavior, gentleness, and attitude toward others.

The modern world often measures people by external success: money, status, fame, and power. Honest, kind-hearted, and moral people may receive much less public attention, though in truth, they represent a far deeper human success.

The depth of this idea is sharpened by a story about a granddaughter of the Chofetz Chaim. In her youth, she was drawn to the spirit of the Enlightenment, and, at the age of 16, she fled her home in the small town of Radin to the great city of Moscow. Many years later, after immigrating to Israel, she recounted that when she was 18, she returned to visit her grandfather and said to him: "Grandfather, why are you still sitting in darkness? Come out into the world of light!" It was during the height of the First World War. At that time, people stood astonished at the innovative sight of humans in airplanes dropping bombs from the sky.

The Chofetz Chaim replied to her with prophetic insight: "Do you see these airplanes? The day will yet come when we will reach the moon. A time will come when there will be sophisticated bombs capable of destroying an entire world. Is that what should inspire awe? In Judaism, we are not amazed by what we are capable of building; we are amazed by our ability to

build ourselves. I am more impressed by individuals who succeed in changing their weaknesses than by a spacecraft reaching the moon."

Indeed, the world has advanced in extraordinary ways scientifically and technologically. Yet, alongside all this progress, man himself has been left behind. Rabbi Yitzchak Yaacov Reines once remarked: "The more the world advances, the more the heart retreats." Modern humanity no longer produces human beings. It does not ask anyone to change or become better; it only seeks to make life more comfortable.

Technology knows how to make life easier, but it does not know how to make a person better. The Torah, by contrast, focuses precisely on this point – the building of the human being itself. It demands that people constantly examine themselves: to become better, more moral, and more sensitive.

According to Judaism, a person may reach old age with wealth, status, and success – but if he has not worked on his character and improved his weaknesses, he has missed his primary purpose. True success is not merely what a person has achieved, but what kind of person he has become. That is called real progress.

This is also the reason for the Torah's eternity. It is not dependent on a particular era, technology, or passing cultural fashion because it deals with something that does not truly change – the human soul.

Shavuot invites us to pause for a moment amid the constant race of life and ask not only "What have I achieved?" but, more importantly, "Who am I becoming?"

In a world that sanctifies external achievements, the Torah comes to remind us that our greatest challenge is to build our inner world – and to become better human beings.

The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.

Shavuot: The debate and deeper value



JUDAISM
& MODERNITY
MOSHE TARAGIN

Mount Sinai and the giving of the Torah stand at the seminal moment of Jewish faith. God spoke directly to three million people. Our faith is not built upon the prophecy of a lone mystic or the vision of a single individual; it rests upon a staggering moment in which an entire nation stood together and heard the voice of God.

However, even within this moment of absolute truth, not everyone heard the same broadcast.

The foundation was shared: Every Jew received the same Torah, the same 613 commandments, and the same covenant at Sinai. Yet each person perceived a personalized dimension of the divine word.

The word of God is so eternal and transcendent that no human being can ever fully encompass it. Different perspectives within Torah are built into the system itself. This is not a flaw. It is part of the Torah's design.

Har Sinai and the root of 'machloket'

Machloket ("debate") is not merely the product of a once-unified tradition deteriorating across generations. God presented Moses with multiple pathways through which a particular item could be viewed as impure; he was then presented with multiple pathways through which that same item could be viewed as pure.

Halacha demands a single course of action. An item cannot be both impure and pure in practice. Yet each position still reflects part of a broader divine truth which transcends the binary limits of human reasoning. That is precisely why we study every opinion in the Talmud, and not merely those adopted as normative *halachic* practice.

Just as disagreement is woven into the halachic process, it is also built into the way Torah and commandments are applied within a particular cultural context, what we often call *hashkafah*.

Torah and commandments are eternal, applying equally in every generation. Hashkafah is the manner in which eternal Torah encounters the changing conditions of history and society. God created people with different temperaments and dispositions, and different approaches and frameworks speak more deeply to different individuals.

A divisive moment

In Israel today, no issue has more sharply divided different communities than the question of *haredi* non-conscription to the IDF. The debate always existed, but in times of relative calm it simmered beneath the surface. During the past two



ULTRA-ORTHODOX RECRUITS arrive at the IDF Recruitment Center at Tel Hashomer, early Jan. (Flash90)

and a half years of war, especially amid a severe shortage of manpower, the issue has erupted into a painful and divisive argument.

The rabbis teach that a *machloket* which is *l'shem Shamayim* – i.e., sincere and rooted in noble values – will endure. Ideological debates do not disappear easily. Arguments driven by petty interests or political maneuvering quickly dissolve once the emptiness beneath them becomes exposed. But debates about Torah study, religious culture, and service in a Jewish army touch upon profound values. These are not shallow disagreements, and they will likely take generations to resolve.

Shared values and the value of Torah study

Shavuot is not the moment to stake out already voiced positions. There is too much pain and too much strife surrounding this issue. Additionally, most people's positions are already hardened. My own views can easily be traced to where I teach and the community in which I live.

Instead, Shavuot is a time to clarify the greater Torah values at the center of this debate, ensuring that those shared values are not blurred by the intensity of the argument itself. The first of those values is the supremacy of Torah study.

Those who serve in the IDF, as well as those who do not, agree about the larger value of Talmud Torah. It is a supreme value, equated with the entirety of the Torah commandments. Studying the will of God in order to draw closer to Him is a transcendent experience, difficult to compare to other pursuits.

Protecting our land

The current ideological debate is not about the centrality of Torah, but whether commitment to Torah study ex-

empts someone from participating in the defense of our people and our land.

Torah study and Torah commitment are not merely personal religious experiences. They also protect our land and shape our national destiny.

Without pointing to any single miracle, it is clear that our presence in the land of God is supernatural. The degree to which we infuse this society with Torah and commandment observance shapes our security and our survival.

Debates about deferring Torah study for other pursuits have occupied great Jewish thinkers throughout the generations.

The Talmud cites Rabbi Yishmael, who validated engaging in agriculture even at the cost of reduced Torah study.

It then cites Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, who advocated a life fully devoted to Torah study, supported by others.

These discussions have unfolded throughout the centuries. However, the question of whether Torah study exempts military service, especially when there is no broad consensus about who qualifies for such an exemption, does not clearly surface in our tradition.

It is supremely important for those who combine Torah study with army service to reaffirm how central Torah study remains.

History advances on two stages: the hidden metaphysical stage and the visible historical stage. Every page of Torah studied advances our nation and protects our land on that hidden stage. Those who serve believe that God asks us to operate on both stages, strengthening the spiritual foundations of our people while also physically defending our country.

There is a danger that those who serve and who feel deep pain toward those who invoke Torah study as an exemption may gradually become less attached to Torah study itself. In their forceful defense of integrating Torah study with

military service, they may slowly weaken their own emotional connection to the supreme value of Talmud Torah.

On Shavuot, we recenter Torah study as our supreme value, even as we divert some of its precious human resources toward protecting our people and defending our land.

Preserving religious clarity

Preserving the centrality of Torah also requires intellectual honesty about the achievements of the *haredi* world. This divisive moment should not blur the extraordinary accomplishments of the post-World War II *haredi* world. After the Holocaust, the Jewish world lay in ruins, and Torah students and their teachers were not spared. Modern *haredi* society viewed itself as carrying the responsibility of rebuilding that shattered world of Torah greatness.

In many ways, the explosion of Torah study over the past decades has been driven by the *haredi* world. The broader Torah community has benefited immensely from the intensity, discipline, and publication of Torah, which this culture generated. Regardless of how one views the current *haredi* stance, ignoring these accomplishments would be intellectually dishonest and deeply unfair.

This painful moment cannot reshape our core values. Clarifying the difference between the values we share, such as the supremacy of Torah, and the areas in which we genuinely disagree can help ensure the amplification of those common values rather than their erosion through conflict and resentment.

There is another reason why clarifying terms is so important. Ideological struggles can create great confusion and leave lasting scars. There is concern that this debate could lead to broader religious alienation.

Haredim are highly visible representatives of Torah study and religious commitment, and for those who strongly oppose their current stance, frustration with this issue can gradually become frustration with religion itself. This danger is especially acute for younger people forming their religious identity.

Our messaging must remain clear and unmistakable. This is not a debate about whether we value Torah study or how deeply we cherish it. It is a debate about how Torah study is balanced with what many see as the great commandment of protecting our people and defending our land. Clarifying this may help prevent confusion and alienation. ■

The writer is a YU-ordained rabbi at the hesder Yeshivat Har Etzion (Gush). His latest book, Reclaiming Redemption, Volume II: Faith, Identity, Peoplehood and the Storms of War, is available at www.mtaraginbooks.com.

FRIDAY CROSSWORD

ACROSS

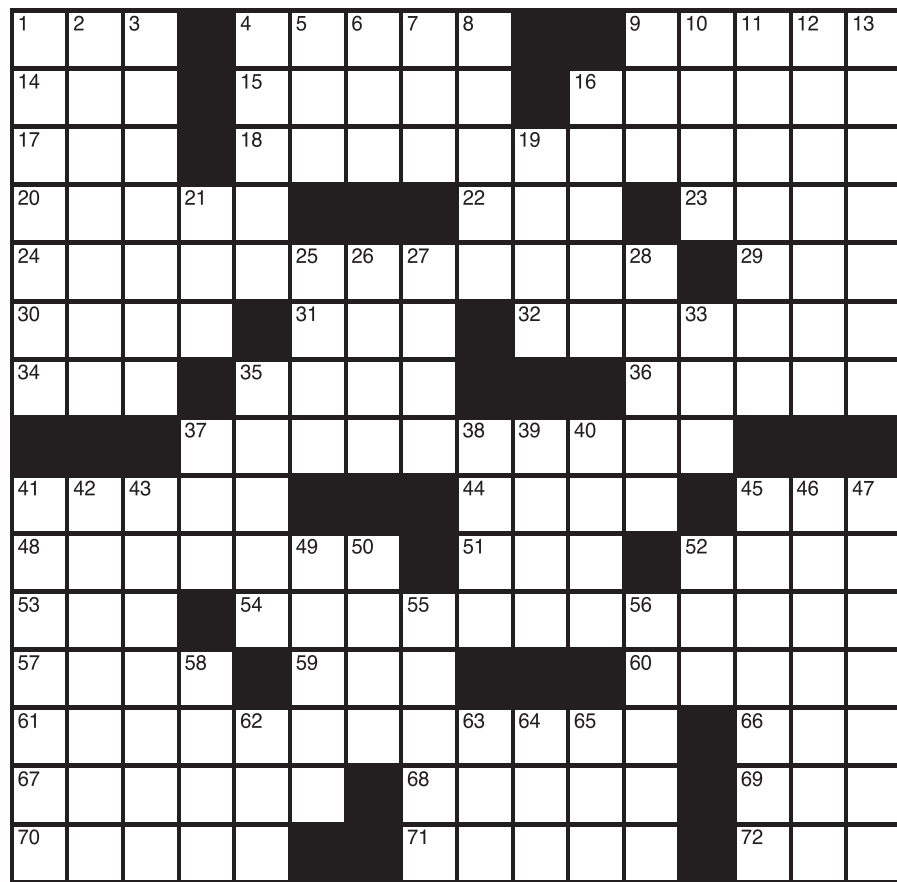
1 Texting format initials
4 Eel in maki sushi
9 Language of Sri Lanka
14 "Long," in Hawaiian
15 Sure to end badly
16 __ Cortina 2026
17 Under the weather
18 *Brunch choice
20 Only major U.S. city founded by a woman
22 Roadside org.
23 Draped silk dress
24 *Apprenticeship in the ways of The Force
29 Digital exec
30 Purple bloom
31 World Series mo.
32 Comedy series featuring Lily Tomlin
34 Grown boys
35 Educational acronym
36 Opera solos
37 Unpublicized restaurant offering, or a feature of the answer to each starred clue
41 Call dibs on
44 Charger, e.g.
45 Navigation tech
48 Tolkien characters who like to eat six meals a day
51 Locavore's org.
52 Small cut
53 Result of advancing in the field?

54 *Negro Leagues player in the Baseball Hall of Fame
57 Key West, e.g.
59 __ shu pork
60 Oyster opener
61 *"I Just Called To Say I Love You" singer
66 Sock part
67 Barbershop parts
68 Leg day exercise
69 Music producer Brian
70 Snacks stuffed with "stuf"
71 Couple of bucks?
72 Web feed initials

DOWN

1 Jerky brand
2 "Tartuffe" playwright
3 First sultan of Syria and Egypt
4 Not wellmatched
5 Swe. neighbor
6 Astonishment
7 Martini liquor
8 Like some ruins in Peru
9 "Beetlejuice" director Burton
10 Bitter beers
11 Last book of the Old Testament
12 Laziness

13 Skin soothers
16 Disney film set in Polynesia
19 Call, as a cab
21 Sue Grafton's "__ for Malice"
25 Campus mil. unit
26 Laptop brand
27 "I feel seen"
28 Fertilizer from bats
33 Mentor of Minions
35 Big rigs
37 Sis, for one
38 Speed reader?
39 Inspiring figure
40 Footnote abbr.
41 Artist known for fabric-wrapped installations
42 Maine course
43 Central Texas city
45 Sparkly stuff
46 City birds
47 Sound investments?
49 Makes less wild
50 Put away
52 Didn't play
55 Loses steam?
56 Sauna openings?
58 Kitchen initialism
62 Tax agcy.
63 Fan
64 "The Code Breaker" subj.
65 Pasta ingredient



Solutions to both crosswords will appear in Sunday's paper.

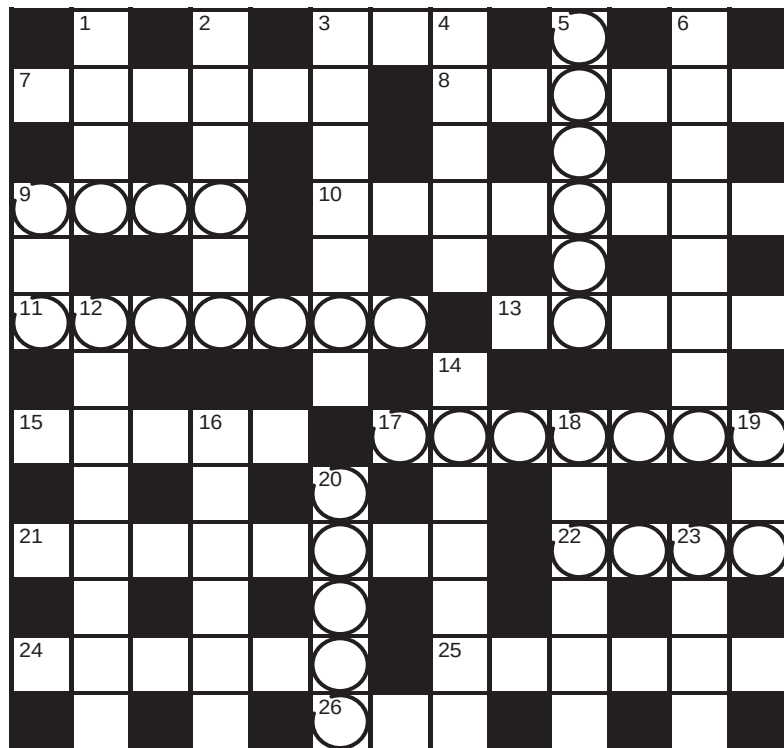
QUICK CROSSWORD

Across

3 Spending ceiling (3)
7 Sphere, social environment (LEUMI I anagram) (6)
8 __ Zedek (Jerusalem hospital) (6)
9 Male Highlander's skirt (4)
10 Carbon 14 feature (4-4)
11 Scotland's largest city (7)
13 See-through scenery piece (5)
15 Stuff that was secretly hoarded (5)
17 "... my __ for a horse!" (Shakespeare) (7)
21 Halcyon, peaceful, quiet (8)
22 Edinburgh native (4)
24 Gush __ (Efrat, etc.) (6)
25 "Jerusalem Post" reporter and humorist Herb __ (ONE INK anagram) (6)
26 " __ Loves You, Yeah Yeah Yeah" (3)

Down

1 __ Dee (sang with Elton John on "Don't Go Breaking My Heart") (4)
2 Time out (USA HIT anagram) (6)
3 Pillow kin on a sofa (7)
4 Poetic creation of King David (5)
5 Scottish language (6)
6 Individual inscription written on a wall (AFRO GIFT anagram) (8)
9 Gunpowder (or beer) container (3)



12 Able to read (TIE ALERT anagram) (8)
14 Antipathy (SKI DELI anagram) (7)
16 Like some bright rooms with large windows (INSULT anagram) (6)

18 Talk about others (lashon hara) (6)
19 MLB baseballer from NYC (3)
20 Famous Scottish poet Robert __ (5)
23 Cousin of the bassoon and clarinet (4)

WORDBUILDER

WORD-BUILDER
6115

E I R
V T

How many words of three or more letters, including plurals, can you make from the five letters, using each letter only once? No foreign words or words beginning with a capital are allowed. There's at least one five-letter word.

TODAY'S GOALS:
Good - 6 Excellent - 8 Amazing - 10

SOLUTION 6114: ale, all, dal, dale, deal, dell, eld, ell, lad, lade, ladle, lea, lead, leal, led.

CHESS ANSWERS

g4+! 2 f8g4 (if 2 Kh4 NxK3+ wins White's b4 mate) Qxg4+ 3 Kg2 Qf3+! 4 Kh3 (4 Kg1 Ne2 queen) Qxg4+ 5 Kh4 Nf3+ 6 Kh5 Qh3+ and White must surrender his queen by 7 Qh4 Nxh4.

► SUDOKU

VERY EASY

8			6			5		9
	7	1			3		8	
2			4	5			1	
	9			7		8		4
		7	3		6	2		
1		6		4			7	
	4			8	9			5
	5		1			6	9	
9		3			2			8

EASY

				3	8		7	
	3			5			1	6
			6					2
6		3			9	2	8	
9								4
	4	8	1			6		3
7					2			
3	1			7			6	
	5		9	1				

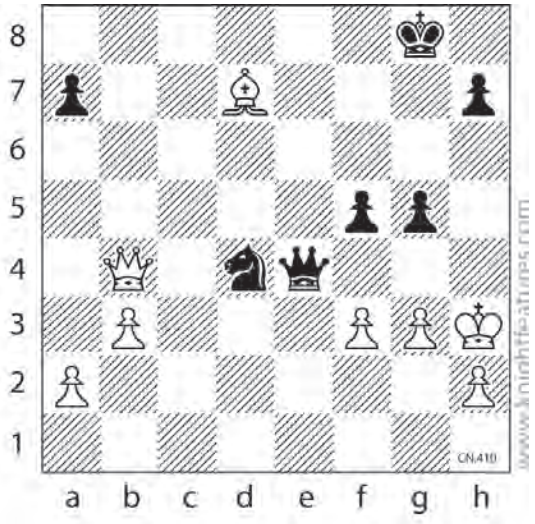
MEDIUM

	6		3	4		2		1
4				2			3	
	8							
					2		5	
		4		7		3		
	1		9					
							1	
	2			9				6
3		7		1	8		2	

HARD

				6				
5	4			7		9		1
	8				1			4
9				4				
	6						5	
				5				8
8			2				7	
2		6		1			4	5
				9				

► CHESS By Leonard Barden



Alex Belyavsky v Andrei Volokitin, Igualada Masters, Barcelona 2005. Ukraine's Volokitin, 19, won the best game of this invitation event, but first prize went to London's grandmaster Luke McShane, 21, whose 4/6 included a victory over chess legend Viktor Korchnoi. Today's diagram occurred after Belyavsky had spurned a draw and underestimated Black's queen-knight duo in the diagram. At first glance the position looks good for White who threatens both fxe4 and dangerous checks starting Qb8+. But Volokitin had accurately calculated that Black can win by force and his next few turns persuaded twice Soviet champion Belyavsky to resign in the face of checkmate or decisive material gain. What happened?

► THURSDAY'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS

N	A	G	S			A	C	T	O	R		N	I	T
A	R	E	A	S		T	A	K	E	I		A	G	O
V	I	N	Y	L	R	E	C	O	R	D		I	L	K
A	S	I	S	E	E	I	T					S	L	O
L	E	E		P	A	N	I	C	B	U	T	T	O	N
				A	T	L			A	R	G	U	E	
A	D	A	M		P	A	N	E	L		C	P	U	
C	U	B	A	N	S	A	N	D	W	I	C	H	E	S
E	B	B		E	E	N	S	Y			A	S	I	A
				E	C	A	R	D			E	O	N	
D	R	Y	C	L	E	A	N	I	N	G		E	R	A
J	A	R	S				U	N	G	R	A	D	E	D
I	D	O		H	A	R	D	P	R	E	S	S	E	D
N	I	A		A	D	A	G	E			S	H	E	L
G	O	D		Y	E	M	E	N				E	L	S

T	O	R	N		G	L	A	S	S	M	A	N		
I		U		B		E		E		E		O		
T	I	M	E	L	A	G		V	E	X	E	S		
A		O		A		U		E		I		Y		
N	O	R	T	H	A	M	E	R	I	C	A			
I			A			E		A		A		P		
U	N	T	R	U	E		P	L	I	N	T	H		
M		R		N		C		S				E		
L	A	T	I	N	A	M	E	R	I	C	A			
H		I		F		N		A		N		S		
A	M	N	I	O		A		N	T	E	N	N	A	
D		E		R		D		S		E		N		
J	E	R	E	M	I	A		D		B	R	E	T	

► 5x5

5x5

Insert the missing letters to complete ten words - five across the grid and five down.

6075

S	T	O	P	S
P	U	R	E	E
I	N	D	E	X
R	E	E	V	E
E	R	R	E	D

PREVIOUS SOLUTION (other combinations may be possible)

B		S		L
	L		D	
A		P		E
	H		E	
T		R		Y

© THE PUZZLE COMPANY

Reference: Concise Oxford 10th Edition

Using her English for the good of others

• ABIGAIL KLEIN LEICHMAN

The woman who recently received a certificate of appreciation on Teacher's Day at ORT Motzkin high school has been living in Israel for only seven years.

Gabrielle Soffer arrived in Tel Aviv on her own in 2019. She had a degree in the visual arts and psychology from New York's Hunter College and had worked in the real estate field for nine years.

Aiming to improve her language skills before seeking employment, she registered for a residential Hebrew *ulpan* at Tel Aviv University, where she shared lodgings with women from Russia, Brazil, and Hungary. But not for long.

Two nights after the start of the program, she and her roommates visited a neighborhood bar. There she met Asaf Cohen, the man who would soon become her husband and father of their two boys, now two and five.

"I didn't think it was very serious, of course, at the time. You never think that when you meet somebody at a bar. But he actually ended up being a really standout guy who helped me with every facet of my life when I was so early into my experience here. I felt uncomfortable signing documents, like at the bank, without knowing Hebrew well. And he invested in my well-being from the start," she says.

"I often joke with my husband that we never would have gotten so serious so quickly if I hadn't been living with three women from Europe and Latin America. It felt silly to be back in a dorm room at that point in my life. I wasn't in my 20s anymore, and neither were they. It was very strange trying to adapt to that."

GABRIELLE GREW up in Tenaflly, a New Jersey borough with many Israeli expat residents and a large Jewish community center. She and her parents and sister traveled to Israel several times to visit close relatives in the Sharon.

Fond memories of those trips came back to her when, during her college years, she began to feel marginalized and unsafe as an American Jew for the first time.

"What I found at Hunter was a big anti-Israel base that would congregate every time there was the tiniest operation in Gaza. They would rally for Gaza and Palestinian rights and completely misinterpret Israel's actions. They'd describe Israel's regime in outrageous terms like 'Nazi.'"

"At the time, I was in a relationship with an Israeli man. And it was a really big turning point for me. I felt threatened and scared to be a Jew in New York,



ASAF & GABRIELLE COHEN on their wedding day in Beit Lechem Haglalit, May 24, 2020. (Idan Hasson)



ON A family vacation in Crete with Gabrielle's parents and sister and their families in July 2024 (from L): Barbara Soffer; Asaf Cohen; Gabrielle Soffer Cohen holding Ari Cohen; Jeffrey Soffer; Talia Marlow; Ariella Soffer Marlow holding Eli Cohen; Ariella's husband, Jason Marlow; and Sam Marlow.

having to mask my identity or be careful with it. Further incidents of that sort made it even clearer to me that there was so much antisemitism hiding beneath the surface. In conversations with spouses of my best friends, I'd hear remarks like, 'Those dirty Jews in Wall Street.' It really, really hurt – but it also filled me with a sense of strengthening of my identity."

She finished Hunter in 2010 and took a real estate sales job, eventually obtaining her license. However, by 2019 she was feeling that her career and her personal life weren't going anywhere. It was at this point that she took another trip to

Israel with her family and spent time with friends of friends in Tel Aviv. She fell in love with the city and decided to move there.

HER COUSINS had told her that English teachers were needed in Israel, but she didn't pursue that option right away because she wasn't sure she could live on a teacher's salary. Then Asaf's mother told her about a free teacher certification course at Kibbutzim College of Education in Tel Aviv, and encouraged her to try it.

"I really liked the idea of doing something that's more meaningful than

GABRIELLE SOFFER COHEN, 41
FROM TENAFLY, NEW JERSEY,
TO TEL AVIV, 2019;
TO KIRYAT MOTZKIN, 2020

sales, and I felt safer financially because Asaf was working, too. And I ended up loving it. Teaching came naturally to me. I felt that I could use my creative brain and my love of literature and, of course, my English, for the good of others."

In August 2020, the newlyweds moved to be near Asaf's parents in Kiryat Motzkin, less than a year before Asaf's father died. Their home is down the street from ORT Motzkin, which is part of the Israel Sci-Tech Schools network. When Gabrielle saw an ad on Telegram for an English teaching position at the high school, she applied and was accepted.

After her first successful year teaching high-level students, the school's English coordinator asked her to develop an accelerated course.

"I was excited to spend the summer creating a beautiful course that uses literature to teach vocabulary, grammar, and speaking skills. I also bring in some visual art elements, like posters for presentations, as well as one-pagers.

"When we implemented it in the fall, the students loved it, and I just kept on building it. It's a class where they can be active and creative and express themselves."

Gabrielle has become close with her 10th-12th graders, many of whom come from Russian-speaking homes. They often come to her to talk – in English – outside of class.

"They feel comfortable sharing really deep things with me. And I don't take that responsibility lightly. I'm happy to be the ear for them."

The past two and a half years have been challenging for both teachers and students, she admits, especially in the North and especially when classes must be held over Zoom. And it's also challenging to be the mother of two preschoolers in an area with frequent sirens during wartime.

"I'm trying not to watch the news as much," Gabrielle says. "And I've turned off different WhatsApp broadcast notifications because it doesn't help me to read all of that. I'm just trying to persevere right now for the sake of my children."

And yet, she appreciates the immediacy of life in Israel as opposed to America. "There is a directness – in how people speak, in how communities function, in how urgency and warmth exist side by side – that took some adjusting to but that I have come to love." ■

Photo © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Elie Posner



back on display at the israel museum, jerusalem



**a voice from the
desert: the great
isaiah scroll**



plan your visit and book tickets
on the museum website: imj.org.il



a voice from the desert: the great isaiah scroll now at the israel museum

Opening hours
Mon, Thu, Sat 10:00 am – 4:00 pm
Tue 4:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Fri 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Shavuot opening hours
Thu, Fri, 21–22.5: 10 am – 2 pm
Sat, 23.5: 10 am – 4pm

Photo © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Elie Posner

