

Yom Haazmaut 5767-2016

Israel: The Language of the Jews

Kehillat Menorat Hamaor-Rav Danny Myers

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Israel-The Language of the Jew

1. Introduction-The Rav on Israel (1958)

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

a. Ezrah-Man's Partnership with God

The halakhic reason for the difference between the blessings recited after the consumption of a meal consisting of bread on one hand and fruit on the other is clearly laid out in the Talmud. The Biblical prescription of "You will eat and you will be satisfied, and you will bless" (Deuteronomy 8:10) applies only to bread and not to other foods. In the forming of fruit, man's participation is minimal. The fruit tree grows by itself, blossoms by itself, the fruit ripens by itself, and fruit can even fall off the tree unaided. All man has to do is pick up the fruit and eat it. Although he can facilitate the process by irrigating the tree, or by picking the fruit, man's involvement in the preparation of the fruit is still minimal. God provides this food in its complete and final form. There is no fundamental difference between the Manna that fell from heaven during the Israelites' forty-year sojourn in the desert, and fruit that appears on a tree. The same miracle occurs. Bread, in contrast, does not grow on trees. While fruit trees are perennial, to make bread one must first plant wheat. Then there are a host of other tasks involved in making a loaf of bread: cutting the wheat, winnowing, threshing, grinding, kneading, and baking. Because man is so integral to the process of making bread, he can be considered a partner with God in this enterprise.

The relative roles of God and man in the creation of fruit on one hand and bread on the other parallel two types of Divine intervention: Yeshuah (salvation) and Ezrah (help). In Yeshuah, man plays no role; God acts alone. In Ezrah, on the other hand, man takes the initiative and Hashem becomes a partner in the enterprise. Colloquially, man can request Ezrah of his fellow man, but cannot request Yeshuah, since the latter is an expression of intervention exclusively reserved for God. The creation of fruit is a miracle of Yeshuah - the fruit grows without man's participation. Bread, on the other hand, fits into the category of Ezrah. The Creator helps man through the growth of wheat, but man must perform those tasks associated with the transformation of God's creation into bread. Although the Psalmist asserts: "If God will not build

a house, the builder toils in vain, if God will not guard the city, in vain is the watchman's effort," (Psalms 127:1) there is clearly a role for the builder and the watchman. Hashem's assistance to man in his efforts constitutes Ezrah. In light of these definitions, it is a paradox that the elaborate Birkat Hamazon is the blessing after consumption of bread, while the simpler, more condensed Berakhah Me'ein Shalosh applies after eating certain fruits. One would assume that Hashem should be thanked more for Yeshuah than for Ezrah, for the miracle of His exclusive involvement in the creation of fruit more than for His assistance in the preparation of bread. We nonetheless arrive at the opposite conclusion: the more man participates in the effort needed to prepare his food, the more he must thank the Creator. **Our gratitude is increased in the case of Ezrah, because we must bless God for the privilege of allowing us to be His partner.** This same idea underlies an interesting Halakhic/historical paradox. Jews today are prohibited from walking on Mount Moriah upon which the Temple stood. No power in the world can neutralize the holiness of this spot. Yet, there is no prohibition to climb Mount Sinai, upon which the Torah was given. Mount Sinai maintains no residual holiness. Why is there a difference in halakhic status between the two mountains? The answer is that Israel did not participate in the giving of the Torah. They slept on the night of Shavuot and Moses had to coax the people out of their tents to receive the Torah. Bnei Yisrael themselves did nothing to contribute to this seminal event. As a result, despite being the site of the greatest Divine revelation in human history, none of Mount Sinai's holiness endures. As soon as the revelation was over, as soon as His Presence departed, the holiness of the mountain vanished as well. The history at Mount Moriah was different. Hundreds of years prior to God resting His Presence there, our forefather Abraham prepared an altar on that mountain and placed his son Isaac upon it as a sacrifice. Abraham thus became a partner in the endowment of holiness permeating the Temple Mount. The role of man in the endowment of holiness is a central theme in Halakhah. It is Knesset Yisrael who sanctifies the festivals through the establishment of the new month. Whether sanctity is vested in physical matter or in time, we find few instances where man is not the active participant in the establishment of holiness.

b. Genuine Holiness

But in a sense this explanation begs the original question. Why are man's actions, and not God's, paramount in the establishment of holiness? The answer is that in the world holiness has one source: sacrifice. Holiness and sacrifice, both literally and figuratively, are fundamentally the same concept. Holiness can only be created through self-sacrifice, pain, effort, and exertion. If a person does not anticipate and struggle, holiness cannot come into being. God's help, Ezrah, asserts itself only after man waits with anticipation and uncertainty for it to arrive. God desires the element of sacrifice in this act of waiting and His response is therefore not immediate. Moses ascended Mount Sinai to receive the second set of tablets on Rosh Chodesh Elul and for many days he entreated God to forgive Israel. During this period, Moses was beset with uncertainty: Maybe I will be able to atone for Israel's sin. (Exodus 32:30). Moses was distressed that perhaps he would be incapable of reversing Hashem's terrible decree. He worried that perhaps his efforts would be insufficient to appease God and save the nation. Only after forty long days on

Mount Sinai, on the day of Yom Kippur, did God finally reveal Himself. Moses' struggle sanctified both himself and Yom Kippur for all generations to come.

c. Suffering and Medinat Yisrael

Tonight, as we are on the eve of the 10th year of the establishment of the State of Israel, I would like to make a reckoning. One can view the State of Israel from two standpoints. One can view the State from an external standpoint, from a political-economic perspective, the perspective of the State Department and the British Foreign Office. But I do not wish to deal with this aspect tonight. This is a solemn moment. I wish to view the State of Israel from an internal standpoint. That the existence of the State of Israel is a miracle is beyond doubt. Yet, at the same time, it is a miracle that came at great cost. At Israel's very inception, on the first night of the State of Israel's existence, bombs were dropped on Tel Aviv. Subsequently, in the ten years since it had come into being, the relationship of the State of Israel to world Jewry was like the relationship of a mother to her only son: saturated with trembling, fear, and insecurity. Insecurity because one is never sure if a passenger bus will be attacked. One is never certain if a small fishing vessel in the Gulf of Aqaba will not be fired upon. A mother whose son is stationed only a few miles from her home is never sure if he will not become the next victim of Arab snipers. Why is the suffering that has accompanied the entire history of the State of Israel necessary? Because the State of Israel involves holiness, and holiness only exists if man, through sacrifice, becomes a partner with God. The paradigm of this partnership is the mitzvah of circumcision, to which the prophet refers: "through your blood shall you live." (Ezekiel 16:6) The blood and the suffering allow us to merit the continued existence of Medinat Yisrael. We experience this uncertain period in our history because our very insecurity is a sign that Hashem indeed desires the State of Israel. If He did not, the birth and the subsequent building of the State would have proceeded smoothly. Jewish history is on a zig-zag trajectory. Abraham was repeatedly promised a child by God, and yet had to wait many long years Isaac's birth, ultimately to be commanded to sacrifice him.

d. The Mitzvah of Living in Israel

To assert that the Land of Israel is central to Halakhah is as obvious as stating that the Torah contains 613 commandments. Even if one were to maintain Maimonides' opinion, that Yishuv Haaretz is not one of the 613 Mitzvot, this does not render it less important. For example, Nacmanides does not count the first commandment "I am the Lord your God Who took you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage" as one of the 613 commandments, but he would never deny that it constitutes a central tenet of Judaism. Omission of a tenet from the list of Mitzvot does not imply anything regarding its centrality to Judaism. I have read opinions that living outside Israel was a better option for Orthodox Jews than living in Israel, because while Israel was allegedly rife with heretics, outside Israel one could create insular ghettos and eliminate such outside influences. However, with all the ghettos that Jews have created, from Brooklyn to Johannesburg to Gateshead, none was holier than the Levite camp during the Israelites' forty-year desert sojourn, the camp where Moses himself lived. Yet, despite the

sanctity of this encampment, Moses, the most preeminent of prophets, begged God: Please allow me to pass and see the Land, the good mountain, and Lebanon. (Deuteronomy 3:25) Moses knew that even the holiness of the Levite camp itself did not approach that of the Land of Israel. Furthermore, one cannot naively argue that the mitzvah of living in Israel can somehow be separated from the exercise of political sovereignty there. Nachmanides explicitly asserts that both aspects are integral to the mitzvah: "that we are commanded to inherit the land that God gave to our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that we should not leave it in the hands of the nations, or leave it desolate." The Biblical phrase from which the mitzvah is derived "And you shall inherit the land and settle in it" (Numbers 33:53), contains dual imperatives; 'settle' means colonization of the land, while 'inherit' means governing and controlling the land. The Mitzvah of settling the land is not limited to colonization. It requires conquering and governing it as well- maintaining political power and sovereignty. Both aspects of the mitzvah are fulfilled through the State of Israel. However, even if one were to deny a political aspect to the Mitzvah and maintain that the Mitzvah only refers to colonization, today this distinction is entirely moot. Although in Nachmanides' time it may have been feasible to settle in the Land of Israel without conquering it, none of the contenders for sovereignty of the Land, whether Nasser or the British government, would allow such colonization of Israel by the Jews. If the Jews did not exercise political power in the Land of Israel, they could not settle there either.

e. Heeding the Call by Dina Blank

Our young heroes, knowingly or not, consciously or otherwise, embraced the age-old Jewish values of hard work, self-reliance, and resolve, or what John Kotter from the Harvard Business School calls a "sense of urgency." These guidelines for Jewish living are at the core of our faith and were promoted by Chazal in Pirkei Avot when they taught:

הוא היה אומר: אם אין אני לי מי לי, וכשאני לעצמי מה אני, ואם לא עכשיו אימתי

היום קצר והמלאכה מרובה והפועלים עצלים והשכר הרבה ובעל הבית דוחק

This focus on hard work (המלאכה מרובה) and urgency (אם לא עכשיו אימתי) is fundamental to Torah observance and learning. Similarly, the Piaseczner Rav, Rav Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, instructs us in Chovat Hatalmidim:

, כי ה' יתברך לא נתן לנו עבודה למעלה מכוחותינו ויכליתנו, רק שצריכים להתאמץ ולהתחזק בה, לא

לעבוד בלבד בשעה שבאה עבודה לידו, רק להיות איש עובד בעצם ולא מתרפה

In this passage, Rav Shapira enjoins the youth, the Talmidim, to embrace the notion of hard work and to recognize that all precious things in life require the investment of time and labor. While this is certainly true in the world of Torah learning, it is equally true in the world of Jewish communal life. And though achievements in Torah and in community development do not come easily, one does not have the luxury of abdicating responsibility. Instead, the Piaseczner insists that while our Torah obligations require great effort and hard work, God did not assign us

responsibilities beyond our capacity to perform. As Chazal implied in the famous Midrash regarding the outstretched arm of Paroh's daughter as she grabbed for Moshe, many things that seem out of reach are actually within our grasp if one makes the effort. These values help understand what roused our young Jewish heroes of the twentieth century. They were swept up by a sense of urgency, an understanding that no one else would rise to the challenge. More importantly, perhaps, they understood that simply hoping, yearning, and wishing from the sidelines would no longer be sufficient. To achieve statehood, they needed to act. And so they did. On Yom Haatzmaut, we celebrate them as much as we celebrate these timeless Jewish values, values that have motivated Jews throughout history.

f. The language of the Jew

In 1965, in an inspiring Sukkot morning sermon, Rabbi Norman Lamm exhorted his Jewish Center congregants to adopt these principles of action, toil, and commitment:

"...Without labor and struggle, without exertion of the intellect and long hours of patient plodding, one can neither master the intricacies of any profession, nor can achieve great and satisfying success in any business. It is true about children — if we over-protect them, if we train them to accept easy triumphs, the shortcuts to success, then they will grow up without backbones, nurtured on the infantile conception that a wishbone is enough. Such people can never fly, they can only flutter. Their vision never soars, their dreams remain myopic, their conceptions petty.... To be a Jew means never to look only for the easy way. It means never to sacrifice conviction for convenience, although convenience in and of itself is no sin. It means always to search for the road of the greatest meaning and duty. Rabbi Israel Salanter, the great founder of the Musar, put it this way: 'I have never asked myself if I can do something, only if I ought to. And if I ought to, then I always knew that I would be able to.' This is the language of the Jew."

What Rabbi Lamm terms the "language of the Jew" is the message of Yom Haatzmaut. Herzl's "If you will it, it is no dream" was piggy-backing on centuries of Jewish wisdom and deep-rooted tradition.

2. Spirituality

a. New Mossad chief: Israel still needs God's help

In synagogue Torah speech days after appointment, Yossi Cohen says Israel needs God now just as it did at its foundation. The Prime Minister's National Security Adviser Yossi Cohen, who on Monday was named as the next head of the Mossad, gave a particularly powerful speech at his synagogue on Saturday, noting how Israel was established with God's help and needs His help today just as much. Cohen does not himself wear a *kippah* but is what is known as a "traditional" Jew, meaning he generally observes the *mitzvot*, and on Shabbat attends his synagogue in Modi'in. "Without *siyata de'shamaya* ('Heavenly aid' in Aramaic - ed.) the state of Israel would not have been established," Cohen said in a Biblical exegesis at the synagogue this Shabbat, reports *Walla* on Saturday night. "That was true then - and today too, we need *siyata*

de'shamaya." The synagogue was filled with people who, in addition to taking part in the Shabbat services, wanted to hear Cohen's words. In his speech made in honor of his appointment as Mossad chief, Cohen spoke about the weekly Torah portion *Miketz*, which recounts how Joseph became second only to Pharaoh in Egypt, how his brothers came down to him during the great famine, and their emotional reunion after Yosef tested them by accusing them of espionage. "We can see the importance in the strategy that the brothers took in their descent to Egypt," said the new Mossad head, emphasizing the importance of correct strategy alongside a good cover story and intelligence information. "Where there is no wise direction, a people falls; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety," concluded Cohen, quoting Proverbs 11:14, which was taken as the slogan of the Mossad. One of the community members later recounted that "everyone listened intently to his Biblical exegesis, he is a very impressive man. All the time he used hints to connect the weekly Torah portion with his position at the Mossad. It was very unique."

b. Israeli Defense Forces Celebrate Their Greatest Passover Seder Ever

This year, 480 Israeli Defense Force (IDF) lone soldiers participated in what is being called "The greatest Passover Seder in the IDF". This special Seder, sponsored by The Association of Well Being of Israeli Soldiers (AWIS), the *LIBI Fund*, and Canadian Zionist Cultural Association (CZCA) marks the 15th anniversary for such a massive undertaking. "Traditionally, Passover is the most family oriented Jewish holiday in the calendar year," stated Dr. John A.I. Grossman, Chairman of *LIBI USA*, to *Breaking Israel News*. "For lone soldiers who do not have family in Israel, orphans or those estranged from their families, sharing in a Passover Seder with other soldiers in similar circumstances brings a deep feeling of comradery and a sense that one can build a new family in the Holy Land." On Friday morning, before Passover set in, the soldiers were treated to a festive welcoming ceremony at which every soldier received a special holiday gift. In attendance were the IDF Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Gadi Eizenkot, AWIS and *LIBI Fund* Chairperson, Major General (Res.), Yoram Yair YaYa and CZCA President in Canada, Mr. Wilf Shiff. "These soldiers originate from 35 different countries around the globe in order to protect Israel and her people," continued Grossman. "We do all that we can to bring a warm holiday spirit to soldiers with no place else to go for the holiday."

The Givat Olga dining room was turned into a luxurious banquet hall through festive decorations. In the spirit of Passover, six *Afikomans* (matzah set aside to be eaten when completing the reading of the Passover Haggadah story) were hidden in the hall for soldiers to find. The seder was conducted in full accordance with Jewish Biblical law under the leadership

of Personnel Directorate Rabbi, Major Asher Molad. Joining the event will be the Head of IDF Personnel Directorate, Major General Hagay Topolansky, AWIS CEO, General (Res.) Ilan Tal, and other senior commanders.

c. All together - 93% of Israeli Jews to join in Pesach seder

The Passover Seder, the retelling of the story of the exodus from Egypt and accompanying festive holiday meal, remains enormously popular in Israel – even among irreligious Jews. According to a Pew Research Center study released last month, 93% of Israeli Jews are likely to participate in a Seder this Friday evening, the first night of the Passover holiday. Passover remains one of the most widely observed Jewish traditions, with an overwhelming majority of even secular Jews participating in a Seder. According to the Pew study, 87% of secular Jews attended a Seder in 2015, compared to 97% of traditional Jews, 99% of religious Jews, and 100% of Haredim. An in depth look at the survey reveals that non-observance of Passover was highest among recent Russian immigrants. Among those living in households where the primary language is Russian, only 70% attended a Seder in 2015. By contrast, among those living in Hebrew-speaking homes, 95% participated in a Seder.

d. Second generation Russian immigrants returning to religion

Immigrants from the former Soviet Union living in Israel are overwhelmingly secular, notes a new Pew Research Center poll, but their children are increasingly embracing religion. A new Pew study released on Wednesday reaffirmed what has become common knowledge in Israel – that immigrants from Russia and other ex-Soviet states are far more likely to be secular than other Israelis. While 49% of Israeli Jews as a whole identified as secular, 81% of immigrants from the former USSR identified as such. According to the study, while 36% of Israeli Jews believe the government should actively promote Judaism, only 12% of Jews from the former Soviet Union agreed. Similarly, while 29% of all Israeli Jews favor the establishment of Jewish traditional law as the basis of the State of Israel, only 8% of FSU Jews concur. In terms of personal religiosity, a similar pattern can be seen. While 77% of all Israeli Jews believe in God, only 55% of FSU Jews do. Compared to 63% of all Israeli Jews who keep kosher at home, only 24% of Jews from the ex-Soviet Union do. Israeli Jews as a whole are more than twice as likely to light Shabbat candles and Hannukah candles, and nearly three times as likely to keep kosher outside of their home. Second-generation FSU immigrants, however, are far more likely than their parents to be actively connected to religion. A full 70% believe in God, 15 points higher than their parent's generation and only 7 points less than Israeli Jews as a whole. Children of FSU immigrants are also almost as likely as Israel Jews as a whole to keep kosher at home, or to light Hannukah or Shabbat candles. Compared to 81% of FSU immigrants who identified as secular, only 60% of second-generation FSU immigrants viewed themselves as secular

e. Daat Torah R. Aviner: The Satmar Rebbe is Visiting Israel!

Question: The Satmar Rebbe arrived in Israel for a five-day visit. Is it obligatory to go and greet him? **Answer:** A person is not obligated to greet every single Torah scholar, especially since – Baruch Hashem – there are so many Torah scholars today. A person is only obligated to greet his Rabbi, i.e. "Rav Muvhak" - the Rabbi from whom he has gained the majority of his knowledge. Additionally, even if a Rabbi is not his main teacher, but is the "Gadol Ha-Dor", he is considered one's "Rav Muvhak." Therefore, if the Satmar Rebbe is one's "Rav Muvhak," he is obligated to go and greet him, but if he is not, one is not obligated, although it is certainly permissible.

Rav Yoel Teitelbaum, the first Satmar Rebbe, made extremely harsh statements. Our Rabbi, Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook, never scorned or denigrated him even though their stances were diametrically opposed. Our Rabbi once heard a severe ruling in the name of the Satmar Rebbe, and all he said was: "This is not correct." Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah also admonished students who expressed a lack of respect towards the Satmar Rebbe, and would not allow them to continue to speak. Once Ha-Gaon Rav Moshe Feinstein issued a ruling that in pressing situations it is permissible to be lenient in a regarding the height of a mechitzah between men and women in a shul,. The Satmar Rebbe came out against him. Our Rabbi said: "It is known that our paths are separate and different, but in this issue he (the Satmar Rebbe) is correct." Even though they were polar opposites regarding the Redemption of Israel and Klal Yisrael, our Rabbi never said one negative word against him.

Reciting the Prayer for the State of Israel

Q: Should we recite the Prayer for the State of Israel when the State is acting improperly. After all, it says, "And send Your light and truth to its leaders, ministers and counselor and provide them with good counsel before You," and they are not demonstrating the light, truth or good counsel!

A: If the leader, ministers and counselors are following an improper path we should recite the Prayer of the State of Israel twice! They need more illumination and more good counsel, since they are currently the leaders of the State. Not reciting the Prayer for the State of Israel does not lead to a change of leadership. It is similar to flying in an airplane that is not flying well. The people investigate, and it turns out that the pilot does not know how to fly. What do you suggest, sitting next to him, insulting and cursing him? The plane will then almost certainly crash. On the contrary, we should encourage him to do the best he can. He is the pilot. There is no choice. Whether our current leaders are suited to their positions or not, we must pray that they perform their jobs the best way possible.

Standing for the Prayer for the State after the Expulsion from Gush Katif

Q: Is there an obligation to stand for the Prayer for the State of Israel, especially after the Expulsion from Gush Katif?

A: There is no source regarding this matter since it is a new prayer. One can stand or sit, it is unimportant. It does not strengthen the State if one stands, and it does not weaken the State if one sits. Each place should act as it desires. The prayer is not connected to the Expulsion from Gush Katif in any way. Even before the Expulsion there were problems: violations of Shabbat, a problematic system of justice, etc... If the Government is acting inappropriately we should recite this prayer twice. If someone is sick, we pray for him. If he becomes sicker, we pray more. Maran (our revered teacher) Ha-Rav Kook wrote that our Nation is sick, but it will heal. Whether standing or sitting, we must pray for its recovery. Fortunate is the Nation that loves to argue in Shul regarding proper practice instead of arguing over money, riches, glory, etc...

f. Rav Kook's Approach to Zionism

How the iconic first Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Israel approached secular Zionism.

From Rabbi Chanan Morrison

Historical Precedents

Rav Kook noted that our generation is not the first to experience a return to the land of Israel comprised primarily of Jews lax in religious observance. When Ezra led the return to *Eretz Yisrael* in the beginning of the Second Temple Period, many of the Jewish pioneers who joined him were Sabbath-desecrators and worse; and yet this period witnessed the rebuilding of the Temple and tremendous advances in Torah scholarship.

Centuries later, during the corrupt reign of Herod, the nation suffered from a cruel king, far removed from the ideal Jewish leader. The irony of the holy Temple built by Herod, a brutal and paranoid despot, is even greater than the current phenomenon of the Holy Land being resettled by secular pioneers. The actual construction, Rav Kook wrote, may be carried by those who fail to penetrate the profound secrets of the righteous. And not just the stonemasons; they may even be the ones orchestrating the construction. Yet this does not sully the innate purity of the lofty objective.

The Positive Influence of *Eretz Yisrael*

Rav Kook suggested that we need not be overly concerned about the religious level of the pioneers, since the Land on its own will determine who is deserving of living in it. "There is no need to check the level of *kashrut* of those who come, for the Land will vomit out the true chaff; and all those remaining shall be called holy (Isaiah 4:3). This is similar to how we do not separate food from its waste elements before we eat it, but leave this [separation] process to life's natural functions." Furthermore, the merit of *Eretz Yisrael* helps even the unworthy: "The merit of the Land even protects the wicked. Even a gentile maidservant in the land of Israel is promised a portion in the World to Come (*Ketubot* 111a). Clearly the Talmud is not speaking of a righteous maidservant, who would anyway merit the World to Come... Rather it is referring to an ordinary maidservant, with sordid deeds and coarse traits. Nonetheless, the merit of living in the land of Israel enables her to gain a portion in the World to Come....

"All the more so [regarding the secular Zionists, since] one may find in every Jew, even the most unworthy, precious gems of good deeds and positive traits. Certainly the land of Israel helps elevate and sanctify them. And if this is not evident in them, it will become so in their descendants."

Sacred Roots Despite the current secular nature of Zionism, the return to *Eretz Yisrael* in recent times was first promoted by great *tzaddikim* - starting with the disciples of the Gaon of Vilna and the Baal Shem Tov - and Zionism derives its spiritual nourishment from these holy roots.

"[It was] the lofty righteous of previous generations who ignited a holy inner fire, a burning love for the holiness of *Eretz Yisrael* in the hearts of God's people. Due to their efforts, individuals

gathered in the desolate land, until significant areas became a garden of Eden, and a large and important community of the entire people of Israel has settled in our holy land....

"Recently, however, the pious and great scholars have gradually abandoned the enterprise of settling the Holy Land.... This holy work has been appropriated by those lacking in [Torah] knowledge and good deeds.... Nonetheless, we see that the [secularists'] dedication in deed and action is nourished from the initial efforts of true *tzaddikim*, who kindled the holy desire to rebuild the Holy Land and return our exiles there."

To summarize the salient points in Rav Kook's views on Zionism:

- There are historical precedents for significant Jewish movements in which irreligious Jews played a major role.

- The special merits of *Eretz Yisrael* will elevate those who participate in its settlement and rebuilding.

- The original roots of Zionism are holy, going back to the disciples of the Gaon of Vilna and the Baal Shem Tov. Zionism must be returned to these authentic holy roots.

- The success of secular Zionism is due to its non-sectarian concern for the entire Jewish people, and it serves as a necessary correction for the imbalances caused by centuries of statelessness.

3. ZAHAL

a. **Spike in IDF Volunteers in 2014 Marked rise in volunteers from abroad since 2011; 25% are Americans.**

More and more young adults are flocking to Israel to join the IDF, *Haaretz* reports Wednesday, with a marked increase in 2014. Currently, some 3,484 soldiers have volunteered from more than 70 countries, according to the daily, up from 3,138 since 2011. Of those, 2,700 are new immigrants; 284 are non-citizens volunteering as part of the army's Machal program. Immigration organization Nefesh B'Nefesh (NBN) stated that the influx of "lone soldiers" has increased from 5-10% each year since the launch of the Lone Soldier program - a framework for volunteers from abroad with special benefits - and a senior officer stated that the past year has seen an unprecedented rise in volunteer soldiers. A full 25% of volunteer soldiers serving today are American, according to the report, followed by Russians (16%) and Ukrainian (13%). 10% of volunteer soldiers are French; 4%, Ethiopian; and Belarusians, British, and Canadian soldiers comprise 9% total (3% each). 23% of volunteer soldiers hail from other countries, including China, India, Iran, and several countries in Europe. Demographically, 70% of volunteers are men, versus just 30% who are women. 57% are combat soldiers (31% in active combat, 26% serving in support roles); 43% are in non-combat positions. The senior officer attributes the rise in volunteers to word-of-mouth, as well as Israel's increasing isolation around the world.

b. **'It's Just Amazing, the Whole IDF is in Nepal'**

New video documents IDF evacuating stranded Israeli tourists to field hospital, and efforts there to save wounded Nepalese. The IDF has uploaded a new video giving a first-hand view of its massive efforts in Nepal to locate and evacuate stranded Israeli tourists to its field hospital outside of Kathmandu for treatment prior to returning to Israel, as well as its efforts at the hospital to treat Nepalese wounded by the earthquake disaster last Saturday. At the start of the video an IDF team is seen asking a European tourist at a tent camp if she had seen any Israelis, to which she answered she had seen two Israeli boys and one girl. "Your parents were all in touch with us," a soldier is seen telling the Israeli tourists after they were located, before one flashes his cell phone at him - evidently with correspondence with his parents on it, at which point the soldier affectionately grabs him in a headlock before planting a kiss on the top of his head. Then another Israel tourist is seen calling home on his cell phone, saying, "how are you all, okay? Mom? You pressed a button. The army has evacuated us now, and we're on our way to Kathmandu on a bus with guys here in (IDF) uniforms, it's just amazing. It's crazy what's happening here. The whole army is here." "Everything is okay, they said they would take care of it, they said they would take care of me," he added, apparently talking about his transport back to Israel. "I miss you guys and love you, and there's a high chance I'll be getting home now." In the bus to the field hospital the Israeli tourists are seen sitting together, with one recalling, "we got there and sat down, the quake started and we ran the rest of the path, basically we avoided the rocks that fell."

Upon arriving at the field hospital, IDF doctors can be seen telling the tourists they will perform a "general check just to make sure everything's okay," before taking their pulses and temperatures. Captain Guy Walkovich, commander of the rescue unit, said, "we received a mission to bring the Israelis home 24 hours ago from Trisuli. "We succeeded in bringing the Israelis today safe and sound, they received medical treatment and an excellent reception here, and it's a great pride for us," added the captain. The video then proceeds to show the large-scale treatment being provided to Nepalese wounded in the disaster at the IDF field hospital, with victims of the quake being flown in by Nepalese army helicopters. A sheet on the wall of the hospital was also shown, listing common expressions in Hebrew and Nepali, with the video ending showing the IDF team holding a morning flag raising ceremony while singing the Israeli national anthem Hatikva.

c. Israel's 'Iron Mole' Offers Technological Solution to Terror Tunnels, Boosting IDF Deterrence

Prime Minister Netanyahu on Monday announced a new technological breakthrough in Israel's effort to locate Hamas underground terror tunnels. Speaking after the announcement of the discovery of a terror tunnel reaching 90 feet into Israel from the Gaza Strip, Netanyahu boasted that the breakthrough had occurred only days earlier, making it a light-speed pace between pointing out the need for the technology, in August 2014, and the delivery. The new technology has been dubbed "Iron Dome for Tunnels," which JNi.media officially coined 'Iron Mole.' According to Yedioth Aharonoth Monday night, the tunnel location feature is based on

proprietary technologies developed in Israel's military industrial complex. It includes a series of sensors that send data back to a system that uses algorithms to examine it. Apparently, all of that allows the end-user to spot the underground tunnels accurately, no false readings. The speedy development cost all of \$60 million and no one else but Israel has it. Of course, where else but in Israel are there dedicated terrorists trying to dig across the border to kill innocent civilians? The question is, according to several Israeli analysts, will the realization that their ace in the hole (literally) is no more serve to deter the Hamas leadership from their ceaseless scheming against Israel, or will it drive them to yet another summer of mad rocket attacks on Israeli civilian centers, resulting in even more Arab death and destruction. The IDF believes—or hopes—that the lesson of 2014 is still fresh in Hamas's mind. But it should be noted that Hamas and Hezbollah do not attack because they imagine they could win a direct confrontation with Israel — they attack for internal reasons—tighten the social ropes—and for external ones—elicit sympathy and financial support from the Arab world.

Meanwhile, the IDF is investing in finding an effective, permanent solution to the tunnels problem. It will include an upper fence above ground, a lower fence underground, and ongoing operations along the border with Gaza. The IDF has also been training in raiding tunnels and confronting Hamas diggers or fighters. At any given time, the IDF has about 100 engineering machines along the border.

d. Tunnel cave-in #10: Is Israel behind it?

A man described as a Hamas “field commander” died Monday in a “tunnel accident” in Gaza, the terrorist group said in a statement.

The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' armed wing, said that Abd al-Salah al-Butnaji died while he was working in a tunnel in Gaza. Al-Butnaji, 36, was from the al-Shejaiya neighborhood of Gaza City, the terror group added.

On Saturday, Gaza's civil defense found the bodies of two Arab workers in a tunnel which had been flooded by Egypt three days earlier.

The tunnel collapse is the tenth in recent weeks, and while it is generally believed that this year's unusually heavy rainfall is the main reason for the collapses, there is growing speculation that an Israeli secret anti-tunnel weapon is at work underground.

“While Israel struggles to prevent the construction material it is allowing into Gaza from ending up in Hamas tunnels, it is developing a secret military weapon designed to eradicate the problem,” wrote *Foreign Policy* last week.

The report cited intelligence officials who said Israeli engineers are working tirelessly to develop what's being called the "Underground Iron Dome" — a system that would detect and destroy Hamas's tunnels.

The United States has already appropriated \$40 million in the 2016 financial year, in order "to establish anti-tunnel capabilities to detect, map, and neutralize underground tunnels that threaten the US or Israel," said US Defense Department spokesman Christopher Sherwood, according to the report. Most of the work in 2016 will be done in Israel, Sherwood added, but the US will "receive prototypes, access to test sites, and the rights to any intellectual property."

The Israeli companies working to develop the new anti-tunnel mechanism include Elbit Systems and Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, the same company that developed the Iron Dome rocket defense system that was put to effective use during the 2014 Gaza operation. "Both companies declined to provide any details due to security reasons, as did the IDF and other Israeli officials, who fear that such information could play into Hamas's hands," wrote *Foreign Policy*, but anonymous intelligence sources said that the system "involves seismic sensors that can monitor underground vibrations."

Yaakov Amidror, a former national security advisor to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and former head of Israel's National Security Council, told *FP* the confidential new system is not yet operational, but is "in a testing mode."

Ismail Haniyeh, the senior Hamas official in Gaza, told Gazans at Friday prayers in February that Hamas had "discovered an underground vehicle on which were installed cameras and sensors to monitor tunnels and fighters." Haniyeh claimed the find gave his movement an "advantage."

When Major General Yoav Mordechai, the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), was asked by the *Ma'an* news agency in February whether Israel had a hand in the collapse of the tunnels, he evaded a direct answer and only said, "God knows."

e. New in IDF: Tactical Kamikaze Drones

The new weapon loiters over target then attacks it like a missile, and is intended for use at the tactical level. After years of development, UVision Air Ltd. of Israel has unveiled its new weapon system: drones capable of loitering over a target and attacking it like a missile, reports *Israel Defense*. While "Kamikaze" drones, like the IAI's Harop, have existed on the battlefield for at least ten years, thus far they were intended primarily for strikes against strategic targets — that is, important targets, deep in enemy territory. The new weapon system series is intended for use at the tactical level as well, such as enemy ships, tanks, missile systems, etc. The loitering attack munition, designated "Hero," has been developed in several versions, to be employed in accordance to the size of the target and the way in which the munition is to be deployed. The smaller attack munition weighs just 3 kg, writes *Israel Defense*. The Micro-Stamp payload by Controp of Israel, weighing 300 grams only, is fitted to the head of the UAV. It enables daytime and nighttime video surveillance, transmitting images to operators on the ground. The UAV may also be used for surveillance and intelligence collection missions. All Hero strike missions can be

aborted until the very last moment, and the UAV can be retrieved and then land by means of a parachute.

f. President honors legendary 90-year-old Mossad agent

President Reuven Rivlin and Mossad Head Yossi Cohen honored legendary Mossad agent Avraham Barzilai Wednesday at the President's Residence and awarded him a Lifetime Achievement Prize. Because of health problems, Barzilai – who is 90 – could not make it to the traditional ceremony held December 29 at the President's Residence, in which Mossad employees received certificates of excellence. Therefore, a smaller-scale ceremony was held just for him. Barzilai has been serving the nation's security for over 60 years. He was recruited to the Mossad in 1955 and served as a warrior on numerous missions, including Mossad operations that secretly brought about 80,000 Jews to Israel from Arab countries. He officially retired in 1995, but never really quit. Since retiring, he has volunteered in the organization in various capacities. In the last few years, Barzilai has been instructing young recruits to the Mossad and sharing his wisdom and experience with them.

After the president thanked him, Barzilai said: "You can probably imagine how much this occasion moves me and my family. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the great honor you bestowed upon me today. It is a duty and a right to mention my wife's extraordinary contribution throughout the years of my service. We celebrated 61 years of marriage this year – one year more than my years of service in the Mossad. Throughout the service she held up the homefront, she raised our daughters wonderfully, on her own. Quite a few times she was with me on missions. Mr. President – there is not enough time to tell about my wife's part, and I feel that this honor is both of ours and she shares it with me equally."

g. Former Mossad chief Meir Dagan passes away

Former Mossad Director Meir Dagan passed away on Thursday, following a years-long battle with cancer. He was 71 years old. Dagan, who was first appointed to the Mossad by Ariel Sharon, served from 2002 to 2011, undertaking some of the agency's most ambitious anti-terror operations. Dagan was widely believed to be responsible for numerous assassinations of Hamas and Hezbollah terrorists abroad, earning him a reputation as "superman" in the Arab world. Born at the end of World War II to Jewish refugees who had narrowly escaped the Holocaust, Dagan was a decorated soldier who served with distinction and was wounded multiple times in the line of duty. First enlisting in 1963, Dagan fought on the southern front in the 1967 Six Day War, was a member of an elite commando unit in the early 1970s, and was a unit commander involved in the crossing of the Suez Canal during the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Dagan later served as a commander in Lebanon in the 1980s, and continued his military service through the mid-1990s. Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu remembered Dagan as a "daring fighter and commander who greatly contributed to the security of the state in Israel's wars, at the [National Security Council] Counter-Terrorism Bureau and as Director of the Mossad."

"The photograph in which his grandfather is being humiliated by Nazi soldiers shortly before he was murdered in the Holocaust was always before his eyes. Meir was determined to ensure that the Jewish People would never be helpless and defenseless again and to this end he dedicated his life to building up the strength of the State of Israel. In the eight years in which he served as Director of the Mossad, he led the organization to daring and pioneering operations. A great soldier has passed away; may his memory be blessed."Late in his term as

Mossad Director, Dagan was involved in Israel's campaign to halt Iran's nuclear program, which included the assassination of Iranian nuclear scientists.

4. Chochma, Bina & Daat

a. 6 Israeli universities ranked among world's top 100

The 2016 QS rankings, which compared top universities in the world in 42 different areas of study, included six Israeli universities—Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv University, Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, Weizmann Institute of Science, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, and Bar-Ilan University. Published annually since 2011, the QS World University Rankings by Subject highlight the world's top-performing institutions in a broad spectrum of individual academic areas, such as in arts and humanities, engineering and technology, life sciences and medicine, and natural sciences. **Israeli universities had more places in the top 100 universities by subject—64—than all of the universities in the Middle East combined.**

Hebrew University was Israel's most-featured top 100 university, ranking three times in the 51-100 section for agriculture and forestry, history, and anthropology. Haifa-based Technion ranked twice in the top 100 for computer science and information systems as well as mathematics, Tel Aviv University ranked in the top 100 for anthropology, and the Weizmann Institute ranked high for biological sciences. The ranking system includes 800 universities from 70 countries, all of which are evaluated based on a combination of criteria - including the research output, reputation, student satisfaction, and teacher-to-student ratio. This is the second time in two months six Israeli universities have made a top 500 list for world academia. Last month, Hebrew University again topped the list in another ranking system: the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU).

b. Five Times More Israeli University Grads Than in 1990

New stats show over 75,000 Israelis achieved academic degrees in 2014, five times the number who graduated in 1990. Over 75,000 Israelis achieved academic degrees in 2014, five times the number who graduated in 1990, the Central Bureau of Statistics said Tuesday. The degrees were given at Israeli universities, colleges, and academic training centers. Of the total, an impressive 42,000 – 55.9% - received their degrees from universities, while 24,700, or 32.9%, were granted degrees from colleges, which operate three and four year programs under the auspices of universities. Two thirds of the degrees granted in 2014, the CBS numbers show, were first degrees such as Bachelor of the Arts, with about 51% of those granted in the humanities or social sciences. Of those, about a quarter were in architecture and in psychology/sociology, while a fifth were in management studies. About 60% of the degrees were granted to women, the statistics show. Of the 21,800 graduate degrees granted, some 60% were in business and management, with most of the rest in the social sciences. The CBS statistics showed that 1,500 Israeli graduates went on to doctorates and other third degrees, three times the number of those who achieved those degrees in 1990. About one tenth of the overall graduates were Israeli Arabs, with about 20% of them attending college programs. Among Arabs, the most popular fields were medical related, including nursing and other allied industries. In addition, Arabs were a large presence in pharmaceutical training programs as well.

5. **Kibbutz Galiyoth** *"I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out."* (Ezekiel 20:34)

- a. **Guy Bechor:** "What a disaster for those foreign associations, the national media and the demographic computers! We are in the midst of a wave of immigration from France, 400 immigrants from France every week! In total the number of Olim July and August will rise to over 3,000 precious immigrants including young families with small children. With nearly 10,000 immigrants from France and more than 15,000 immigrants from Ukraine and Russia, who are expected in 2015, the number of immigrants this year will climb to 35,000! This is double the usual number! A small city every year! And aliyah will continue to broaden and intensify. With each Oleh our strength grows!"

- b. **Interior Minister Personally Greets New Bnei Menashe Olim**

Some 100 Bnei Menashe immigrants landed in Ben Gurion Thursday, where they were welcomed by Interior Minister Silvan Shalom. Yet another group of "lost Jews," the Bnei Menashe, arrived in Israel Thursday morning, marking the third time this month Israel has conducted an airlift of the group's members, who hail from the northeastern Indian state Manipur, which borders Burma and Bangladesh. Some 100 members of the group arrived at Ben Gurion on Thursday, joining 78 others who arrived last week – a group that included the 3,000th Bnei Menashe to come to Israel – as well as another contingent that arrived at the beginning of June, numbering 50. Thursday's group was met personally by Interior Minister Silvan Shalom, who greeted them and hailed their decision to come to Israel. "I am so happy to welcome you as new immigrants," said Shalom. "This is where all Jews belong, and I will do my best to bring all Jews from the Diaspora to Israel." The Bnei Menashe claim descent from the tribe of Menashe (or Manasseh), one of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel which were exiled by the Assyrian empire after the death of King Solomon more than 2,700 years ago. The immigrants were brought to Israel by Shavei Israel, which received permission from the Israeli government last October to bring 900 Bnei Menashe to the Jewish state by 2015. Currently, there are said to be about 7,000 members of the group remaining in India, many of whom are interested in coming to Israel. "The return of the Lost Tribe of Bnei Menashe to Zion after 2,700 years of exile is a modern-day miracle," said Shavei Israel chairman Michael Freund. "It is a testament to the determination and resolve of the people of Israel to come home again. At a time such as this, when the Jewish state finds itself under increasing pressure from the international community, it is comforting to see that G-d continues to gather His flock, bringing back those who were once deemed to be lost

- c. **In answer to Rabbi Kanievsky's call**, the Jews of France have begun to arrive in Israel in blessed droves. The impetus is certainly a reaction to increasing anti-Semitic and Islamic fueled violence across Europe. After the horrific terror attack at a Kosher market in Paris six months ago, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu urged French Jews to come home to Israel. His remarks drew criticism from some, however last week, in the wake of Ramadan violence in several countries including France, Zeev Elkin, the Israeli Minister of Immigration and Absorption, called on French Jews to make Aliyah, echoing his leader's words. "Come home! Anti-Semitism is growing, terrorism is on the rise and the sickly ISIS activists carry out murders in the light of day. We are prepared to accept the Jews of France with open arms," he said. Last year, 7,000 French Jews made aliyah to

Israel, making it the number one country of origin for new immigrants. The Jewish Agency and the Ministry for Aliyah and Immigrant Absorption are expecting more than 3,000 French Jews to immigrate to Israel this summer alone, many of them families with children who want to arrive and integrate before the beginning of the school year.

- d. **Aliyah from China: Jewish history in the making** *Arutz Sheva* was on hand late Monday morning to greet five women from the ancient Chinese Jewish community of Kaifeng, as they made Aliyah to Israel and returned to their homeland after thousands of years of exile. The five women, Gao Yichen ("Weiwei"), Yue Ting, Li Jing, Li Yuan, and Li Chengjin ("Lulu"), were aided by the Shavei Israel organization in coming home, and arrived after several years of intensive Jewish study and Hebrew study in Kaifeng. "Weiwei" told *Arutz Sheva* that she learned of her Jewish identity when she was still a child, at around the age of seven, while Li Yuan said her father and grandfather taught her that "we need to come back to Israel." According to "Weiwei," it felt like "magic" to arrive in Israel. While at Ben-Gurion International Airport to greet the five, Shavei Israel Chairman Michael Freund emphasized that "what we're seeing here today is Jewish history in the making." He noted the Kaifeng Jewish community existed from about the 8th or 9th century CE, but a process of intense assimilation about 200 years ago signaled the end of the community. However, today there are about 1,000 people in Kaifeng "who are identifiable as descendants of the Jewish community via family trees," and who are largely returning to their Jewish roots. Their Jewish ancestors were Sephardic Jews who came to China from Iraq or Persia, traveling along the Silk Route. Freund cited the Book of Isaiah (49:12) where God speaks about the ingathering of the exiles, and noted the verse concludes by saying: "and these from the land of the *Sinim*," a term which in Hebrew means the Chinese. He hailed the Aliyah of the five women as a fulfillment of the prophecy.

He explained to the new immigrants that he was going to lead them to the Western Wall (Kotel) to thank God for being able to fulfill the commandment of settling the land of Israel, and also noted on the need to be thankful for the return of Jewish sovereignty. Freund recently managed to get permission for them to come to Jerusalem to prepare for their formal conversion, so as to clarify their status and learn more about their tradition. After arriving in Israel, the five women will continue their Jewish studies at Jerusalem's Midreshet Nishmat – The Jeanie Schottenstein Center For Advanced Torah Study For Women, with the support of Shavei Israel, which will also cover their living expenses and support them as they prepare to undergo formal conversion by Israel's Chief Rabbinate. After completing the conversion process, they will receive Israeli citizenship. The last time Shavei Israel managed to bring Chinese Jews from Kaifeng on Aliyah was in October 2009, when seven young men from the community arrived. A total of 19 members of the Kaifeng Jewish community have been brought on Aliyah by the group, which continues to fight through bureaucracy to obtain the required permits for more to come.

e. **Watch: PM Netanyahu meets new Olim from Yemen**

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu met on Monday with new Olim who arrived on Sunday from Yemen in a secret mission. Israel spirited 19 Jews out of war-torn Yemen in a "covert operation" to rescue some of the last remnants of one of the world's most ancient Jewish

communities, officials said Monday, according to *AFP*. The operation transporting them to Israel almost brings to an end the presence of the Jewish community in Yemen, which once numbered around 60,000 people and dates back some 2,000 years. Only 50 or so Jews now remain and have chosen to stay in the war-ravaged Arabian Peninsula country, according to the Jewish Agency, responsible for immigration to Israel. Most of them - around 40 - live in a protected compound adjacent to the US embassy in Sanaa. "Nineteen individuals arrived in Israel in recent days, including 14 from the town of Raydah and a family of five from Sanaa," the agency said in a statement. "The group from Raydah included the community's rabbi, who brought a Torah scroll believed to be between 500 and 600 years old." Rabbi Salman Dahari, red-eyed and looking exhausted after his travels, told reporters the scroll had been passed down in his family. Prime Minister Netanyahu viewed the scroll with some of the new olim. The Prime Minister and one of the children read from the Torah scroll together. "Welcome to Jerusalem, to the Land of Israel. I am very excited to see you here. It is moving that you know to read from the Torah. This is the basis. For many years we have thought about bringing you and with G-d's help it is over," Netanyahu said. The Olim thanked the Prime Minister warmly and blessed him for bringing them to Israel.

6. Israel & the Nations

a. מתחיל בגנות Amid terror wave, UN adopts six resolutions - all anti-Israel

'Surreal'? Israel should hand Golan Heights to Assad regime, and has no right to sovereignty in Jerusalem, according to General Assembly. In a move dubbed "surreal" by a leading UN watchdog, and as a campaign of daily Palestinian terrorist attacks continues to target Israelis, the United Nations General Assembly on Tuesday adopted six resolutions - all of which bar none condemned Israel. Not a single mention was made of the Palestinian attacks, which have left 22 Israelis dead and hundreds wounded, nor did any other countries - even serial human rights violators such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Russia and others - receive any of the General Assembly's attention. More disturbingly still, five of the the UNGA resolutions were sponsored by the Palestinian Authority, while the sixth was sponsored by none other than Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria. "Surreal barely captures the scene: the world is under assault by terrorists killing in the name of Islam and martyrhood — as Palestinians did this week while stabbing Israeli Jews — and the UN's response is to reflexively condemn Israel in six separate resolutions, all of which are one-sided," said Hillel Neuer, executive director of UN Watch, in response to the votes. One resolution condemned the Jewish state for retaining the Golan Heights, demanding Israel hand it over to the Syrian regime. The resolution's adoption - by 105 votes to 6, with 56 abstentions - elicited warm words of praise from Syria's UN Ambassador Bashar Jaafari, who expressed his "heartfelt appreciation and gratitude" to the UN for its Golan resolution, and without any sense of irony accused Israel of "occupation killing policies," "expansion," "racism," and "aggression." Another vote - which passed 153 to 7 - claimed that Israel has "no right" to "impose" its sovereignty over "the Holy City of Jerusalem." "It's astonishing," said Neuer. "At a time when the Syrian regime is massacring its own people, how can the UN call for more people to be subject to Assad's rule? The timing is morally galling and logically absurd." "What is also outrageous is that these resolutions claim to care about

Palestinians, yet the UN proves itself oblivious to the hundreds of Palestinians who continue to be slaughtered, maimed and expelled by Assad's forces," he continued.

Neuer accused the General Assembly of being hijacked by an "automatic majority" of fiercely anti-Israel dictatorships. "The farce at the General Assembly underscores a simple fact: the UN's automatic majority has no interest in truly helping Palestinians, nor in protecting anyone's human rights; the goal of these ritual, one-sided condemnations remains the scapegoating of Israel," he stated.

"The U.N.'s disproportionate assault against the Jewish state undermines the institutional credibility of what is supposed to be an impartial international body, and exposes the sores of politicization and selectivity that eat away at its founding mission, eroding the U.N. Charter promise of equal treatment to all nations large and small."

b. British Business Secretary Says Israel-UK Trade Ushering in 'Golden Era'

The British business and innovation secretary declared on Monday that the U.K. and Israel had entered a "golden era" for trade. "The past few years have been a golden era for Anglo-Israeli business," said British Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills Sajid Javid, during the annual British Israel Business Awards event. "Over the past 67 years, Israel has made business bloom in the barren desert," said Javid. "What really excites me are the possibilities for the years that lie ahead." The MP, self-described as a "proud British-born Muslim," and keynote speaker at Monday's event said he held Israel in high regard, and expected bilateral trade and services— currently valued at about \$6.9 billion, according to Javid — to continue to grow.

"Over the years I've taken a great interest in [Israel's] affairs. Because the values that have made Israel such a success are values that matter a great deal to me. I share Israel's love for freedom and democracy. I admire its tenacious determination when the odds are stacked against it," he said. "And, like millions of Israelis, I have a mother who's still waiting for me to get a proper job!" he quipped. A member of the British Conservative Party, Javid once told a meeting of the Conservative Friends of Israel that if he had to choose a country to live in in the Middle East, he would pick Israel as his "home."

c. International Power

Israel's Epic Rise to Global Powerhouse The State of Israel, and Jewish civilization around the world, are experiencing a historical Golden Age they must amplify, says historian.

Hand in hand with survival is expression: cultural expression. It has strategic implications as much as it does gauging the vibrancy of a society. One of those strategic tools the last century and a half, as employed by the Zionist movement with unprecedented success, is the reinvigoration of Hebrew. By utilizing a common thread across the Jewish world and fighting off suggestions to make German or Yiddish the founding language of a new Jewish state, the state's future became far more accessible to the wider Jewish civilization spread throughout its multilingual Diaspora. Hence, Israel was able to grow.

d. Jerusalem is Condé Nast's top Middle East hotel

Lavishly refurbished 226-room hotel places 7th on world list; building was previously the Palace Hotel, built by mufti of Jerusalem Haj Amin al-Husseini. Jerusalem's Waldorf Astoria Hotel took the top spot in the Middle East and seventh place worldwide in Condé Nast Traveler's annual Readers' Choice Awards. "More than 128,000 travelers took part in our 28th annual Readers' Choice Awards survey — the most in its history — submitting millions of ratings and tens of thousands of comments to help us create a list of winning favorites," Condé Nast Traveler said in announcing the rankings Tuesday. The world list was headed by the 16-room Singita Grumeti in the Serengeti, Tanzania, followed by The Lodge & Spa at Brush Creek Ranch, in Saratoga, Wyoming. Places 2-5 on the Middle East list were filled by hotels in the United Arab Emirates, with Jerusalem's Mamilla Hotel at 6, and the King David Hotel at 8. Also in the Middle East top 15 were the Inbal Jerusalem at 12, the Dan Tel Aviv at 13, the Hilton Tel Aviv at 14, and the David's Citadel Jerusalem at 15. "What an honor! We are thrilled," the Waldorf posted on its Facebook page. The 226-room Waldorf opened in March 2014, after a reported \$150 million refurbishment.

The former Palace Hotel in central Jerusalem, it had stood empty for years and then been used as a government ministry. The renovation and preservation of the building, which also features the city's largest ballroom, was carried out by architect Yehuda Feigin. The three-year project included extensive work to restore the building's blend of Roman, Moorish and Arab architecture. An Israeli TV report last year revealed that Israel's pre-state Haganah military force spied on the meetings of Britain's Peel Commission at the hotel. The Commission headed by Lord William Peel, which was set up to investigate the causes of unrest in Palestine and wound up recommending the partition of the Holy Land, was headquartered from late 1936 to mid-1937 in what was then the Palace. The hotel was built by the then mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, a fierce opponent of Jewish statehood who would later collaborate with Hitler's Nazi Germany. The Haganah planted listening devices in chandeliers in the hotel, the TV report said, exploiting the expertise of two of its officers who had been involved in the building's construction. The mufti has been in the headlines this week, after Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu alleged that Adolf Hitler only decided on the mass extermination of Europe's Jews after receiving input on the matter from al-Husseini.

e. Israel ranks 6th on list of world's healthiest countries

Bloomberg world health rankings place Israel after Singapore, Italy, Australia, Switzerland and Japan • U.K. ranks 21st and U.S. only 33rd • Indicators include life expectancy, smoking rates, immunization rates • Swaziland lowest-ranked of 145 countries. Israel is the only country in the Middle East to make the top 10 in the world health rankings.

Israel is the sixth-healthiest country in the world and is the only Middle Eastern country in the top 10, according to recent world health rankings by media outlet Bloomberg and reported in British newspaper The Independent. The rankings, which compiled data from the United Nations, the World Bank and the World Health Organization, placed Singapore in first place of 145 countries, with a "health grade" of 89.45 percent. Italy came in second, followed by Australia, Switzerland and Japan. After Israel came Spain, the Netherlands, Sweden and

Germany. The United Kingdom ranked 21st and the United States 33rd. The U.S. came in after Costa Rica (No. 24), Denmark (26), Cuba (28) and the United Arab Emirates (30). Russia was in 97th place and Iraq in 98th. In last place was Swaziland, with a health grade of only 0.26 percent. The rankings were determined using a points system for positive and negative indicators of health, including life expectancy from birth, smoking rates among young people, and immunization rates.

f. Netanyahu named one of world's most powerful people

Prime Minister Netanyahu jumps up five spots to land as world's 21st most powerful person in 2015, according to Forbes. Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu is one of the world's 25 most powerful people according to *Forbes Magazine's* annual ranking of the "global elite whose actions move the planet." The 66-year-old Netanyahu ranks at twenty-first on *Forbes'* 2015 edition of The World's Most Powerful People, who are defined as the "heads of state, financiers, philanthropists and entrepreneurs [who] truly run the world." Jumping up five spots from 2014, the Prime Minister's profile on the magazine's site also includes his age, residence, marital status and education. "His tiny Middle East country of eight million is dubbed 'startup nation,' and boasts the highest number of startups per capita in the world." At the top of *Forbes'* list is Russian President Vladimir Putin, followed by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and United States President Barack Obama.

g. Israel ranked as world's 8th most powerful country

US News & World Report places Israel in the world's top ten power-wise

Israel was ranked #25 in the world's "best countries" list of 2016, as compiled by *US News & World Report*. The single category in which Israel made the top ten was Power; Israel ranked #8 in that category, and the main reason was its military. The IDF received a score of 9.7 – similar to the US, and second only to Russia's military, which received a perfect 10. Additional criteria for power included political influence, for which the Jewish state received a score of 7.6, and strong international alliances, for which it got a 5.8. It fared less well in the field of economic influence (2.4) and leadership (2.7). According to the report, Israel is very highly developed in terms of life expectancy, education, per capita income and other human development index indicators, but it also has "one of the most unequal economies in the Western world, with significant gaps between the rich and poor." The top five "best countries" overall were Germany, Canada, Britain, the US and Sweden.

h. Netanyahu hails report ranking Israel 8th world power

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu on Monday celebrated a recent report listing Israel as the 8th most powerful country in the world during a Likud faction meeting. "For a long time I've been telling you that we are witnesses to two trends - (one is) the front of de-legitimization of the state of Israel, and we are fighting it. Another front is the strengthening of the alliances of the state of Israel," said Netanyahu. He noted that today he met with the Egyptian ambassador, as well as with African ambassadors "to strengthen the union between the countries of Africa and Israel. He also noted that US Vice President Joe Biden is due to visit soon, adding, "we are strengthening ties with many world powers in Asia and Latin American countries, and that's what we're doing all the time, every day."

7. Economic Progress

a. Record Car Imports Show Strength of Israeli Economy, Say Experts

More cars were imported in the first four months of 2015 than in any four month period in Israel's history. One of the traditional indicators of the health of the Israeli economy is the level of auto imports – and for the first four months of 2015, a new import record was set. During the first four months of the year, 97,657 – the most ever for a four month period – were imported into Israel, and 7.6% more than during the same period last year. A total of 17,647 vehicles were imported in April alone – 3.7% more than the same month a year earlier. The number was even more remarkable, economists said, because showrooms were closed for at least five extra days in April 2015 than in April 2013, because of the preponderance of holidays and days off during the month, including Passover, Memorial Day, and Israel Independence Day. Hyundais are still the best-selling cars in Israel, with 12,208 vehicles sold, an 8% increase over the January-April 2014 period for those cars. The biggest climber on the popularity ladder was Kia, which sold 11,450 vehicles in the first four months of this year – 30% more than last year. Toyota, which sold 11,231 vehicles, was in third place, followed by Mitsubishi with 6,035 vehicles sold

8. Charaidim-One of the Great & Holy Shevatim

a. **ZAKA chairman Yehuda Meshi Zahav** describes sparingly and with restraint the things he and thousands of his volunteers at ZAKA do. ZAKA is a *haredi* (ultra-Orthodox Jewish) organization that rescues, identifies, and traces Jewish disaster victims in Israel and all over the world under sometimes virtually impossible conditions. Such a mission requires love of one's fellow man, great empathy, faith, and a belief that good will come of it. It requires Zahav, a man with impeccable curly white *payess* (sidecurls). Two months ago, following a four-year struggle, ZAKA won recognition as an official UN consultant and observer. The eventual decision was taken unanimously by a special UN committee composed of representatives of 19 countries, including Iran, Sudan, Venezuela, Cuba, Turkey, China, Russia, Pakistan, Uruguay, Burundi, Greece, the US, and Israel. *"Globes": Did Iran and Pakistan also vote in favor?* Zahav: "There was no opposition, not even one country. We sent our representative, who met with every one of the committee members. The Iranians asked us if the report that ZAKA treats Jews first and Arabs later at terrorist events was true. We said that they hadn't read it correctly. We treat the victim first, and then the murderer, regardless of nationality. They realized this, and voted in favor."

About-face: From extremist haredi operations officer to national hero

Once upon a time, Zahav was the operations officer of the Eda Haredit extremist haredi group. He led demonstrations against Sabbath desecration, burnt Israeli flags, fasted and wore mourning clothes on Israel Independence Day, illegally removed dead bodies from the Abu Kabir

Forensic Institute to prevent autopsies from being performed and put mice into the pathologists' rooms, and sneaked onto archeological sites in order to prevent archeological excavations. Since then, however, Zahav has been honored by being asked to light a torch on Mt. Herzl while calling aloud in a clear voice, "For the glory of the state of Israel." His grandfather, Rabbi Yosef Sheinberger, the mythological leader of the Eda Haredit and a fanatical opponent of the founding of Israel, refused to speak with Zahav for the last four years of his life. For Sheinberger, what Zahav did was a desecration of God's name.

Zahav, 57, exudes authority and wisdom, youthfulness and sympathy. His family has lived in Jerusalem for 11 generations (before Herzl, he once said). He is the father of seven children and a grandfather. He lives in the Sanhedria neighborhood, and leads over 3,000 ZAKA volunteers. At the most difficult moments, when the volunteers can no longer bear the emotional and physical load, he is called to the scene - unless he is there already. When things are the most difficult, he stops, hugs, and begins to sing - one song after another, and then the work starts, with the tears. Sometimes, there is no choice, he has to dance, because that is the way to set in motion the superhuman capabilities of his volunteers. The organization is huge, spanning Israel and the globe, but it has barely 11 especially modestly paid positions. The organization's annual budget is NIS 18 million, mostly from donations consisting mainly of equipment. Under ZAKA rules, the state pays less than NIS 2 million, and only for proof of participation in work not done by the state institutions. "It's only from the power of faith. Nothing else can motivate a man to wake up at night, leave his family, see what we are exposed to, do this work, go home and be incapable for days of talking with his wife and laughing with his small children," Zahav says.

b. The sector's future: Work and study?

ZAKA is only part of what Zahav is doing. His attention is focused on two other goals. First of all, "We're getting ready. The demographic picture is known, and in a few years, we'll have to be the ones managing this business - the state. We have to educate our children accordingly, and send them for additional studies. Yes, yes, core curriculum, mathematics, English, world history, physics. We need children who can also take the lead in security. The Central Bureau of Statistics says that 50 years from now, there will be 30% haredim, so we have to make people professionals."

c. The second goal? "We want everyone to realize and know that the Second Temple was destroyed because they fought about values and laws. It seemed to them a thousand times more important than anything involving life itself. So what happened in the end? Everything fell apart from inside. We lost our independence for thousands of years. We killed each other, and they killed us. Today, we're independent, everything's prospering, everything's growing, there's so much Torah in Israel today. There hasn't been as much Torah as there is now since the days of King Hezekiah. We don't know how to appreciate what we have." Young people today were born into the reality of the state. They want to be involved and to participate in everything there is here. People want to learn, to make a good living. All the institutes in the haredi community for studying professions are bursting with people. There is no university, college, or technological institute without a branch for haredim."

d. Yeshiva Student Combat Draft Rates 6 Times Higher Since 2007

Six times more yeshiva (Torah academy - ed.) students have enlisted in IDF combat units since 2007, according to a report filed by the State of Israel to the High Court on Thursday. Just 288 yeshiva students enlisted in the IDF in 2007, out of 6,872 up for recruitment. In 2008, the number swelled to 387, or 6% of 6,872 for that year. After establishing the Department of Integration for Haredim in the Workforce, the regular Army recruit rate jumped 10%. In 2010 and 2011 the number of haredi recruit continued to rise. 898 out of 7,562 joined in 2010, and 1,282 joined the following year, out of 7,844.

e. First: Haredi Hesder Yeshiva Specializing in Cyber-Warfare

'Derekh Chaim' is the first haredi yeshiva to incorporate IDF service - and hopes to raise Israel's next generation of cyber-warriors.

A first-of-its-kind haredi-religious yeshiva has officially been accepted into the ranks of the IDF's hesder movement. Named Derekh Chaim (Path of Life), it combines not only Torah studies and military service, as in all hesder yeshivot, but also technological studies, with an emphasis on cyber-warfare. Derekh Chaim was initiated by none other than the Defense Ministry's Security-Sociological Wing and the IDF's Manpower and Chief Rabbinate Departments, for the purpose of enabling young haredi men the opportunity for "meaningful IDF service." The Rosh Yeshiva is Rabbi Carmi Gross, of the English-speaking haredi community in Beit Shemesh. The yeshiva is located in Moshav Nachalim, near Petach Tikvah, having moved there just recently after its previous site in Jerusalem proved unable to handle the burgeoning student body. The four-year post-high school program in Derekh Chaim begins with two years of study, followed by two years of army service. During the first two years, the students learn various disciplines of Torah for 45 hours a week – plus another 20 weekly hours of technology study. During the third and fourth years, the student-soldiers are integrated into the cyber and intelligence divisions of the IDF; the former deals with protecting sensitive computer and internet networks, and the second deals with cyber attacks. Derekh Chaim actually began nearly a year ago, but operated in relative secrecy in order to prove itself before haredi-religious opposition might nip it in the bud.

Until its establishment, the only yeshivot which combined Torah study and military service were the growing number of religious-Zionist hesder institution. Rabbi Gross formerly taught in the yeshiva high school Maarava, which faced similar challenges when it was founded and is now a successful educational enterprise and accepted fixture in the haredi public. Parents of Maarava students, in fact, provided some of the impetus for the founding of the new hesder yeshiva. An additional course of study will apparently be opened in Derekh Chaim in the coming months - machine engineering and electrical engineering – at the request of the IDF's Merkavah and armored combat vehicles plant.

f. Nahal Haredi battalion 'best in the regiment' Haredi soldiers honored at award ceremony as the battalion continues to neutralize terror attacks. A ceremony honoring the Netzach

Yehuda battalion was held last week at the headquarters of the Binyamin Regional Brigade.

Soldiers of the battalion, who in the past few weeks neutralized several terror attacks in the area, were awarded certificates of merit during a ceremony which was attended by regiment commanders and the soldiers' families. Col. Israel Shomer, commander of the Binyamin regional regiment, congratulated the troops for their bravery and praised their families for raising courageous children. The awards of excellence join the battalion's collection of previously honors received in the last several years. The battalion has also received the "Chief of Staff Award", the "Head of Technology and Logistics Award", the "Ground Forces Command Award" and the "Headquarters Officer of Paratroopers and Infantry Award." Last year, the Battalion's reserves unit received the "President's Award." "The battalion's soldiers' courage and hard work are demonstrated in each sector the battalion is stationed at," said Nahal Haredi Foundation Co-Founder and President Rabbi Tzvi Klebanow. "With the help of Heaven, soldiers of the battalion are working day and night to maintain the civilian daily life in the sector and I'm glad to see that their hard work is also demonstrated by their success in achieving great accomplishments, receiving praises from the heads of the brigade," said Rabbi Klebanow. "We will continue to stand firm in the face of the threats opposing us, while maintaining that path and values of the Torah, which the soldiers keep at all times."

g. Reflections of a Chareidi Yom Ha'Atzmaut by Rabbi Avraham Edelstein

The Brisker Rov once said that the secular Zionists stole the love of Israel away from Chareidi Jews. What he meant by this was that Chareidim, who ought to have a deep and natural connection to the holy land, now feel a little uncomfortable with and alienated from those

feelings. This is sad. But it is changing. Jerusalem and Bnei Brak have triumphed Borough Park and Stamford Hill as the centers of Torah, and the chareidim provide one of the most consistent aliyahs to the country – very much to the benefit of all Israelis by anyone's book.

It was a mystery how the radical anti-Torah Zionist leadership of the time merited to be the vehicles of history-changing, Providential change in the Jewish nation, but the facts were undeniable. And that those miracles were followed by the miracles of '67 (especially), '73 and pretty much every war we have been through or suffered under since. We deeply appreciate the enormous sacrifice that the early pioneers made to create the miracle of the land and I marvel to this day the encroachment of green fields into the Negev. We all derive tremendous benefits from living in a high-tech, well run economy; a thriving democracy where we can all give our utmost passion to our causes (almost) without anyone killing anyone.

Israel is, in addition, free of anti-Semitism. It is true that our enemies lurk on our borders by the tens of millions and that the Palestinians are the most radical people on earth in their recorded percentages of support for suicide bombing, establishing a Palestinian state on all of Israel, etc. But, most of the time, we Israelis get up every morning knowing that we can freely and safely walk our streets, feel no discrimination as Jews in school or the workplace, not face clubs or rentals or businesses that say implicitly or explicitly, "Jews not welcome".

In addition, this miracle-State has contributed to making Israel the greatest center of Torah study on earth. Not only has Torah flourished in Israel, but the State has actively supported this. Overall, the State has made massive financial contributions (under the last government around half a billion shekels annually) to Torah educational initiatives of one sort or another. It has, until now, deferred army service for yeshiva bochrim (which usually amounted to an exemption). It has allowed all-Chareidi neighborhoods, and entire Chareidi towns to develop — significant populations where everything — from the makolet-man to the mayor — have been steeped in Chareidi values.

While Chareidim may find non-Chareidim sometimes hostile, the broader Israeli population is much closer to Torah values than any other major Jewish population. Over time, Israelis are getting more religious, not less. A recent poll (2013, by the Guttman Institute and the AVI CHAI Foundation) found that 85% of Israeli Jews say that it is important to celebrate Jewish holidays in the traditional manner; 63% don't mix meat and milk, and 35% do not watch TV on Shabbat.

But, just as the non-affiliated have been getting closer to Judaism, the Chareidim have been closer to fuller integration with the State. Consider that the two largest initiatives to defend Israel on campuses in the Diaspora have been a joint initiative of the Foreign Ministry with Morasha International called Binyan, and Aish Hasbara Fellowships. The former has brought an astonishing 1,000 N. American Jews on Hasbara trips to Israel, with a clear commitment to follow up on those activities in the States. The campus rabbis who have bought into this program are almost exclusively Chareidi. Many of the trips are led by Chareidim and many of the Hasbara lectures in Israel are given by Chareidim (under the watchful eye of Foreign Ministry officials). As one of the organizers put it, "Chareidim today have to be the Zionists on campus. Anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism. And often we are the only ones there who can effectively recruit and program to protect the State of Israel."

Only Chareidim in the Diaspora, you will say. Well, let's take Charedi politicians. In the olden days, they were purely sectarian, there to guard the interests of their constituents. But over the last three governments, Chareidi politicians have held important posts in the Finance Ministry, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Housing and many more. One can point to hundreds of

pieces of legislation initiated by them — like a law on seat-belts in cars — that not by the wildest imagination had anything to do with their own sector. I write non-judgmentally. Let the facts speak for themselves.

What about work and the army? This too has been happening. Seven thousand Chareidi men (apart from Chareidi women) are right now doing professional courses and degrees in law, computers, business administration, education and a dozen other areas. Besides the Nachal HaChareidi, the army now has units in intelligence and elsewhere that are absorbing Chareidim, providing them with a degree, and legitimizing the idea that today, unlike in the past, the army will be sensitive to the needs of the observant.

Who cares whether the Chareidim wave the Israeli flag on Yom HaAtzmaut or not? Who is going to dictate what constitutes loyalty and script the text? In America, we don't judge a citizen's loyalty to the State by whether he is a flag-waver or not. In a world where so many secular Israelis consider themselves post-Zionists or by some other new title, we need to come up with broader definitions of what it means to be a proud member of the State of Israel as a vehicle that serves the Jewish nation. If we set the bar too high, we make it unfairly and unnecessarily uncomfortable for whole groups to say that they belong. We shoot ourselves in the foot with our elitist and outdated attitudes.

Non-Chareidim have to invite the Chareidim to become a part of the healthy (and always passionate) debate about what this State should look like, instead of having them look in as outsiders. Chareidim have to become more comfortable with the facts of their situation and not to fight the battles of yesteryear. Non-Chareidim should nurture and facilitate trends towards work and army that are happening, instead of making easy political capital by trying to solve it in one fell swoop with legislation. Chareidim should continue to value Torah-study above all, but ensure that they have the means to support their values. Non-Chareidim should remember that for 2,000 years it was almost exclusively Chareidim who kept a continuous presence on this land, often at the expense of their lives. Chareidim should know the sacrifices that our non-Chareidi brethren have made to hand us the wonderful gift of this country. Non-Chareidim should tap into that deep love of Israel — of its land and its people — that Chareidim have in spades. Come my brother—you are a Jew and so am I; let us hold hands and begin to talk! L'chaim to this wonderful people and its magnificent country. I have never regretted the thirty-three years that I have felt this was my home!

8. Israel Eleventh Happiest Country Worldwide

a. Israel outranks the US, UK in happiness index, and has jumped three spots since 2011.

Israel was the eleventh happiest country in the world in 2014, according to the World Happiness Report released Friday - outranking the US, UK, and numerous European countries.

Just outranking the Jewish state, the world's top 10 happiest last year were Switzerland, Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Canada, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden, New Zealand, and Australia.

The US ranked at #15 - behind Israel, Costa Rica, Australia, and Mexico - and the UK ranked at #21. The "Palestinian territories" were also included for the list and ranked far down the list at #108 - two spots above Iran, at #110. The United Arab Emirates is the happiest of Arab countries, at #20. Bottoming out the list are Chad, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Afghanistan, Rwanda, Benin, Syria, Burundi, and Togo. Israel has jumped three spots since 2012,

when it first ranked at #14. The report is released annually by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), and is a United Nations initiative. The report studies statistics from *Gallup* global polls and factors in information on life expectancy, corruption, GDP, and social rights and freedoms. Israel was also recently ranked as one of two "free" countries throughout the entire Middle East; the second is Tunisia.

b. Optimism-Two sets of triplets born in two hours during busy day for Kaplan Hospital in Rehovot; director says a 'baby boom' follows every major war.

Israel is experiencing a post-war baby boom after last summer's Operation Protective Edge, the Labor & Delivery Director of Rehovot's Kaplan Hospital said Friday, after a total of 49 babies were born there over Memorial Day and Independence Day alone.

Twenty boys and 29 girls were born in 48 hours, hospital staff said, with 33 born on Memorial Day and 16 on Independence Day.

In a rare sequence of events, two sets of triplets were also born within two hours of each other, they added, as well as two sets of twins over the holiday period.

"This is a new generation of children from Operation Protective Edge," Avivit Karni Tzanahi, Labor and Delivery director, told *Walla! News*. The Gaza war began nine months ago.

"We had 15 births in one eight-hour shift," said Tzanahi.

"We are aware of the phenomenon that after an operation or war there is an increase in the number of births," she continued. "We saw it in Operation Cast Lead and Operation Pillar of Cloud and now it is back."

She added that she has worked as a midwife for 30 years, and never once seen two sets of triplets born in such close proximity to each other.

9. CHESSED

a. Heartwarming: Overcoming disabilities to defend the nation

Pvt. E never thought he'd join the army. As someone on the autism spectrum, he struggled with certain social situations and would get easily distracted. Now, at 19, he is serving in a sensitive intelligence unit in the Israeli military, working in software quality assurance and defying what he and many of those around him thought he could accomplish. Israel has for decades exempted people on the spectrum from joining the military, a compulsory duty for most Israeli Jews. But in recent years it is increasingly enlisting them, harnessing their special capabilities for certain meticulous tasks and including them in an Israeli rite of passage that can boost their independence and open professional doors. "It gives me a chance. It gives me education, on-the-job education," said Pvt. E, whose name could not be published and whose face could not be photographed because he serves in a classified intelligence unit. "It's a beginning. It's a very solid beginning." Pvt. E. is part of a program called Roim Rachok, or "seeing into the distance," which provides training and assistance to Israelis on the autism spectrum who wish to enlist in the military. The program's founders saw the inclusion of people on the spectrum as a way to help usher them into a self-sufficient life once they are discharged. Until recently, people on the spectrum were largely sidelined from the military, allowed to volunteer but without a proper framework to ease them into the challenges of military life. Roim Rachok, and at least one other

program that has sprouted up, is doing just that. The Israeli military serves as a great equalizer where youth from all walks intersect and those who do not enlist can find themselves at a handicap once they hit the job market. One's military career can often be a key determinant for employers and soldiers who served in intelligence units often land coveted jobs in Israel's booming tech sector. People on the spectrum are dealt another challenge once they reach 21, the age when state-funded programs and assistance are mostly cut off, leaving them to fend for themselves or depend on their parents for support. Roim Rachok hopes to provide its graduates with a softer landing through inclusion in the military. "Many sit at their parents' home and don't do anything. That is the painful reality," said Tal Vardi, a retired security official who is co-founder of the program. "This program gives every adult on the spectrum the opportunity to realize his full potential. And the moment we give them opportunity it puts them and us as a society in a different place."

The program seizes on the participants' perceptive capabilities and their knack for precision or repetition and places them in the military's most elite and sensitive intelligence units, where they pour over satellite imagery or, like Pvt. E., serve in quality assurance roles, verifying that the software the military develops is flawless. The program is expanding to address people with skills other than heightened perception, training soldiers for roles in combat support as well. Once in the army, the soldiers are accompanied by an occupational therapist and a psychologist, lending support both to the people on the spectrum and their commanders and colleagues who may need guidance in their relationship with the soldiers. "It's revolutionary," said Pvt. Y., a soldier who also works in quality assurance, of his military service. "It proves that even though others say we cannot, we can."

b. Special in Uniform

Lotan was born four months premature - her family spent six months in the intensive care unit with her, and after two months she suffered oxygen deprivation, leaving her with cerebral palsy and a lifelong battle for normalcy. "All along, they warned us that she wouldn't walk, wouldn't dance," relates her mother. "But all along I insisted, 'Yes, you will!'" Not only did Lotan succeed in walking - now through the Special in Uniform program she has fulfilled her dream of enlisting in the IDF like her peers and doing her part to defend the Jewish state.

Joining the army, joining society

The groundbreaking initiative of the IDF incorporates young people with disabilities into the army, emphasizes their abilities and skills and helps them in the long-term to integrate into society and the workforce. Several years ago, Special in Uniform joined forces with Israel's Lend a Hand to the Special Child Foundation, a grassroots organization established in 2005 by parents of children with disabilities that operates in partnership with the Jewish National Fund (JNF). Currently Special in Uniform incorporates over 200 special needs youth in the army, in an initiative contributing to the IDF and Israeli society by fostering acceptance and diversity. Participants then go through a ten-day basic training program to launch their military service,

and then are integrated into a number of functions including preparing protective kits, manning emergency depots, a military store, printing shop, kitchen, shredding mill and more.

"These children were in special education schools...suddenly they reach the age when everyone else joins the army, but the gates are closed. They can't join. This program allows them to join the army, contribute, and give from themselves. Just like everyone else," said Lt. Col. (res.) Tiran Attia, director of the program.

c. Would Israelis take advantage of a blind man?

Social experiment tests how Israelis react to 'blind man' asking for 20 shekel change - of a 200 shekel bill. The results? Anyone who's ever spent a considerable amount of time in Israel will have become acquainted with the disarming tendency of Israelis to offer (sometimes very much unsolicited) help to members of the public they have never met before. This remarkable sense of brotherhood and mutual responsibility has been exhibited graphically on countless occasions during the ongoing wave of Arab terrorist attacks. Civilians of all ages and stripes have regularly intervened to stop attacks, with countless pieces of CCTV footage showing onlookers running towards, rather than away from, the scene of attacks to help despite the danger. Several heroic citizens have even been killed in the process of attempting to save others. So the results of an Israeli student's social experiment into how Israelis react to a "blind man" handing them the wrong change are hardly surprising - if nonetheless still remarkable. In recent months a number of similar social experiments (both real and staged) have been circulated online, showing how members of the public in the US and Australia react when asked for change of a 5 or 10 dollar bill by a "blind man", who then offers them a much greater sum "by accident." The results tend to be mixed - while many quickly explain his mistake, others are seemingly happy take advantage of the situation. But in Israel, not a single individual in dozens of scenarios hesitated for a second before explaining to the "blind" man that his 20-shekel note was in fact a 100 or 200 bill. In one case, a total stranger gave him 20 shekels without taking anything in return. So - surprising? No. But inspiring? Most definitely.

10. Hakarat Hatov

The charismatic Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk could never just throw away a pair of old shoes that had served him well. He would gently wrap them and put them in the garbage with care and affection. Which brings us to Yom Ha'atzmaut. This day of the year has nothing to do with differences of belief or ideology or politics or grievances past. It should be a serious, solemn yet joyful time to show appreciation. Yom Ha'atzmaut is no more than a display of *hakaras hatov* to a Jewish State that performed the largest act of *pekuach nefesh* and *hachnosis orchim* by taking in several hundred thousand refugees and survivors 67 years ago when the rest of the world didn't want Jews. It's a display of *hakaras hatov* for a Jewish State that has been the largest financial supporter of Torah causes since its inception in the history of the Jewish people. In 2013, through the Israeli taxpayer, the Jewish State gave \$300,000,000 to educate the children in the *Chinuch Atzmai* chareidi school system, \$120,000,000 to educate children in the *Maayan HaChinuch HaTorani* schools, and \$180,000,000 so *Kollelim* can pay those who study full-time, not counting the money given to the schools of the Mizrahi Party. In addition, \$80,000,000 was given to fund religious needs throughout the country (*Moatzot Dativot*) such as *mikvos*, *shuls*, *kashrus*, rabbi's salaries, upkeep of cemeteries. This does not count money given to Orthodox causes by local municipalities. And the Jewish State contributed \$40,000,000

towards sustaining a network of *batei din*. This is a day of *hakaras hatov* to the Jewish soldiers who protect Jews regardless of their level of religiosity. Yom Ha'atzmaut is a day to display *hakaras hatov* to the only country in the world today where a Jew threatened in Paris or Ukraine or Antwerp can simply hail a cab to the airport, catch a plane, and "go home" without begging to be admitted. We should *all* show gratitude for this because there but for the Grace of G-d go you or I.

Remember: It's never *assur* to give thanks. And finally: A fact of indisputable import to know on Yom Ha'atzmaut is this: The number of Jews who have died in the past 67 years (under 25,000) from wars and terrorism is *less than three days at Auschwitz* –and Auschwitz was not the only insatiable death camp.

Joe Bobker

עם ישראל חי. 11.

מילים: אבי אוחיון
לחן: אסף צרויה
עומר אדם
מילים:
מודה אני כל בוקר
שהחזרת את נשמת
מודה אני על בגד
שהנחת על גופי
שלא יהיה לי קר אתה שומר עליי

מודה אני כל בוקר
על האור על עצם היותי
מודה אני על לחם
שהנחת לשולחני
שלא אהיה רעב שלא אדע כאב

על אין ספור חיוכי מודה אני
על כל כישרונותי ועל כל שירי
ועל כל שירי את כולם אקדיש לך
דע לך דע לך שמודה אני לך

אצעק לך אדיר שמך אלייך אקרא יה
לך חיי לך ליבי ותודתי
אליך אקרא יה אליך אקרא יה

מודה אני כל בוקר
על כוחי על אבי ועל אמי
מודה אני על גשם שנתת בשדותי
לדאוג לאוהבי נתת לי חיי

תופים: ברק אהרון וחיים דיין

גיטרה בס: גיא דאן
גיטרות: אסף צרויה ויוני קובני
בנגו ובוזוקי: יוני קובני
פסנתר וקלידים: נדב ביטון
כלי הקשה: גולן קולש
כינורות: רוניס
חליל: אמיר שחסר
קולות: יוני קובני
מיקס: אסף צרויה
מאסטרינג: שמוליק דניאל
יחסי ציבור: עופר מנחם תקשורת ויחסי ציבור

לחן: רמי קליינשטיין
זה עוד יום שישי נושם את האוויר
האור והצל משחקים שוב תופסת
השולחן ערוך תמונות ילדות על הקיר
שיירות לבנות חוזרות מבית כנסת
והריח הזה ששורט לי את הלב
מתגנב מתגנב ופותח דלתות
אל אושר קטן אל אותו שיר ישן
שעובר אצלנו במשך דורות

מתנות קטנות
מישהו שלח לי מתנות קטנות
רסיסים של כוונה עיגולים של אמונה
מתנות קטנות מישהו שלח לי
מתנות קטנות
כמו הכוח לקבל את מה שאין את מה שיש
מה עוד אפשר כבר לבקש

זה עוד יום שישי מרפסת ועיתון
השמש כמו הדאגות לאט נמחקת
מנגינות פשוטות זוחלות מהחלון
ושום סערה כבר לא תסתיר פה את השקט

...מתנות קטנות

מילים: עדי כבירי

לחן: נאור סינזואני
עיבוד: אבי גוטמן

סלח לי אבי כי חטאתי לך
מחול לי על כל פשעי
גם בימים ששכחתי אותך
היית תמיד בחיי
בכל הדרכים שהלכתי בעצם
היית לי נר לרגליי
הייתי עיוור לא ראיתי מעבר
למה שהביטו עיניי

מלך מלכי המלכים תודה על חיים
על אושר על בכי על צחוק
גם כשקשה לפעמים גם אז אלוקים
אתה לעולם לא רחוק

גם כי אלך ודרכי חשוכה
בטחתי בך אלוקיי
על חצי שני על בכור וילדה
תודה גם על אושר בלי די
תודה על חגים
על שבת ששומרת
שלא יגמר לעולם
כל יום שעובר בדרכי לגן עדן
שיויתי אותך מול עיניי

b. Rav Kramer in Tel Aviv

Rav Chaim Kramer arrived with his children in Tel Aviv on Wednesday afternoon to make some purchases for their new home in Baitar. The hour was a bit late, so he went into the Makolet to pick up some food for his children before the long ride home. The Makolet owner Dovid told Rav Chaim that he is very sorry but he cannot sell him any food since it is already Yom Hashoah, when all sales are prohibited. Rav Chaim asked if he can simply buy just a few Lachmaniyot for his children. Dovid told him that he would love to help him, but it was truly illegal to sell anything at this point. Rav Chaim's children were getting hungry and would have a tough time making it home. Rav Chaim said that he understands Dovid's position and left it at that. Dovid truly felt sorry for Rav Chaim and his children, but he simply had no choice; the law is the law, with a penalty for one who violates it! Suddenly, the owner had a look of excitement on his face, as if he had just won the Lotto. Rav Chaim asked Dovid what the smile was all about. Dovid was almost too excited to speak about his novel idea. He told Rav Chaim that the law only prohibits **selling** food during this time, since it is not appropriate to do business while mourning for the

6,000,000 Jews that perished in the Shoah. However, there is nothing wrong-both with regard to the letter of the law & the spirit of the law-to do an act of Chessed at this time; on the contrary, what greater way to commemorate the martyrs' memory then doing an act of kindness! Dovid then proceeded to take an empty box, fill it up with food, and handed it to Rav Chaim, wishing him a safe (and quiet) ride home, and a most meaningful day!!!

c. Angel' on train pays soldier's 1,950 shekel debt

Overhearing hysterical soldier fighting with the Electric company on the train, man pays her family's debt to give her peace of mind. On Monday an "angel" on a train helped out a soldier in need on a train by paying her family's debt of 1,950 shekel to the Israel Electric Corporation (IEC). According to an eyewitness report, the soldier was crying hysterically into her phone while arguing with the IEC not to cut off the power to her mother's home when another passenger took her phone and paid the debt for her. The soldier, who lives solely on the meager military stipend, is the only daughter of her single and disabled mother. The mother lives off of her social security benefits which she receives at the end of each month. The amount owed to the IEC had accumulated to a large sum which was more than the family could pay until the next social security stipend would come in. Daniel Danino, the eyewitness, who is also a soldier, was shocked at the kindness displayed by the gentleman whom she identified as Ofir Yitzhak.

According to a post that Danino posted on her Facebook page, and on a number of groups including "soldiers tweeting", the "angel" Yitzhak "grabbed" the telephone from the hysterical soldier, paid the debt on the spot from his own pocket and provided the soldier with a confirmation number so that she can verify the transaction. Danino also reported that Yitzhak did it all out of love so that the soldier can have some peace-of-mind.

"This is a man of action, values, humility and with a huge heart," Danino wrote in her description of Yitzhak in her post. She signed off by stating that the entire episode filled her with pride to be part of a nation that devotes itself to helping one another in times of need. עם ישראל חי.

זה היום
עשה ה נגילה ונשמחה בו