

# “אם תרצו, אין זו אגדה”

## “IF YOU WILL IT, IT IS NO DREAM”



### RAV AHARON HERSKOVITZ | RAV SHALIACH

*“I always knew I would return. It was what I was taught, and it was how I was raised.”*

These words were uttered by Yochanan Ben Yaakov, reflecting upon his return to the area of Gush Etzion in 1967. In the winter of 1947-1948, three-year-old Yochanan was evacuated from Kibbutz Kfar Etzion together with his mother, as part of a larger evacuation of mothers and children from the area. After the passing of the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine on 29th November 1947, the area they were living in became the frontline of attack in battles against the Arab Legion and local fighters.

On 13th May 1948, the day before the declaration of the state of Israel, Yochanan's father Yaacov, together with 128 others, were killed defending the area of Gush Etzion. A few years later, this day (4th Iyar) was established as Yom Hazikaron, the day on which we commemorate the memory of fallen soldiers.

Between the years of 1948 and 1967, Yochanan and others would dream of returning to the lands that their fathers and mothers had acquired, cultivated, built and defended. In 1967, at the conclusion of the Six Day War, their request to rebuild Kfar Etzion was approved.

When confronting tragedy and challenge, a natural response is to fold up, to withdraw into ourselves; to say, “A tragedy has befallen us, we cannot move on.” This is reflected

in many of the individual mourning practices in halacha, such as refraining from simcha, remaining at home for a seven-day period etc. It is reflected as well in the communal practices established to mourn the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash, such as intentionally leaving out a dish from an impressive meal (Shulchan Aruch OC 560:2). Not only that, but the Gemara writes (Bava Batra 60b):

*Rabbi Yishmael ben Elisha said: From the day that the Temple was destroyed, by right, we should decree upon ourselves not to eat meat and not to drink wine, but the Sages do not issue a decree upon the public unless a majority of the public is able to abide by it. And from the day that the wicked kingdom, i.e., Rome, spread, who decree evil and harsh decrees upon us...by right we should each decree upon ourselves not to marry a woman and not to produce offspring, and it will turn out that the descendants of Avraham our forefather will cease to exist on their own. But concerning a situation such as this, the following principle is applied: Leave the Jews alone and do not impose decrees by which they cannot abide. It is better that they be unwitting sinners, and not be intentional wrongdoers.*

In other words, the “right” thing to do would be to encourage the gradual dying out of Bnei Yisrael!

Although this feeling of grief is important and has its place in our tradition, the feeling expressed by Yochanan above is what we celebrate on this day: the hope and dream that we **can** return and that we **will** return.



Baruch Hashem, in this day and age we have been blessed that the opportunity to build up Israel, from a physical but also from a cultural/social/institutional perspective is one that is not only afforded to the lucky few able to gain an entry permit from a foreign power. Each and every one of us is able to make that decision, to take the education and skills we have received, to take the values we believe in,

and apply them to the fullest extent possible. As someone who has made Aliyah (twice!) I know that it is not easy. There are challenges inherent in adapting to a new culture, in adjusting our educational and financial goals, in distancing ourselves from our families and what we are familiar with etc. But as the great Wayne Gretzky once said: "You miss 100% of the shots you don't take."

## EDITORS CORNER

We are delighted to introduce 'Zeh Hayom', Bnei Akiva's special Yom Ha'atzmaut publication!

The full pasuk זה היום עשה ה' נגילה בו ונשמחה בו translates as 'This is the day Hashem has made, let us rejoice and be glad on it.' There is, however, another way of interpreting it, as 'This is the day Hashem has made, let us rejoice and be glad because of it'. There is no truer verse to encapsulate our joy and elation in celebrating 71 years of the State of Israel.

2019 also marks the 80th birthday of Bnei Akiva UK. Anniversaries are a special time to reflect on past success and to look to the future with renewed vigour to achieve even more. The past 80 years for BAUK has seen so many amazing achievements. As a Tnua, we now look to the future with determination and passion to build a Tnua that continues to fulfil our dreams and the promises of its founders.

We hope you enjoy this very special

evening as we commemorate Yom Hazikaron and celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut and BAUK's 80th birthday!

## COMING UP...

- Join us tomorrow morning, Thursday 9th May, at 8:00 am at the London Bayit for Tefillat Chagigit followed by Breakfast!!

- Bogrim and Shevet Morasha are invited to the annual BBQ from 6:00 pm at the Herskovitz Home!! Mincha and Ma'ariv included.

- Bnei Akiva is running peulot in schools on Yom Ha'atzmaut! Look out for us in King David Manchester, Sinai, JFS, Yavneh, and Etgar!

- Join us on Yom Yerushalayim, Sunday 2nd June for a special Hachnasat Sefer Torah parade at the London Bayit!

- Summer Machane!! And so much more!!

**Chag Atzmaut Sameach!!**

זה היום עשה ה'  
נגילה ונשמחה בו

# ZEH HAYOM

**BNEI  
AKIVA**  
UNITED KINGDOM



**YOM HA'ATZMAUT**  
4<sup>TH</sup> IYAR 5779  
8<sup>TH</sup> & 9<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2019  
OMER DAY 19



## MORE THAN A COMMEMORATION HARRY SALTER SHEVET EITAN

71 years ago, on the 5th Iyar 5708, the modern-day miracle of Yom Ha'atzmaut was actualised. Jews were finally able to return to the promised land. Technological advances and success can be seen all over the world. The advances in Torah learning, with thousands of men and women learning Torah in the Land of Israel, bring to life the prophecy in Isaiah (2:3): **כִּי מִצִּיּוֹן תֵּצֵא תוֹרָה** - *"For Instruction shall come forth from Zion, and the word of Hashem from Yerushalayim."*

However, as we know, the State of Israel was born out of sacrifice and suffering. The sacrifices our ancestors went through to enable us to appreciate the Land and settle in our home cannot be underestimated.

This idea can be seen in the Chanukah and Purim stories as well. In both festivals, the few against the many, the weak against the strong, rose up and defeated the enemy. Self-sacrifice in order to establish nation-unity. The blessing before the Chanukah candles and reading the Megillah is: **שְׁעֵשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בְּיָמֵינוּ הַהֵם** - *"who performed miracles for our forefathers in those days, at this time."* The two festivals were created by Chazal to commemorate the wonders and miracles Hashem performed for our ancestors. Whether the threat of the enemy was to physically harm us or whether the threat involved a spiritual eradication, the threat of existence was real until God intervened and rescued the Jews.

However, the question arises as to why these two festivals are commemorated? Why do we not commemorate other significant days?

The Gemara in Pesachim (117a) asks: *"And this Hallel, who initially mentioned it?"* The Gemara answers: *"The Prophets among them established this Hallel for the Jewish people, that they should recite it on every appropriate occasion; and for every trouble, may it not come upon them, they recite the supplications included in Hallel. When they are redeemed, they recite it over their redemp-*

*tion, as Hallel includes expressions of gratitude for the redemption."*

Although we do not say Hallel on Purim (see *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 693, Mishnah Berura 7*), what makes these two days so special for us to commemorate them?

The Gemara in Ta'anit (17b-18b) speaks about the times when Bnei Yisrael were saved from danger and, as a result, are not allowed to eulogise or fast on these days. Seemingly from this, being saved from a military threat or the miracle itself does not constitute creating a Yom Tov.

When we consider the festival of Pesach, we can understand why we celebrate Purim and Chanukah. These three festivals are not just commemorating the miracles performed or strengthening the nation, they also signal the increased relationship between Hashem and the people. The Gemara in Megillah (14a) discusses whether one should say Hallel on Purim to commemorate the miracle of our salvation from annihilation. Within this discussion, the Gemara concludes that when the Jewish people reside in Israel, the Divine Presence dwells with them and God Himself performs miracles for them, thus deriving that one should say Hallel for direct miracles from God.

Yom Ha'atzmaut is not just a day of commemoration for the miracles performed by God, it is not just a day to recognise nationhood, rather it is also a day to celebrate the increased Avodat Hashem.

When Hashem said to Moshe telling him to go to Pharaoh to let the Jewish people go, the Torah says (Shemot 7:26): *"Send out My people that they may serve me."* The exodus from Egypt was to enable the Jewish people to serve Hashem in their Land, so too, the exodus from the diaspora to the Land of Israel is to enable the Jewish people to serve Hashem in their Land.

Yom Ha'atzmaut is a turning point in modern-Jewish history, it enables us to serve Hashem to the best of our ability. It is more than a day of commemoration of miracles, it is a day to serve Hashem, appreciating how the Land of Israel makes this possible.

**HARRY IS ROSH NIVCHAR 5779**

# THE PAST: JANUARY 2018



**DENA SCHWARTZ**  
SHEVET HAGVURA

## **What are you currently doing in Israel?**

I am currently living in Jerusalem and working at an educational tourism company.

## **What inspired you to make Aliyah?**

Growing up with Bnei Akiva, Aliyah has always been on my mind, something I would like to do at some point. But there was one event that really inspired me to make Aliyah. When I was in Israel for a year with Torani at Midreshet Harova, we went to Har Herzl on Yom Hazikaron. Before we went, each person was given the name of a soldier buried at Har Herzl. With the name, we also received information about the soldier, and it gave us the opportunity to get to know these heroes. Going to Har Herzl on Yom Hazikaron, seeing how many people had sacrificed their lives for the state of Israel really inspired me to make Aliyah, they sacrificed so much for the country. How could I not come and make my life in Israel?

## **What has been the most challenging part of making Aliyah?**

In March there was a general election in Israel, the last election in Israel was four years ago. In Israel when there is an election it is such an important day that everybody gets the day off. So, I ended up doing a lot of research weighing out the different options, the

pros and cons, discussing it with a lot of people what they were going to do. Finally coming up with a plan with what to do with my day off in Israel as we really don't get them very often! But in all seriousness being able to vote in an election in the state of Israel was one of the best things I have had the opportunity to do since making Aliyah, but having over 40 different parties to choose from made the decision who to vote for way more challenging than voting in the UK election.

## **What has been your most pleasant surprise?**

It's got to be meeting all the different people in Israel. I know it is really cliché, but it really does feel like one big family in Israel. Everyone has each other's back and will do anything to help you if you have a problem. One such example is when I first moved into my flat and bought all my electric appliances from one shop, I asked the shopkeeper if I could come over the next few days to pick up the items because I didn't have a car. But instead, he offered me a lift home, asked for my radio music preferences, and got his assistant to schlep the items up two flights of stairs in the building!

## **What advice do you have for Chaverim in the UK who want to make Aliyah?**

On my first day of Ulpan, the first word that they taught us was סבילות - patience. It's really something you have to learn, everything in Israel takes time, but it always works out in the end, usually better than you would expect.

**DENA WAS CHINUCH WORKER 5777**

# ALIYAH – LIVING THE DREAM

## THE PRESENT: FEBRUARY 2019



**TALIA BENJAMIN**  
SHEVET TZION

### **What has been the highlight of your gap year so far?**

My gap year has been full of amazing memories and experiences, but I think one of my highlights has to be the week that I spent at the Bnei Akiva Veida Olami. We met Chanichim and Madrichim from all over the world and whilst travelling to various very interesting places and speakers finding out about Zionism in this day and age.

### **What are your plans for next year? Why did you choose to do this?**

I will be joining Midreshet Nishmat's Shana Bet programme at the beginning of next year until I draft into the IDF. I chose to do this to spend as much time as possible before joining the army learning, and despite being extremely scared for how a North West London girl is going to get through basic training, I am very excited to face the new challenges that the army will have to offer and to meet Jews from all types of backgrounds serving together.

### **What do you think you will miss most about living in the UK?**

One of the things that I will certainly miss a lot about living in the UK is the sense of unity that we have amongst the Jewish community that is slightly lacking in Israel. Having such an amazing network of friends and families that we see on a regular basis at shul and at community events. As well as the Bnei Akiva family that come together every week for Sviva and having your Shevet that you have been with for years on Machanot is something that it very hard to leave.

### **What are you most looking forward to about life in Israel?**

Aside from the amazing food and weather... I am excited to a part of the Jewish people writing the next chapter of Jewish History in our homeland. To be able to celebrate all of the עם ישראל with חגים (especially keeping one day!), to be able to vote for Jewish autonomous leadership in the Knesset and to enjoy hiking across the land that our forefathers walked in thousands of years ago.

**TALIA WAS SGANIT AT HENDON SVIVA 5778**

# THE FUTURE: SEPTEMBER 2019



## NEVER RESTING DANI JACOBSON SHEVET NA'ALEH

There are endless things to say about the miracle of Jews returning to their homeland after two millennia of exile, and the seventy-one years of blessing that have passed since then. Promises have been fulfilled, prophecies come true every day. The desert is blooming, the streets are full of children and old people, the exiles are coming in on the wings of eagles (or at least of jumbo jets). I feel so lucky to have been born when I was, to have grown up with the Israeli state and to be able to visit there and, ultimately to move there at my choice.

This year, we were even blessed to see a general election take place in Israel. Rav Milston, Rosh Midrasha of Midreshet Harova, wrote to Bogrot on the day it took place that the election symbolised why, to him, Yom Ha'atzmaut is one of the holiest days of the Jewish year. Most of the dates in our calendar mark events of years gone by; even on Pesach, when we are commanded to see ourselves as experiencing liberation, we are celebrating an event of the past and applying it to today. But Yom Ha'atzmaut is here and now, happening in front of our eyes. We are the direct subjects of this festive day, and at moments like a general election, we are active beyond our ancestors' wildest dreams. Despite having spent two months arguing about the vote choices, the beauty was in the fact that today Am Yisrael has a choice.

Just as this year, when I was in Sem four years ago Israel was also going through an election, and as always, the questions of security and the occupied territories were vital. Discussing politics with Torani in Rabin Square, Michael Rainsbury explained that there is no one opinion to hold to be

a 'good' BA member: there are Bogrim who want to relinquish control of the West Bank, and Bogrim who would rather die. However, crucial to our Bnei Akiva identity is recognising the importance of the areas in the first place. It doesn't matter (to the movement) our view as to what to do with them as long as we approach them from a place of love and religious, cultural and national significance.

*"For the sake of Zion I will not be silent, and for the sake of Jerusalem I shall not remain still, until her righteousness shines out like the brightness of day and her salvation burns bright as a torch" (Yishayah 62:1)* In this pasuk from the Haftarah for Yom Yerushalayim, I'm pretty sure that Yishayahu is saying that he won't rest until God redeems the city, but I think that it can also be read as that **he** won't rest until **he** redeems it. **I** won't rest until **I** redeem it. Because of our love for our holy land, we will never stop trying to fix it and better it, until we can hold it up as a beacon of goodness in the world. That's how I see Zionism: acknowledging the connection, and then the mission. Not letting the closeness blind us to the problems, or the problems blind us to the closeness. It doesn't have to be one or the other, and it's totally possible to celebrate these milestones – like seventy-one years of statehood – whilst also recognising how very far we have to go. But flaws don't mean you shouldn't celebrate the triumphs, the love and the significance.

I decided in 2015 to make Aliyah in 2019 because I wanted to plan my part in the future of the Jewish people. Now that the time has come around, I'm terrified: to leave my family, to move across the world, and to deal with all the many, many issues of Israeli society. But I'm also excited beyond measure, proud and humbled by my opportunity to act.

ברוך שֶׁהַחַיִּינּוּ וְקִיּמָנוּ וְהִגַּיעָנוּ לְזְמַן הַזֶּה

**DANI WAS SGANIT ON BET BASE MACHANE  
5778**