



"THIS NEWSLETTER IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF מנחם מנדל MORTON GOLDSTEIN ז"ל FATHER OF DEBORAH KEMPIN, WHOSE LOVE FOR ISRAEL NEVER WAVERED"

Shevat's Tzedakah Highlight



Living in Israel means facing constant danger – missile attacks, terror, and the unbearable reality of sending children into war. But another, quieter crisis is unfolding among the soldiers and reservists returning from combat. In 2025, 22 IDF soldiers died by suicide, the highest number since 2010. In 2024, 21 soldiers took their own lives, and in 2023, 17, including seven after Hamas's October 7th massacre. Military investigations link this tragic rise directly to the psychological toll of prolonged combat, traumatic exposure, and the loss of close friends. Israeli leadership has responded with increased funding, expanded PTSD prevention programs, and a major buildup of mental health services. Yet the need continues to overwhelm the system. Tens of thousands of soldiers are believed to be living with untreated PTSD, especially in the aftermath of October 7th.

This is where we must step up.

While we live comfortably in the diaspora, families in Israel are sacrificing their children to defend our homeland and our people. Supporting Israel means supporting those who bear the emotional scars of that defense.

One organization on the front lines of this effort is Herzog Medical Center's Israel Center for the Treatment of Psychotrauma (METIV). Founded in 1989 by Dr. Danny Brom, METIV is a global leader in trauma treatment. Since the start of the current war, METIV's "Helping the Helpers" program has trained over 3,000 mental health professionals, enabling them to treat trauma and PTSD – with thousands more still waiting for support.

Our soldiers protected us. Now they need us.

👉 *Donate today to support METIV and help ensure Israel's heroes receive the mental health care they urgently need.*

Your gift saves lives – not someday, but now!

To donate to this important organization [click here!](#)

ADDITIONAL
TZADAKAH
RESOURCES



Suggestion
Box

Belief in Hashem when the World Seems so Bleak

By Deborah Kempin

Throughout the history of our nation, we have been the recipients of relentless persecution. Since the trauma of October 7th, questions have filled my everyday thoughts. How could Hashem allow this to happen? Why must our people constantly suffer?

I began a journey over two years ago searching for answers—for direction, for meaning, for some understanding of the atrocities that have befallen us. Simchat Torah 2023 and the explosion of antisemitism that followed were among the most devastating experiences of our time, perhaps because they caught so many of us completely off guard.

In my search for answers, I turned to the weekly parshiot. I felt that deep within the stories of the Torah there had to be messages meant to guide us—messages that could help explain, or at least contextualize, our suffering. This week's parsha, Va'eira, is one of many that confronts the age-old question: why does Hashem make life so difficult for us? Why doesn't Hashem make things easier? We sinned, we acknowledge our mistakes, we try to improve—so why can't we have our Beit Hamikdash back?

Parshat Va'eira begins by reaffirming Hashem's promise to our nation. He tells Moshe that He has heard the cries of Bnei Yisrael and remembers His covenant. Redemption is coming.

"I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom Egypt enslaves, and I have remembered My covenant."

Yet, when Moshe relays this message to the people, the Torah tells us something striking:

"But they did not listen to Moshe, because of shortness of spirit and hard labor."

The Jews were not lacking faith or gratitude; they were emotionally and physically crushed. Mikotzer ruach u'me'avodah kashah—they simply could not absorb hope while trapped in unbearable reality.

Hashem then begins to demonstrate His power over Pharaoh through the plagues. At first glance, this seems unnecessary. If Hashem wanted to, He could have ended Pharaoh's life instantly and freed the Jewish people without delay. Instead, He unleashes a calculated sequence of plagues, one after another, almost as if He is "showing off" His strength.

But upon closer examination, it becomes clear that the plagues were not primarily for Pharaoh. They were for Bnei Yisrael. Time and again, the Torah emphasizes the distinction between Egypt and the Jewish people:

"All the livestock of Egypt died, but not a single animal belonging to the Israelites perished."

"Throughout the land of Egypt, the hail struck everything in the open... only in the land of Goshen, where the Israelites lived, there was no hail."

Hashem was demonstrating, again and again: I am here with you. I see you. Trust Me.

The plagues were not just acts of punishment for the Egyptians; they were acts of reassurance to Bnei Yisrael. They were meant to rebuild the shattered trust of a nation that could barely breathe.

On October 7th, on Simchat Torah, Hashem heard our cries once again. And when I began to look closer—much like our ancestors in Egypt—I started to see His presence, His power, and His protection, even amid devastation. There are truths we may never understand in this world. Even Moshe Rabbeinu, at the height of his closeness to Hashem, asked why righteous people suffer—and was not given an answer. The Torah teaches us that not everything is meant to be understood. But it is meant to be purposeful.

In the months and years following October 7th, we witnessed events that defy conventional explanation. Time and again, outcomes that should have ended in catastrophic loss resulted instead in survival—sometimes narrowly, sometimes overwhelmingly so. Plots were foiled at the last possible moment. Missiles failed. Decisions were made just hours before disaster that saved countless lives. Engineers, doctors, military experts, and analysts have admitted that some outcomes simply do not make sense on paper.

These moments do not erase our pain. They do not answer every question. But they echo the same message Hashem sent in Egypt: You are not alone.

Hashem is teaching us that what appears impossible can, in fact, become possible. What seems overwhelming can be overcome. With Torah, faith, and effort, even the darkest realities can be transformed.

Hashem operates through us.

One who internalizes this idea begins to see life differently. Whether stuck in a traffic jam or facing something far more painful, the belief that “everything Hashem does is for the good” does not remove hardship—but it makes it bearable. It gives strength to endure, hope to continue, and faith to breathe again, even when the spirit feels short.

Parshat Va'eira reminds us that redemption does not begin with ease, but with effort. Before the miracles, before freedom, Bnei Yisrael were asked to listen, to move forward, and to trust—even when their spirit was short and their reality unbearably hard.

I've come to realize that we, too, are not meant to wait passively for change. Hashem asks us to take responsibility: to strengthen our tefillah, to deepen our learning, to act with unity, kindness, and courage, and to refuse despair. Our role is to take the first steps—to show up, to try, to choose faith even when it feels difficult. To remember that Hashem is walking beside us, guiding our efforts, and turning them, in His time, into something far greater than we could ever accomplish alone.

Shabbat Shalom!



AHAVAT ACHIM'S ISRAEL TRAVEL BLOG FEATURING: ELIZABETH JACOBS



I recently had the opportunity to go on an Israel trip through Israel Free Spirit, the Oll's Birthright Israel trip organizer. The program brings together diverse groups of young Jews to explore their heritage and connect more deeply with Israel- meaningful connection through experience.

The application process was straightforward: apply, get accepted, and go. Because the trip is subsidized by Birthright, the cost was minimal. While the accommodations were typical Birthright-style (definitely not five-star luxury), that wasn't what mattered to me. What mattered most was the chance to volunteer, give back, and feel like I was truly making a difference.

One of the most meaningful highlights of the trip was volunteering with Shachen Tov ("The Good Neighbor") in Tiberias, an Israeli nonprofit initiated through Meir Panim. The organization helps families in need by distributing food packages and providing broader community support so people can live with dignity. Our task was hands-on and impactful: packing boxes of fresh produce for families throughout the Tiberias area. Knowing exactly where our work was going made the experience incredibly rewarding.

We also volunteered with Leket, the country's national food bank and leading food rescue organization. Leket rescues surplus food and redistributes it to hundreds of organizations serving vulnerable populations across Israel. Much like in Tiberias, we packed food boxes – simple work, but essential, and a powerful reminder of how small actions can support large systems of care.

Another meaningful stop was Yad Sarah, an organization that provides medical and rehabilitative equipment to people of all ages, free of charge. Their services allow the elderly and sick to remain in their homes rather than institutional settings. From their 24/7 emergency call center to their home hospital services, Yad Sarah plays a critical role in maintaining dignity and independence for countless Israelis. Seeing the scale of their impact was eye-opening.

We also traveled south to Talmei Yosef, a moshav in the northwestern Negev Desert near the Gaza border. Known for its innovative agricultural techniques, the moshav is home to the famous Salad Trail, an educational farm founded by a resident in 2005. There, we learned how Israel's agricultural technology makes it possible to grow more than 80 different crops – primarily fruits and vegetables – in desert soil, without pesticides. Watching native species support plant and insect growth in such a harsh environment was nothing short of amazing.

In Beit Shemesh, we volunteered with Alon & Ella, a nonprofit focused on community building and supporting vulnerable populations, including the elderly, lone soldiers, and at-risk youth. While not a formal daycare center, the organization provides guidance, activities, and support designed to uplift the broader community and improve quality of life. Their work emphasized how strong communities are built through care, connection, and consistency. There we were able to listen to

their interesting stories and brighten up their day a little.

One of the most emotionally powerful moments of the trip occurred during our visit to the Sdeirot Police Station Memorial and as our tour guide explained the events of the attack and the surrounding battles, an unexpected moment unfolded: a woman walking nearby suddenly began to cry. She told us she was the grandmother of two children whose parents were killed in the attack and her two grandchildren were saved at that very spot. The coincidence – being there, hearing the story, and then meeting someone directly connected to it – was overwhelming. It was a reminder that history in Israel isn't distant or abstract; it lives in the people around you.

This trip wasn't just about seeing Israel—it was about taking part in it. Through volunteering, listening, learning, and connecting, the experience became deeply meaningful, and it's something I'll carry with me long after returning home. Even though the war is over, there is still important work to be done in the recovery efforts. The Jewish nation is remarkable in the strength of our connection and our deep commitment to chesed.

We are Israel- Be Loud and Proud!

By Isaac Cohen

Israeli innovation is all around you! From Waze routing and Mobileye-powered driver assistance, to the compression inside your images and the cryptography protecting online payments, Israeli-born technology shows up in everyday American life.

Here's a very limited list of some of the greatest Israeli technologies that are used day-to-day by Americans:

On the road:

Waze – one of the most popular GPS apps – which started out as a community project in Israel in the early 2000's, turned into a massive company which was bought by Google in 2013.

MobileEye – a pioneer in autonomous driving started in 1999 by researchers in the Hebrew University, had its product integrated to BMW, Ford and Toyota. MobileEye was acquired by Intel in 2017.

Computing:

RSA Cryptosystem – an essential part for online security was invented partially by Mr. Adi Shamir from Tel-Aviv. The S in the middle of RSA stands for Shamir.

LZ Compression – the fundamentals of online compression as we know it today (LZ) was laid out in the 1970's by two Israeli Researchers – Abraham Lempel and Yaakov Ziv from the Technion Institute. In fact, Yaakov Ziv claimed that the Avinu Malkeinu prayer where the word Avinu Malkeinu only shown on the top of the siddur, is very similar to how compression actually works...

Cyber-security:

Check Point – The company that introduced the stateful inspection firewall to the world, which now is the basic for online security. The company is worth \$20bil (not an investment advice).

Palo Alto Networks – back in 2005, a Check Point Manager decided he had enough, and invented the next-generation, application and identity-aware firewall. The company is now worth north of \$130bil (not an investment advice).

Wiz – The pioneer for agentless, graph-driven cloud security was established in January 2000, and is being acquired by Google/Alphabet for \$32bil (not an investment advice).

On the Internet:

Where do we actually start? Wix, Fiverr, Viber, Monday.com, MyHeritage, eToro, and the list goes on and on.

An Israeli Community Rooted in Resilience: Kiryat Shmona קרית שמונה



Kiryat Shmona is known to most as the largest and most strategic town on Israel's northern border with Lebanon. But its name carries a deeper meaning — one rooted in the passion and sacrifice of the early Zionists who gave their lives for the Land of Israel. Literally meaning “The Town of Eight,” Kiryat Shmona was founded by Jewish immigrants from Russia who came with a singular dream: to work the land and redeem it.

At the time, the region had only recently been divided between French and British control. Authority was weak, and Bedouin groups moved freely through the area, often raiding small Jewish settlements for weapons and property. The settlers lived with constant insecurity. In response, Jewish leadership appointed Yosef Trumpeldor, a former Russian army officer, to oversee their defense. By day, the settlers worked the land; by night, they stood guard.

On March 1, 1920, a large group of Bedouins arrived at the gates of Tel Chai, claiming they were searching for French soldiers. The settlers allowed them inside — and suddenly, a gunfight broke out. Eight Jewish defenders, six men and two women, were killed, including Trumpeldor himself. The village was ultimately burned to the ground. However, when rebuilding the village, they named the town Kiryat Shimona.

Trumpeldor became a symbol of the ideals that shaped early Zionist life. His leadership and sacrifice helped ignite the vision of an organized Jewish defense force, leading to the creation of the Haganah — the first such effort since the time of the Maccabees. His final words, “It doesn't matter — it is good to die for our land” (“טוב למות בעד ארצנו”), captured the spirit of an entire generation. The battle of Tel Chai was seen not as a defeat, but as a triumph — a declaration that the Jewish people would once again stand up and defend themselves.

Today, the residents of Kiryat Shmona are fighting another battle — this time, not with weapons, but for survival. While Hezbollah has not physically destroyed Israel's northern towns, it has devastated Kiryat Shmona's economy. After two years of war and repeated evacuations, the capital of Israel's north feels like a ghost town. Shops are shuttered, malls are empty, and without jobs or functioning businesses, families are struggling to put food on the table.

Most residents of Kiryat Shmona were working-class families who had never relied on government assistance before October 7. Now, many don't know where their next meal will come from. [Yad Ezra V'Shulamit](#), Israel's largest distributor of food baskets, has received thousands of urgent requests from families across the north, all struggling to make ends meet.

While government funding is being allocated to rebuild schools, hospitals, and infrastructure, residents and small business owners are not receiving the financial support they need to survive right now. Since the war began, 21,000 businesses have closed, and unemployment has risen by 49 percent. Without immediate help, Kiryat Shmona risks disappearing altogether.

We cannot allow that to happen. We owe it to the pioneers who built this town — and to their descendants who still call it home — to stand with them in their time of need.

[To make donations, please click on the Yad Ezra link above.](#)

Interesting Podcasts and Instagrams to Follow.



Podcast-*Call me Back- insightful analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its focus on providing nuanced perspectives. Listeners appreciate the show's ability to engage with complex issues and offer a variety of viewpoints, especially those from experts on the ground in Israel.*



Podcast-*"Ask Haviv Anything" is a podcast about history, a podcast you, dear listener, will help to shape and direct, focusing not just on what I want to talk about but on what you want to learn and discuss. Nothing is off limits. We're going to talk about big and painful things, and also beautiful and fascinating things, wars and identities and painful history. And also more light-hearted things. Humor matters, especially when facing tough subjects.*

The Jewletter
By Samantha Ettus



Instagram-*Best-selling Author and Jewish Activist -In the wake of October 7th, Samantha Ettus found herself in the unexpected position of becoming a Jewish activist. While previously recognized for her insights on the future of work as a speaker, author and TV contributor, she refocused all of her endeavors to combat antisemitism and mobilize the Jewish community. As Sam explains it she went from covering work and life issues to covering life and death issues after the start of the Hamas/Israel war.*

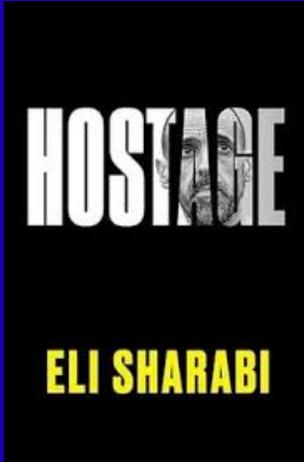
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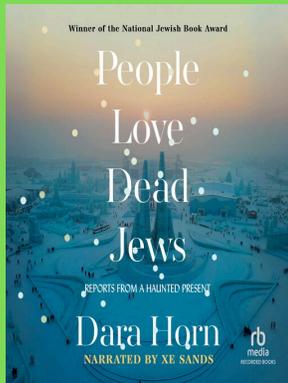
Staff Sgt. (Master Sgt.) Ran Gvili

was a 24-year-old Israeli police officer (Yasam unit) abducted by Hamas on October 7, 2023, despite being on medical leave for a shoulder injury, Gvili left home to fight Hamas terrorists, saving around 100 people from the Nova festival and killing 14 terrorists before being shot in the leg and abducted.

Jewish Community Events and Israel



In a raw and unflinching memoir, Eli Sharabi, a survivor of 491 days in Hamas captivity, recounts the harrowing ordeal of his abduction from Kibbutz Be'eri on October 7th, 2023, the loss of his wife and daughters, and his unyielding resolve to survive.



The book, a collection of essays, covers various topics including the global veneration and universalization of Anne Frank, the commercialization of Jewish history in places like Harbin, China, and indifference to rising antisemitism. Horn critically analyzes the subtle dehumanization embedded in the public reverence given to past atrocities, arguing that this benign reverence is a significant affront to human dignity.



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[Historic Night for Israeli Hockey:
Jerusalem Capitals Edge HC Tel
Aviv in Thrilling OT Win at
UBS Arena](#)

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