



## YISE Programs and Listings

**Blood Drive** - The community blood drive originally scheduled for Sunday, April 19, will not take place due to COVID-19 restrictions. The blood drive will be rescheduled as soon as possible.

**Camp Shomrai 2020** is open for registration! Programs for campers entering 2-year-old preschool through 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Camp Dates: Monday, June 29 -Thursday, August 13. Register online at <https://campshomrai.campapplications.com> For more information contact Sarah Dollman at [camp@yise.org](mailto:camp@yise.org)

**Shomrai Preschool 2020-2021** - Online registration is now open for children ages 2 to 5 years old with customizable extended care options from 7:30 AM to 6:00 PM. Visit [preschool.yise.org](http://preschool.yise.org) or email [preschool@yise.org](mailto:preschool@yise.org) for more information or to schedule a tour. Ask about our special, deeply reduced tuition for incoming 2-year-olds!

**Helping Hands Across Kemp Mill** is a part of YISE's Chesed Committee. The program helps members undergoing serious medical crises. We are always looking for volunteers to help. To be a part of this program by helping with meals, visitation, shopping, childcare, etc., contact: Melanie Karlin, 301-681-4740, [mskarlin@gmail.com](mailto:mskarlin@gmail.com) or Miriam Friedman, 301-754-1517, [mfriedman2@yahoo.com](mailto:mfriedman2@yahoo.com)

**The Rachel Bassan Horwitz Fund** is used for medical needs in our area, elsewhere in the US, and in Israel. In order to continue this much needed medical fund your financial help is needed! Tax deductible contributions may be made payable to: YISE Charity SPECIAL Fund, c/o Norma Burdett, 11720 Lovejoy St., Silver Spring, MD 20902. Earmark: Bassan Fund. For more info: Norma Burdett, 301-593-5964 or Pearl Bassan, 301-649-3137.

**Shiurim from Rabbi Gedaliah Anemer, ZT"L**, are available at <http://audio.yise.org>

## Chametz After Pesach 2020

- Chametz may be purchased from all Capitol K establishments and caterers.
- Chametz may be purchased from the following national stores: Aldi, BJ's, Costco, CVS, Food Lion, Harris Teeter, Kmart, Lidl, Petco, PetSmart, Rite Aid, Royal Farms, Save-A-Lot, Sam's Club, Shoppers Food and Pharmacy, Trader Joe's, Walgreens, Walmart, Wegmans, Whole Foods Market, Winn-Dixie
- Chametz may be purchased from the following stores in our community: H Mart, MOM's Organic Market, ShopRite of White Oak
- Chametz may only be purchased from Snider's beginning four weeks after Pesach, May 15.

Due to possible Chametz distributed by a Jewish company, if one has the option of purchasing Chametz from other stores, it is commendable to not purchase Chametz from Giant, Safeway or Target until four weeks after Pesach, May 15, Due to a potential limited supply of food due to COVID-19, this would not be the year to be stringent on this matter if not feasible.

## Community Programs & Listings

**Remote Night Shiurim from YGW** - Sunday 8:30 PM - 9:15 PM, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Blate; Monday/Wednesday 9:00 PM - 9:30 PM, Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky; Tuesday/Thursday 9:00 PM - 9:30 PM, Rabbi Eliyahu Reingold. Register at [https://zoom.us/webinar/register/1715843153121/WN\\_n6jNGqUpTpCN6ikCabUutA](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/1715843153121/WN_n6jNGqUpTpCN6ikCabUutA)

**Daf Yomi Shiur** currently meets online via a WebEx video conference. There is still room for a few more participants. Anyone interested may email Judd Lifschitz at [lifschitz@srlslaw.com](mailto:lifschitz@srlslaw.com) to be added to the invite list. Sunday 7:00 AM, Monday - Thursday 9:00 PM, Friday 5:45 PM.

**Kemp Mill Toastmasters** - Wednesday, April 22, 8:00 PM - 9:15 PM. See what Toastmasters is all about and find out how you can become a more confident communicator & leader. Contact Manasseh Katz at [vpm@kempmilltoastmasters.com](mailto:vpm@kempmilltoastmasters.com) for more info. Zoom meeting ID: 986 546 841, password 3671.

**Partners in Tefillah** matches people with others in need of similar assistance from Hashem. The feedback we have received so far has been amazing. You, too, can Daven for someone else in the community and have them Daven for you. May Hashem answer all your prayers. Please visit [www.yadyehuda.org/partners-in-tefillah](http://www.yadyehuda.org/partners-in-tefillah) to learn more and to sign up.

**Community Helping Community: Yad Yehuda's COVID-19 Crisis Relief** - During this crisis, previously financially stable households in our community are already experiencing financial challenges. Yad Yehuda is receiving many more assistance requests than usual. Community financial donations are critical now. Please make an additional donation to Yad Yehuda today to help us address this unforeseen need at [www.yadyehuda.org/donate](http://www.yadyehuda.org/donate) A COVID-19 Telephone Assistance Hotline is now available at 301-494-1010, Sunday - Thursday 9:00 AM - 6:00 PM, Friday 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM. When you call, one of our dedicated Yad Yehuda volunteers will answer questions and help connect you with resources in the Jewish community and the area at large. If the volunteer is unable to answer your issue or question, they will, IY"Y, ensure that someone gets back to you in a timely manner. Our friendly volunteers are there to help and will do so with the utmost discretion and privacy. Please visit [www.yadyehuda.org/covid19](http://www.yadyehuda.org/covid19) for additional and updated information.

**Daily Halacha Program from Rabbi Eliyahu Reingold** - Receive one every day in your inbox. Visit [dvarhalacha.com](http://dvarhalacha.com) and click "Sign Up."

**Kemp Mill Village** volunteers are now offering services to Village members, including rides for appointments, shopping, and visits to friends and family, help with household tasks, and prescription deliveries. Call the toll free number 1-833-KMV-20902 to request member services or to volunteer.

**Silver Spring Gemachim** - For a complete list: [www.gemachexchange.com](http://www.gemachexchange.com)

The Week Ahead	Sunday April 19	Monday April 20	Tuesday April 21	Wednesday April 22	Thursday April 23	Friday, April 24 Rosh Chodesh
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No Minyanim will take place at YISE next week. You are encouraged to Daven at home at your regular Minyan time. Mincha was scheduled for April 19 - 23 at 7:35 PM (Ashkenazi)/7:30 PM (Sephardi). In addition to Shiurim listed above, conference calls are scheduled with Rabbi Rosenbaum for Tehillim and a 15-minute Shiur on the Parsha in the mornings (Sunday 9:00 AM, Monday through Friday 8:30 AM) and for Tehillim and a 15-minute Shiur in the evenings (Sunday through Thursday, 7:30 PM) using Zoom A listed above.

**Halachic Times:** Earliest Talis and Tefillin: 5:30 AM, Latest Krias Shma: 9:41 AM, Earliest Mincha: 1:42 PM

## Upcoming Events

Tuesday, April 21 Yom HaShoah v' Hagvurah Program, 7:30 PM

## Next Shabbos

April 24 - 25, 2020 - 1 Iyar 5780

Parshas Tazria/Metzora/Rosh Chodesh

Light Candles: Friday by 7:36 Havdalah: 8:39

Next Shabbos Shorts Deadline: Wednesday April 22 at 12:00 Noon

Submit items for the Shabbos Shorts to: [announce@yise.org](mailto:announce@yise.org)

Office Phone: 301-593-4465 Office Fax: 301-593-2330

Eruv line: 301-593-5561

E-Mail: [office@yise.org](mailto:office@yise.org) Website: [www.yise.org](http://www.yise.org)

Office Hours: Monday - Thursday 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Friday - 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Rabbi Dovid Rosenbaum

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Simi Franco - Office Manager

This week's *Parashah* opens with the dedication of the *Mishkan*. We read (9:7), "Moshe said to Aharon, 'Approach the *Mizbei'ach* / Altar and perform the service ...' *Rashi z"l* writes: "Aharon was ashamed to approach. Moshe said to him, 'Why are you ashamed? For this you were chosen!'" R' Moshe ben Nachman *z"l* (*Ramban*; 1194-1270; Spain and *Eretz Yisrael*) elaborates: "Aharon was sanctified to *Hashem*. He had no sins on his conscience except for making the Golden Calf, but that sin was always at the forefront of his thoughts. Moshe therefore told him, 'Have some pride and do not be so humble, for *Hashem* has already forgiven you'."

R' Shlomo Wolbe *z"l* (1914-2005) writes: It is true that our Sages have taught (*Avot*, Ch.4), "Be very, very humble!" We see here, however, that there is a limit to humility. When humility impedes a person's service of *Hashem*, it is no longer appropriate. The first key to serving *Hashem* is to recognize one's worth and importance. This is stated expressly in the work *Sha'arei Ha'avodah* which is attributed to Rabbeinu Yonah Gerondi *z"l* (Spain; died 1263): "The first step is for the person who is serving [*Hashem*] to know his own worth, to recognize his elevated level and the elevated levels of his forefathers, and their greatness and importance to the Creator and his affection for them. A person should then always strive and strengthen himself to live up to that level and to always act accordingly. If, G-d forbid, a person does not recognize his level and that of his ancestors, he can easily go in the ways of lawless people." (*Shiurei Chumash*)

## Elsewhere in the Torah . . .

Rabbah bar Machsaya said that Rav Chama bar Guria said that [the sage] Rav said: If all the seas were ink, all the reeds were quills, all the heavens were parchments, and all humans were scribes, it would not be possible to record the depth of "*Rashut*." What verse teaches this? Rav Mesharshiya said: "The heavens for height, the earth for depth, and the heart of kings cannot be fathomed" (*Mishlei* 25:3).

(*Shabbat* 11a)

*Rashi z"l* understands "*Rashut*" to mean "government," and he explains: The depth of kings' hearts cannot be fathomed, for, in one day, they must focus on many different provinces: here, collecting taxes; there, wars; in another place, justice.

R' Yitzchak Isaac Chaver *z"l* (1789-1852; rabbi of Suvalk, Lithuania) explains differently: It is a given that *Hashem* created the world for a reason. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to discover as much of that reason as we can. But, *Hashem's* reason is not like the reason why a human does something. Humans make new things because there is something missing in their lives. Not so *Hashem*, who lacks nothing and needs nothing!

King Shlomo wrote (*Mishlei* 25:2 -- the verse before the one quoted in the *Gemara*), "It is the honor of *Elokim* to conceal the matter, but it is the honor of kings to search out the matter." We can never know the ultimate reason why *Hashem* created the world; hence, "It is the honor of *Elokim* to conceal the matter" -- not to try to discover it. But, we do know that He created the world for mankind, the only being that has free will and on whose choices the rest of the world hangs. Because of that free choice, mankind is referred to in the above verse as "kings." That fact we should reflect on, so we will know our obligations; therefore, "It is the honor of kings [*i.e.*, mankind] to search out the matter." Nevertheless, says our *Gemara*, a complete understanding of man's free will is so deep that all the ink, quills, parchments, and scribes in the world could not capture it.

(*Si'ach Yitzchak: Likkutim* p.285)

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10815 Meadowhill Road, Silver Spring, MD 20901 / 301-593-2272

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and in memory of *Moreinu Ha'Rav Gedaliah ben Zev Ha'Kohen Anemer z"l*

**“This may you eat from everything that is in the water: everything that has fins and scales in the water, in the seas, and in the streams, those may you eat.” (11:9)**

The *Gemara* (*Chullin* 66b) states: All species that have scales also have fins [and are kosher], but there are species that have fins and do not have scales [and are not kosher]. If so, why doesn't the Torah just say that a fish is kosher if it has scales? [The *Gemara* answers, quoting a verse in *Yeshayah* (42:21):] “So that the Torah be made great and glorious.” [Until here from the *Gemara*]

R' Nosson Yehuda Leib Mintzberg z"l (1943-2018; rabbi and *Rosh Yeshiva* in Yerushalayim and Bet Shemesh, Israel) ask: How does it make the Torah “great and glorious” to say something that seems to be completely unnecessary [*i.e.*, that kosher fish have fins]?

He explains: The Torah is more than a practical how-to guide for performing *Mitzvot*. Were it only that, it would have sufficed for the Torah to say that a fish is kosher if it has scales [since such a fish necessarily has fins also]. However, the Torah is teaching us an additional truth--that a fish is kosher because it has fins and scales. Fins and scales are not merely signs that the fish is kosher; rather, for reasons that only *Hashem* knows, fins and scales are what make a fish kosher. The Torah is made “great and glorious” each time it teaches us an additional secret of *Hashem's* creation, even if that information has no practical consequence.

(*Ben Melech Al Ha'Torah*, Introduction p.15)

R' Yehonatan Eyebchutz z"l (Central Europe; 1690-1764) writes: When the *Gemara* states, “All species that have scales also have fins,” it actually means, “Most species that have scales also have fins.” Indeed, throughout nature, laws have exceptions, as naturalists have testified. The Torah and *Mitzvot* are meant to address the predominant circumstances that exist--for example, that most species that have scales also have fins, and the fact that there are a relatively few species that are exceptions does not contradict the words of our Sages. (*Kraitit U'plaiti* 83:3)

R' Yaakov Zvi Mecklenburg z"l (1785-1865; rabbi of Koenigsberg, Germany) adds: The *Gemara* (*Eruvin* 29a) states expressly, “We do not learn *Halachot* from generalities, even when a *Mishnah* says, ‘All . . . except . . .’” One might think that since the *Mishnah* says, “Except . . .,” it is identifying all exceptions, and the statement, “All . . . except . . .,” should be taken literally; however, the *Gemara* teaches that that is not a proper way to interpret the words of our Sages. [Rather, we must rely on the classical commentaries to help us understand our Sages' words.]

(*Ha'ketav Ve'ha'kabbalah*)

**“Moshe said, ‘This is the thing that *Hashem* has commanded you to do; then the glory of *Hashem* will appear to you’.” (9:6)**

The *Midrash Torat Kohanim* interprets: “Moshe said to *Bnei Yisrael*, ‘Remove that certain *Yetzer Ha'ra* from your hearts and be unified in your desire to serve G-d. Just as He is One, so your service should be uniquely for Him. If you do this, then the glory of *Hashem* will appear to you.’” [Until here from the *Midrash*]

What is “that certain *Yetzer Ha'ra*”? R' Yitzchak Hershkowitz *shlita* (Israel) explains, citing several *Chassidic* works: When *Bnei Yisrael* heard that *Hashem* would reveal Himself to them on that day (*i.e.*, the day of the dedication of the *Mishkan*), their hearts burned with impatient anticipation. That was the *Yetzer Ha'ra* to which Moshe referred, for it meant that their service of *Hashem* was motivated by a desire to attain lofty spiritual levels, not a desire to simply do G-d's will. Moshe said, “If you want the glory of *Hashem* to appear to you, then you must serve G-d only because, ‘This is the thing that *Hashem* has commanded you to do’.” (*Ha'mal'ach* p.86)

*A related thought:*

R' Zvi Elimelech Shapira z"l (the *Bnei Yissaschar*; died 1841) writes about the commandment not to ascend to the *Mizbei'ach* / altar on steps: In my opinion, this *Mitzvah* hints that a person should not seek lofty spiritual levels such as *Ruach Ha'kodosh* or the revelation of Eliyahu Ha'navi. If he is honored by Heaven with such attainments, he should thank *Hashem*, for He is good. However, one's only intention should be to serve *Hashem* out of love and awe, and with simplicity, as a son serves his father and mother. If, G-d forbid, a person thinks he is worthy of lofty levels, his “account book” will be opened in Heaven, and his shame will be revealed. Therefore, a person should be content to do what he is commanded.

(*Derech Pikudecha: Mitzvat Lo Ta'aseh* 41:11)

## ***Pirkei Avot***

**“Shammai says: ‘Make your Torah study a fixed practice. Say little and do much, and receive everyone with a cheerful face’.” (Chapter 1)**

R' Chaim of Volozhin z"l (1749-1821) explains: Review your studies, and don't say that you are bored by them, just as a storekeeper doesn't get bored of sitting in his store day-after-day. Say, “Little!” -- *i.e.*, what I have learned already is very little. If you adopt that attitude, then you will “do much.” Moreover, this attitude will cause you to greet every person pleasantly, for you will assume that he has learned more Torah than you have.

(*Ruach Chaim*)

# Likutei Divrei Torah

Gleanings of Divrei Torah on Parashat Hashavuah  
via the Internet

Shabbat Shalom

Volume 26, Issue 25

Shabbat Parashat Shemini

5780 - B”H

## Covenant and Conversation: R. Jonathan Sacks

**Between Hope and Humanity** - It should have been the great day of celebration. The Tabernacle, Israel's first collective house of worship, was complete. All preparations had been made. For seven days, Moses had performed the inauguration. Now, the eighth day, the first of Nissan, had arrived. The Priests, led by Aaron, were ready to begin their service.

It was then that tragedy occurred. Two of Aaron's sons, Nadav and Avihu, brought "strange fire, which [God] had not commanded them." Fire "came forth from the Lord" and they died. There then follow two scenes between Moses and Aaron. The first: Moses then said to Aaron, "This is what the Lord spoke of when He said, 'Among those who are near to Me I will show Myself holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honoured.'" Aaron remained silent.

Moses then commanded their bodies to be removed, and forbade Aaron and his remaining sons to engage in rituals of mourning. He gave them further instructions to prevent such tragedies from occurring in the future, and then proceeded to check whether the sacrifices of the day had been performed. He discovered that Aaron and his sons had burned the sin offering, instead of eating it as prescribed:

When Moses inquired about the goat of the sin offering and found that it had been burned up, he was angry with Eleazar and Itamar, Aaron's remaining sons, and asked, "Why didn't you eat the sin offering in the Sanctuary area? It is most holy; it was given to you to take away the guilt of the community by making atonement for them before the Lord. Since its blood was not taken into the Holy Place, you should have eaten the goat in the Sanctuary area, as I commanded."

Aaron replied to Moses, "Today they sacrificed their sin offering and their burnt offering before the Lord, but such things as this have happened to me. Would the Lord have been pleased if I had eaten the sin offering today?" When Moses heard this, he approved.

Without going into the details of these exchanges, their psychology is entralling. Moses tries to comfort his brother, who has lost two of his sons. He tells him that God has said, "Among those who are near to Me, I will show Myself holy." According to Rashi, he said, "Now I see that they [Nadav and Avihu] were greater than you and me." The holier the person, the more God demands of them.

It is as if Moses said to Aaron: "My brother, do not give up now. We have come so far. We have climbed so high. I know your heart is broken. So is mine. Did we not think – you and I – that our troubles were behind us, that after all we suffered in Egypt, and at the Red Sea, and in the battle against Amalek, and in the sin of the Golden Calf, we were finally safe and free? And now this has happened. Aaron, don't give up, don't lose faith, don't despair. Your children died not because they were evil but because they were holy. Though their act was wrong, their intentions were good. They merely tried too hard." But despite Moses' words of consolation, "Aaron remained silent," lost in a grief too deep for words.

In the second exchange, Moses is concerned with something else – the community, whose sins should have been atoned for by the sin offering. It is as if he had said to Aaron: "My brother, I know you are in a

state of grief. But you are not just a private person. You are also the High Priest. The people need you to perform your duties, whatever your inner feelings." Aaron replies: "Would the Lord have been pleased if I had eaten the sin offering today?" We can only guess at the precise import of these words. Perhaps they mean this: "I know that in general, a High Priest is forbidden to mourn as if he were an ordinary individual. That is the law, and I accept it. But had I acted on this inaugural day as if nothing had happened, as if my sons had not died, would this not seem to the people as if I were heartless, as if human life and death meant nothing, as if the service of God meant a renunciation of my humanity?" This time, Moses is silent. Aaron is right, and Moses knows it.

In this exchange between two brothers, a momentous courage is born: the courage of an Aaron who has the strength to grieve and not accept any easy consolation, and the courage of a Moses who has the strength to keep going in spite of grief. It is almost as if we are present at the birth of an emotional configuration that will characterise the Jewish people in centuries to come. Jews are a people who have had more than their share of suffering. Like Aaron, they did not lose their humanity. They did not allow their sense of grief to be dulled, deadened, desensitised. But neither did they lose their capacity to continue, to carry on, to hope. Like Moses, they never lost faith in God. But like Aaron, they never allowed that faith to anaesthetise their feelings, their human vulnerability.

That, it seems to me, is what happened to the Jewish people after the Holocaust. There were, and are, no words to silence the grief or end the tears. We may say – as Moses said to Aaron – that the victims were innocent, holy, that they died al kiddush Hashem, "in sanctification of God's name." Surely that is true. Yet nonetheless, "Aaron remained silent." When all the explanations and consolations have been given, grief remains, unassuaged. We would not be human were it otherwise. That, surely, is the message of the book of Job. Job's comforters were pious in their intentions, but God preferred Job's grief to their vindication of tragedy.

Yet, like Moses, the Jewish people found the strength to continue, to reaffirm hope in the face of despair, life in the presence of death. A mere three years after coming eye to eye with the Angel of Death, the Jewish people, by establishing the State of Israel, made the single most powerful affirmation in two thousand years that Am Yisrael Chai, the Jewish people lives.

Moses and Aaron were like the two hemispheres of the Jewish brain: human emotion on the one hand, faith in God, the covenant, and the future on the other. Without the second, we would have lost our hope. Without the first, we would have lost our humanity. It is not easy to keep that balance, that tension. Yet it is essential. Faith does not render us invulnerable to tragedy but it gives us the strength to mourn and then, despite everything, to carry on.

## Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

And Nadav and Avihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censor, placed fire on it, and laid incense thereon, and offered strange fire which He had not commanded them. And there came forth fire from

before God, and it devoured them, so that they died before God.

The portion of Shemini begins with the great drama of the week-long consecration ceremony of the Sanctuary. The nation is exalted, the leadership is inspired – but suddenly joy is turned into tragedy when the two sons of Aaron the High Priest are consumed by a fire sent down by God. What caused such a hapless event? The biblical text seems to say that it was because "they offered a strange fire which [God] had not commanded." What possible sin could these two "princes" in Israel have committed to make them worthy of such punishment?

The expression "strange fire" is so ambiguous that the various commentaries offer a number of possibilities. Immediately after the deaths of Aaron's sons, the Torah issues a command forbidding Aaron and his sons to ever carry out their Sanctuary duties under the influence of any intoxicants. If a person cannot "...distinguish between the holy and the mundane, and between the unclean and the clean..." he doesn't belong in the Ohel Moed (Tent of Meeting). Thus it's not surprising that one midrash looks upon this injunction as a biblical hint that Nadav and Avihu were inebriated when they brought the incense offering, the intoxicant turning their incense offering into a "strange fire."

Another midrash explains that Nadav and Avihu so envied Aaron and Moses, that they couldn't wait for them to step down so that they could step up. This is the strange fire of jealousy which hadn't been commanded of them; they themselves initiated a sacrifice without asking permission of their elders, Moses and Aaron. They were too ambitious for their own good.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, my rebbe and mentor, has often taught that in order to grasp how the sages wanted us to understand a given Torah portion, we should always turn to the haftora (the portion from the Prophets) for that week, which often serves as a commentary in and of itself.

Three separate events take place in the haftora of this portion, (chapters six and seven in ii Samuel): Thirty-thousand of the nation's chosen join with King David on his journey to restore the previously conquered Holy Ark to Jerusalem, turning the occasion into a celebratory procession accompanied with all kinds of musical instruments. The ark is transported in an oxcart that belongs to the brothers, Uzzah and Ahio; when the oxen stumble, Uzzah reaches out to take hold of the ark. Right then and there, God strikes Uzzah dead.

Three months pass before David again attempts to bring back the ark, and when he arrives triumphant in the city of Zion, he dances with all of his might, upsetting his wife who chastises him: "How did the king of Israel get his honor today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows who shamelessly uncovers himself". The third incident records that David decides he wants to build a permanent dwelling for the ark of God rather than allowing it to

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rest in a curtained enclosure. At first the prophet Nathan is encouraging, but later in the night a voice tells him that although David's throne will be established to last forever, he personally will not build the Temple; his son Solomon will. In the account of the same event recorded elsewhere, the blood that David caused to flow in the various wars he fought prevents him from building a Temple which must be dedicated to peace.

All three incidents point to the same theme: the emotional instinct of the individual has to take a backseat to the emotional desire to come close, too close, to the holy; the holy must be revered from a distance.

Uzzah certainly did not intend disrespect when he took hold of the ark; nevertheless, touching the holiest object in existence without permission was forbidden. Since Michal is the daughter of King Saul, and knows first-hand that a king's honor is not his own but is rather the nation's, she cannot applaud David's leaping and dancing in wild abandon – even if it be in religious ecstasy. As such, the monarch of Israel must always behave honorably and respectfully, fully in control of his actions.

And as to who will build the Holy Temple, King David himself must be ruled out because of all the spilled blood; his wars may have been necessary and even obligatory, but even the most just of wars brings in its wake excessive killing, often accidental killing of the innocent, emotional hatred and passionate zeal. What the haftora reflects back on is that performing a mitzvah for God which God didn't command – no matter how inspired, spiritually or ecstatically – invites a disapproving, destructive blaze from heaven. Like Uzzah, Aaron's sons got too close to the sacred, took the sacred into their own hands. Ecstasy, especially in the service of God, can turn into a sacrilegious act of zealotry, of passionate pursuit of God's honor at the expense of human life and respect for others. Passionate religious fire in the name of God can turn into "self-righteous fanaticism" which can tragically lead to the desecration of the divine name, even to suicide bombers.

Nadav and Avihu are rare Jews, sons of Aaron, nephews of Moses, their lives dedicated to service in the Temple, privileged to be among the chosen few to have had a sapphire vision of God's glory back at the sealing of the covenant in the portion of Mishpatim. We cannot even begin to comprehend their spiritual heights. Nevertheless, they die tragically because they brought a passionate fire not commanded by God. When people on the level of Nadav and Avihu fail to distinguish between Divine will and human will, allowing their subjective desires to take over, they are expressing their own emotions but are not necessarily doing the will of the Divine. Confusing our will with God's will is truly playing with fire. If we limit ourselves to God's commands in the ritual realm we can be reasonably certain that we are serving God and not our own egos and subjective hatreds and passions. One dare not get too close to the divine fire, lest one get burnt by that very fire.

#### **The Person in the Parsha: R. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb**

**And Aaron Was Silent** - He was an old man, and in many ways came from a very different world than I. And yet he taught me more than anyone else ever did. One of the things he taught me was that no one suffers as much as a parent who loses a child.

He delivered this lesson to me on a wintry day more than fifty years ago. He was my grandfather, my father's father, and the family had just broken the news to him that his youngest grandchild, my baby cousin, had died. It was a sudden death, totally

unexpected, and everyone was distraught. Grandpa too took the news very hard.

He then did something which surprised everyone present. He rose to leave the room, beckoning to me – his oldest grandchild, then fourteen – to accompany him. We both entered a small adjoining room in which there were a few sacred books, including a siddur. He opened the siddur, read from it for several moments, and then looked up to me, and tearfully whispered:

"There is nothing worse in the world than the death of one's own child. A parent never recovers from such a blow. May the merciful God protect us all from such a fate."

I will never forget those words. I remember them verbatim even today. And a lifetime of experience in the vocation of counseling has confirmed the truth of these words over and over again.

In this week's Torah portion, Parshat Shemini, we read of just such a tragedy. On a bright and sunny spring day, somewhere in the Sinai wilderness, the Tabernacle is being inaugurated. It is an awesome spiritual experience in which "a divine fire descends from on high, in which all the people sing in unison, and fall upon their faces."

It is the moment of a peak experience, for all the people, but especially for Aaron, the High Priest. At that very moment, his two elder sons, Nadav and Avihu, step forward and commit a sacrilegious act which dispels the mood, and ruins the entire experience. Commentators differ widely as to exactly what was the sin of these two sons of Aaron. Scripture just says that "they offered God a strange fire, something He did not command of them."

God's wrath was expressed instantly. "A fire descended from before Him and consumed them, and they died in the presence of God."

A parent, a father, lost a child. Not just one, but two. Not through a long and debilitating illness but suddenly, unexpectedly. And not in any ordinary set of circumstances, but in the context of an act of sacred worship.

What is Aaron's reaction? Does he moan and groan and rend his clothing? Does he scream out in grief? Or does he vent his anger against the God who took his boys from him?

None of the above. "Vayidom Aharon." Aaron is silent. The silence of shock? Perhaps. The silence of acceptance of fate? Perhaps. Or, perhaps, the silence which results when the range and depth of one's emotions are too overwhelming to express in words. But silence.

If the sage words that my grandfather shared with me in my early adolescence are true, and I have every reason to believe that they are, Aaron remained silent about his grief for the rest of his life. Had he used the words of his ancestor Jacob, he could have said "I will go down to the grave in my agony."

Soon after this episode in which my grandfather shared his wisdom with me I had the occasion to read a book which taught me a bit more about a grieving parent. It is quite possible that it was at precisely during the winter of my cousin's death that I was assigned the book *Death Be Not Proud* by John Gunther in my English Literature class.

I somehow doubt that this book is still on the required reading lists of many tenth-graders today. But if it is not on those lists I certainly recommend that it be read, and particularly by teenagers who are learning their first lessons about life and its tragic disappointments.

In the book, the author describes his own son, who was taken from him by a vicious disease. He

## Likutei Divrei Torah

describes his son positively, but realistically. And he rages against the disease, and in some way, the Divine being who took his son from him. He insists to Death itself that it be not proud about its victory over its victim, his dear child.

It has been decades since I have read Gunther's book, and it could very well be that I do not remember it with complete accuracy. But I do recall the poignancy and the power with which the author conveyed the full range of his painful emotions. And I will never forget those passages in which he insists that he will never recover from his loss that the wounds of a parent's grief for his child can never heal.

Many are the lessons which students of Bible and Talmud have derived from the sad narrative contained in this week's Torah portion. But there is at least one lesson which every empathic reader will surely learn as he or she attends to the opening verses of Leviticus 10.

It is the lesson contained in the mystery of Aaron's reaction when his sons are consumed by a heavenly fire. For within the deafening silence of "Vayidom Aharon" are the depths of the terror which every parent dreads, and some parents have suffered. The dread of bereavement, of the loss of one's child.

As always, in contemplating darkness, light stands out in contrast. Reflection upon death leads to an appreciation of life. The story of the death of Aaron's children should, if nothing else, enable us to appreciate all the more those of our children who are alive and well.

As we embark upon this new pre-Passover spring season, with all the springtime symbols in the way of life and renewal, let us celebrate and appreciate all of our own offspring, may they live and be well.

#### **Dvar Torah: Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis**

[*Excerpt*] What is special about the number 8? At the end of the Shema, we conclude the words "Hashem Eloheichem" – the Lord your God, but we always add the word 'emet' onto it which means truth. The Talmud teaches us "chotamo shel HaKodesh Baruch Hu emet", the seal of God is truth. The gematria of the word 'emet' adds up to 441, which is 4+4+1, which equals 9, indicating that the truth of Hashem is represented by the number 9.

So if seven represents the perfection of people, and nine represents Hashem, eight represents the bridge, connecting us with our creator. That is why a baby boy has his 'brit milah' through which he establishes a covenant between himself and Hashem on the eighth day. And that is why between Pesach and Shavuot for a period of 7x7 days we prepare ourselves for the re-enactment of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Once we reach that number 49, we are prepared for the festival of Shavuot, which takes place at the beginning of the eighth week, reminding us of that ultimate revelation when Hashem appeared to us, and of the first two of the ten commandments. He delivered them directly to us – the ultimate bridge between Heaven and earth. Now we can understand our parasha, "vayehi b'yom hashemini" – and it came to pass on the eighth day – once the Mishkan (the sanctuary in the wilderness) had been completed, and the altar was there to be dedicated, for seven continuous days the people offered sacrifices with no response from God, but after those seven days, "va teitzei aish min ha Shamayim" – on the eighth day, fire came from Heaven and consumed the animal on the altar – there was that connection between Heaven and earth. May we merit to live up to the aspirations of the number eight, to feel the presence of Hashem in our lives and to enable Him to bless us always.

# ISRAEL REPORT

To provide greater exposure to primary Israeli news sources and opinions in order to become better informed on the issues, and to gain a better understanding of the wide range of perspectives that exist in Israeli society and politics.

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## RIVLIN: THE MANDATE WILL RETURN TO THE KNESSET TOMORROW (Arutz-7 4/12/20)

President Reuven Rivlin announced on Sunday to Blue and White Chair Benny Gantz that he would not extend Gantz's mandate to assemble a government that he received four weeks ago.

Rivlin also announced that unless an agreement on the formation of a government is reached by tomorrow, Monday, at midnight, the mandate for assembly of a government will return to the Knesset and will not be passed to Benjamin Netanyahu. The President's Residence said that the President made this decision after also speaking to Likud Chairman Benjamin Netanyahu who did not confirm that the two were close to signing an agreement that would lead to a unity government.

"If the two don't sign an agreement by midnight tomorrow, and the map of recommendations does not change, the mandate will return to the Knesset and a 21-day period will begin during which members of the Knesset can form a majority to recommend an agreed-upon candidate. The agreed-upon candidate will be given 14 days to form a government," the statement said.

The President's Residence qualified the statement, noting, "If, before the end of the initial period given to Gantz to form a government, circumstances change and the parties come to the President requesting an extension of the period to help them reach an agreement, the President will reconsider."

If, in the 21 days when 61 signatures can be collected for the purpose of assembling a government, no Knesset member fulfills the task, Israel will embark on its fourth election campaign within a year and a half.

## FORMER CHIEF RABBI DIES OF CORONAVIRUS (Arutz-7 4/12/20)

Former Chief Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi Doron, who was admitted to Shaare Zedek hospital in Jerusalem after contracting COVID-19, passed away on Sunday evening at the age of 79.

The 79-year-old rabbi had come to the hospital for routine treatment, complained of coronavirus symptoms and was sent for examination. A few hours later, his test came back positive and his family went into isolation.

Rabbi Bakshi Doron's funeral is expected to take place in the presence of a limited number of people, in light of the Ministry of Health's guidelines to combat the spread of coronavirus.

Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi Doron was born in Jerusalem and studied at Yeshivat Hadarom, the Hebron Yeshiva, and at Kollel Kol Yaakov. In 1970 he was appointed rabbi of the Bat Yam neighborhoods and later was appointed as the city's Chief Sephardic Rabbi. Later, he was appointed Chief Rabbi of Haifa, where he served for 18 years.

In 1993, he was elected the Chief Sephardic Rabbi of Israel and served in that post until 2003, alongside Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau.

## U.S. AMBASSADOR TO ISRAEL PRAYS AT WESTERN WALL IN VIOLATION OF CORONAVIRUS GUIDELINES (Ha'aretz 4/12/20)

The U.S. ambassador to Israel David Friedman took part in a prayer service at the Western Wall Sunday, contrary to Health Ministry regulations barring public prayer as part of emergency measures to stop the spread of coronavirus. The U.S. Embassy responded that Friedman had been present at the Priestly Blessing service on the invitation of the Western Wall rabbi, Shmuel Rabinovitz.

At least 13 participants attended the service while government regulations allow for a gathering for prayer of no more than ten people. The regulations also state that the rabbi of the Western Wall may permit prayer by "ten

regular participants who live in the vicinity of the site," while Friedman lives about two kilometers from the Western Wall. According to procedure, the Western Wall rabbi is to submit to the health minister the names of the people whose participation he approved before the service.

A U.S. Embassy spokesperson responded: "Ambassador Friedman's participation in the Priestly Blessing was in accordance with the Government of Israel's social-distancing regulations. He attended the service at the invitation of the chief rabbi of the Western Wall. At the end of the service, the rabbi added a prayer for those in America suffering from COVID-19."

## ISRAELI RESEARCHERS AT HEBREW U DEVELOP FASTER, CHEAPER COVID-19 TEST (JPost 4/12/20)

Researchers at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem announced on Sunday that they have developed a new method of testing for COVID-19 which is not only 4-10 times faster than the tests most commonly used today, but also significantly cheaper, while supplying the same level of accuracy.

Moreover, most of the materials required to perform the new test are already available in Israel, easing significantly both the country's dire shortage of testing materials and its heavy economic dependence on foreign commercial markets.

The method was developed in the labs of Prof. Nir Friedman of the Institute of Life Sciences and the School of Engineering and Computer Sciences and Dr. Naomi Haviv of Hebrew University's Neuroscience Research Center, and is based on materials which are not affected by global shortages and can even be recycled for repeated use on future tests.

The method commonly used today for COVID-19 testing involves extracting RNA molecules from a patient's sample to determine if they have viral RNA within them, which confirms the presence of the coronavirus.

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Woodsburgh, NY Minyan  
Young Israel Bet Tefilah of Aberdeen, NJ  
Young Israel of Brookline, MA  
Young Israel of East Brunswick, NJ  
Young Israel of Fort Lee, NJ  
Young Israel of Hancock Park, CA  
Young Israel of Holliswood, NY  
Young Israel of Houston, TX  
Young Israel of New Hyde Park, NY  
Young Israel of North Woodmere, NY  
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The new test developed by the researchers performs the same action, but is made from more commonly attainable materials, that produce results at a much higher speed.

Haviv said that, "We have an efficient RNA extraction method, 4-10 times faster than the current method. It is based on magnetic beads and can be performed both robotically and manually."

Other than the magnetic beads, all of the other materials needed to perform the tests are available for purchase in Israel. The beads themselves are recyclable and can be reused to perform future tests.

"The robotic method has already undergone a series of tests at Hadassah Hospital, using hundreds of samples from patients – and is now becoming operational."

Friedman also mentioned the successful test comparisons done at Hadassah, saying that the team has "already used the method on hundreds of samples in Hadassah, and all the tests came out identical to the results obtained using the current test."

He said that the next step in their research is to develop a method that will allow tens of thousands of samples to be tested simultaneously.

This method will be based on genomic sequencing tools, and early results look promising.

"We are in the process of developing a test that will allow testing of 15,000 people at the same time. We already have very positive indications that encourage us to believe it can work," Friedman said.

Development of the new method now going into use was led by Dr. Ayelet Rahat, Dr. Masha Adam, Alon Chapelbaum, Dr. Ronen Sadeh and Dr. Anise Kluschendler, along with two experts from the robotics industry, Dr. Uri Shabi and Dr. Moshe Cohen.

The study was funded by the Edmund de Rothschild Foundation and performed by a 15 person team in the labs of Hebrew University.

### **ISRAELI CORONA PATIENTS GET SPECIAL BOOST FROM NAVAL COMMANDOS (Israel Hayom 4/12/20)**

Israel's elite Shayetet 13 naval commandos are doing their bit to contribute to the country's battle against the coronavirus epidemic: Aside from sending some of its personnel to help distribute food and medicine at nursing homes in northern Israel, the commandos are now making medical oxygen tanks out of their own diving equipment.

Shayetet 13 has decided to start filling oxygen tanks, and the unit reached out to the Yad Sarah organization, which provides medical supplies, for advice.

Commander of the Shayetet unit, Col. D., and Yad Sarah Director-General Moshe Cohen agreed that members of the unit would provide 400 medical oxygen tanks a week, which will help members of the elderly population who require extra oxygen. The unit has already helped the Jerusalem branch of United Hatzolah fill oxygen tanks.

In addition to filling the tanks, Shayetet 13 is handling the logistics aspect of delivering them. The unit also plans to provide oxygen tanks to the Palestinians, with help from the IDF's Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT).

### **HAMAS ARRESTS GAZA ACTIVISTS AFTER ZOOM CALL WITH ISRAELIS (YNet 4/10/20)**

Hamas-run security forces have arrested several peace activists in the Gaza Strip on treason charges after they took part in a web conference with Israeli activists, officials said Thursday.

The Hamas-run Interior Ministry said the activists are accused of "holding a normalization activity with the Israeli occupation."

"Holding any activity or contact with the Israeli occupation under any cover is a crime punishable by law and a betrayal for the people and their sacrifices," it said in a statement.

The activists held a nearly two-hour meeting on Monday over Zoom, an

online conferencing service, discussing issues of common interest, including the coronavirus pandemic.

The meeting was advertised on a Facebook event page and a recording was posted online by Israeli participants, prompting an outpouring of Palestinian incitement against the Gaza activists on social media.

The family of Rami Aman, the main organizer, said he answered a summons from the security service early Thursday and that they have not heard from him since.

Hamas praised the arrests. "The relationship with the Zionist occupation is only a continuing fight until it is forced out of all Palestinian lands," spokesman Hazem Qassem said.

### **HAREDI INTERNET USE SPIKES DUE TO CORONAVIRUS EPIDEMIC (JPost 4/13/20)**

The Internet Rimon company, which provides various solutions for filtered Internet access, has reported a huge spike in Internet usage among the haredi (ultra-Orthodox) community in recent weeks following the imposition of restriction on movement by the government due to the coronavirus epidemic. Internet usage among the haredi community is far lower than in the general population because of restrictions put in place against it by the rabbinic leadership due to its ability to "breach the holy walls" of haredi society and bypass the formal avenues of information available to the community.

Although filtered Internet and smartphone use has increased significantly in recent years among haredim and now stands at approximately 50% of the community, it remains far lower than in the rest of society.

But the unique challenges of the coronavirus epidemic have meant that many in the community now appear to be logging on at home.

Yariv Peer, director of Internet Rimon, says that since the coronavirus restrictions came into force, the company has seen a doubling of the use of its filtered software, stating that much of this comes through its Etrog filter software designed for the haredi community.

In particular, Peer says that there has been a large increase in video streaming and conferencing, the use of online grocery purchasing sites and other platforms and a massive increase in the use of bandwidth by its customers.

He also says that "thousands" of haredi customers have signed up for its services in recent weeks, and said that many were first time Internet users, which he said was apparent by the need to install Bezeq internet infrastructure, provide equipment and the lack of familiarity of the new customers with Internet installation procedures.

Some of the growth in Internet usage would appear to be by members of the community who are in employment and need Internet access to continue working from home during the epidemic.

Although only some 51% of haredi men work, 76% of haredi women have a job.

Many of those in the commercial sector who use the Internet at work may not have wanted to have Internet access at home due to the rabbinic bans and restrictions, but now may have subscribed to Internet providers to continue working.

"This is a new reality, a real turning point," Peer said. "Today it's clear that people in the ultra-Orthodox community also need a connection to the outside world at this time."

Eli Paley, chairman of the Haredi Institute for Public Affairs and publisher of Mishpacha Magazine, was more skeptical about how much of a transformational moment this new phenomenon will prove to be.

He said that in times of crisis when specific challenges and solutions spring up in the haredi community there is often a counter-action to them after the crisis has passed.

Indeed he noted that Rabbi Moshe Hillel Hirsch, one of the most senior and respected leaders of the non-hassidic branch of the haredi community, said that God had issued an "awful decree" against the world, requiring people to

consider what they need to rectify in themselves.

One of these things, he said, was “use of forbidden technology,” adding that “anyone who does not need this technology for income [from work] purposes should not use it, and those who must use it must do so only in a place and time of need and with excellent blocking.”

“Intuitively, it is hard for me to see people continuing with Internet access after the coronavirus crisis,” said Paley, who added that he believed the situation would return to what it was before the epidemic and that the rabbinic leadership may even embark on a campaign to ensure that this is so when restrictions on movement are eased.

Paley said however that it was possible that new solutions for the haredi community will develop out of the clear need for Internet access which has become apparent with the current epidemic.

“Infrastructure solutions, internet access for schools, and other issues may be advanced after this crisis and it may accelerate technological solutions for the ultra-Orthodox community.”

### **SEA OF GALILEE NEARS ITS FULL CAPACITY AFTER A WEEKEND OF HEAVY RAINFALL** (Ha'aretz 4/13/20)

The water level of Lake Kinneret – better known as the Sea of Galilee – rose 6 centimeters (2.4 inches) over the weekend and on Sunday was only 21 centimeters under its “upper red line,” the level at which the lake overflows and floods homes in communities on its shores.

After a weekend of heavy rains and the resulting heavy flow in the streams feeding the Kinneret, the lake reached 209.1 meters below sea level.

The level is expected to rise even more this week, in part because water is not pumped out and into the National Water Carrier during the week of Passover out of fear that the lake could contain leaven, which is forbidden by Jewish law on the holiday.

The Water Authority estimated last month that it will not need to open the Degania dam at the southern end of the Kinneret this year unless “exceptional” rainfall occurs in the next few weeks. “The last two years were good, but expected dry periods are forecast for our region and we must prepare for it,” said the authority’s director, Giora Shaham.

The Degania dam was last opened in 1995, and in 2004 the level of the freshwater lake reached just eight centimeters below its upper red line. Opening the dam sends water into the Jordan River, which then flows down to the Dead Sea.

### **GANTZ GOT PLAYED** (Lahav Harkov, JPost 4/12/20)

As Blue and White leader Benny Gantz’s mandate to form a government draws to a close, officially ending at midnight between Monday and Tuesday, it’s hard to escape the sense that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hoodwinked him.

Gantz may have been the chief of staff of the IDF, but in politics, he is a rookie. He went through three election cycles – more than many MKs ever get – but has very little experience in the negotiating and wheeling and dealing involved in regular political life, starting with coalition negotiations, followed by the years of trying to get policies approved and laws passed in the years between elections.

And as a result, Gantz has been left almost empty handed: He lost half of his party, his leverage over Netanyahu, and by Monday night, his mandate to form a government.

Netanyahu started calling for an emergency unity government almost a month ago, as the coronavirus crisis became more acute, schools were canceled and Israelis were encouraged and then required to adopt social distancing practices.

“We must unite forces and establish a strong and stable government that can pass a budget and make hard decisions,” Netanyahu said. He suggested that the government be for six months, that he would not be allowed to fire Blue and White ministers and Blue and White would not be able to submit no-

confidence motions against him.

Publicly, Gantz said he was unimpressed, tweeting that the offer was “spin.” “One who wants unity does not postpone his own trial... and does not send proposals for emergency unity through the media; rather, he sends a negotiating staff to a meeting,” Gantz wrote. “When you’re serious, we’ll talk.” Then they started talking behind the scenes. Gantz warmed up to the idea of an emergency government, thinking that putting political differences aside was necessary to help the country pull through this massive public health and economic crisis, even though he still deeply distrusted Netanyahu.

Eleven days after his tweet dismissing the prime minister, Gantz found himself elected Knesset speaker.

In between, Blue and White pushed out MKs from the right-wing bloc who served as committee chairmen and attempted to do the same to then-speaker Yuli Edelstein, arguing that Gantz had the support of the majority of the Knesset – though custom in the legislature had always been to wait for a new government to be formed. Edelstein ended up resigning following a court order to allow a vote on his removal, and it looked like Blue and White candidate Meir Cohen was a sure thing.

When Gantz submitted his candidacy as Knesset speaker it sent shock waves through the political field. It wasn’t that he so coveted the position – in fact, he was caught on camera joking to MK Miki Haimovich that he never before hoped to win a vote for a job that he didn’t want. Gantz became Knesset speaker as a placeholder to stop further moves hostile to Netanyahu in the Knesset and facilitate continued coalition talks.

This showed just how serious he was in negotiating a unity government with Netanyahu.

It also led Blue and White to break apart, with Yair Lapid-led Yesh Atid and Moshe Ya’alon’s Telem forming a separate faction. Gantz had broken the agreement forming the Blue and White bloc, which stipulated that a Yesh Atid MK would get the role of Knesset speaker.

But more than that, Lapid and Ya’alon, who had both been politically burned by Netanyahu in the past, had no trust in the prime minister, and for that reason – and because Netanyahu is under indictment on several counts of corruption – did not want to be in a government with him.

So Gantz was left with less than half of Blue and White – 15 seats out of the 33 it won – compared to Likud’s 36 and the 58-seat right-wing bloc. If Labor’s announced merger with Blue and White becomes official, Gantz’s seats will grow to 17.

In theory, the problem of Gantz being overpowered was going to be solved by having a “parity government,” in which each political side had an equal number of cabinet ministers. In practice, the two Blue and White rebels making up the Derech Eretz Party, plus MK Orly Levy-Abecassis, meant there were 61 right-wing MKs in the burgeoning coalition that could overwhelm Gantz’s centrists in any Knesset vote, even if there was a tie in the cabinet.

As coalition talks went on, they became mired by disagreements over the application of Israeli law in Judea and Samaria, and the judiciary. Gantz and Netanyahu seem to have reached an agreement on postponing settlement annexation, but there was a lot of back-and-forth on the legal system.

Gantz threatened to pass laws in the Knesset that would hurt Netanyahu – instituting term limits and prohibiting a prime minister to remain in office if indicted – if negotiations didn’t go in Blue and White’s direction on judicial matters. But while there was a majority for such moves weeks ago, the parties to Gantz’s left no longer have any trust in him, and could pull the old parliamentary excuse of “our almost-identical draft bill is better” and not support him. The threat seemed to work on Netanyahu, but Gantz’s leverage here is wearing thin.

Netanyahu agreed that Gantz could appoint the justice minister, but wanted veto power – and did not like Gantz’s top candidate, MK Avi Nissenkorn. Gantz sought to block changes to the way judges are selected, and Netanyahu leaned toward a yes, but outrage from within Likud stopped him

from agreeing to it.

Over a week ago, the sides said a coalition agreement was ready and it just needed to be signed. But it has not been signed, with some on Gantz's side accusing Netanyahu of using delay tactics. Now, Gantz's time as the prime ministerial nominee is about to run out.

Was this all a bait-and-switch maneuver by Netanyahu so he can remain prime minister without a rotation with Gantz in a year and a half? It's unclear. When the prime minister called for an emergency unity government, he did not seem to have any way to remain in office other than working with Gantz. But now that Blue and White is a fraction of its former size and there is a majority for right-wing moves in the Knesset, Netanyahu may believe that new options have opened up.

This does not mean that the door is closed on a unity government, and in fact Likud and Blue and White released a joint statement on Sunday night – one of the surest signs that negotiations are truly taking place.

But if talks continue past Monday night, Netanyahu will have even greater advantages over Gantz than before. Netanyahu has political experience and almost unmatched savvy, along with far more MKs behind him. But, hey, Gantz will still be Knesset speaker.

### **ISRAEL HAS A PROMISING CORONAVIRUS EXIT STRATEGY. THERE ARE JUST TWO PROBLEMS WITH IT** (Amos Harel, Ha'aretz 4/13/20)

Throughout the coronavirus crisis Prof. Sigal Sadetsky, head of the Health Ministry's public health services division, has played the proverbial bad cop of the story. She repeatedly expresses disappointment with Israel's high incidence of illness and sounded the alarm that the worst is yet to come. But for a minute or two during an interview with Channel 12 News on Friday night, Sadetsky allowed herself a bit of optimism. "We managed to flatten the curve," she said. "I'm happy to say that we're in good shape."

Israel isn't the only place taking pride in how it's coped with the pandemic. Even in New York state, which is still seeing nearly 800 deaths a day from the virus, has had talk this weekend of a bending of the curve — an admission that, at least for now, the blackest forecasts are not coming true. In Italy and Spain, two of the hardest-hit countries in western Europe, the number of new cases each day has been in decline; the number of deaths each day has been in a decline for two weeks. Nevertheless, every day more than 500 people continue to die from COVID-19 in each of these countries.

The figures in Israel, of course, are much, much lower in terms of fatalities, the number of people in critical condition and the number of those on ventilators. But while the most pessimistic forecasts have not come to pass, there is reason to fear that lifting the increasingly tighter lockdown imprudently and without proper controls could set off a more widespread outbreak. A group of consultants to the National Security Council said in a document, whose contents were reported by the Kan public broadcaster, that the first steps toward easing the lockdown can begin once the number of new COVID-19 cases reported each day falls to around 10.

There are only two problems with this promising theory. One: At present, even with all the restrictions in place, there are still a few hundred new cases each day. Two: The low number of tests and the continued slow pace of testing undermines the credibility of the numbers. The only way to get close to the goal is by expediting the entire testing process so that people who came in contact with a patient can be tracked down within hours after the results come back.

Emergency regulations have reduced the workforce at most workplaces to 15 percent of their pre-pandemic levels. The Finance Ministry plans to lift that to 30 percent, with the approval of the cabinet. Some sectors, such as aviation, tourism, leisure and entertainment, restaurants and conferences, will remain closed. And unfortunately for parents, schools won't be reopening any time soon. (If it's any comfort, New York City announced Saturday that its public schools will remain closed for the rest of the school year.)

The Finance Ministry's exit plan would keep old people in their homes

indefinitely. That would be very difficult. And what about younger people with conditions that make them vulnerable to the virus? The gradual return to economic activity increases the risk to them and will keep many of them out of the workforce for as long as the coronavirus continues to affect Israelis.

In the United States, as in Israel, a wide range of exit strategies are under scrutiny, even though the pandemic is far from being over there. All of them call for a gradual exit over a period of around 18 months and include harsh restrictions on freedom of movement and violations of individual privacy, justified by the need to collect information about the spread of the virus.

The picture in Israel is not very different. A critical component in any such plan concerns the development of a vaccine for the coronavirus. Scientists are optimistic about this possibility, but they all say it will take at least another 12 to 18 months.

But the story doesn't end there. The global capacity for manufacturing vaccines is limited. Large countries, such as China and the United States, want to make sure that their own citizens are the first in line. Israel is largely on its own. If the experiments being conducted at the Israel Institute for Biological Research in Nes Tziona, are successful, there might be an Israeli contribution to the global effort. And who knows, maybe it could help improve relations with other countries in the region.

The government's zigzags over the Passover closures continued over the first part of the holiday, from Wednesday evening to Thursday evening. At first there were proposals to impose additional specific curfews on Haredi communities, whose rates of coronavirus infection are far above the national average. Pushback from the ultra-Orthodox cabinet members caused Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to retreat.

In the midst of this came news of an egregious breach in the bulwark the state erected at Ben-Gurion International Airport against the pandemic. Days after media outlets warned of the problem and the cabinet promised to address it, flights from New York, Ukraine and other destinations continue to land without anyone to meet the passengers, check on their condition and see to it that they enter isolation for two weeks, in accordance with emergency regulations. As expected, the news set off a round of finger-pointing among officials, and Netanyahu ordered the suspension of all incoming passenger flights until a solution can be found.

Then there's the tragedy unfolding at many of the country's nursing homes. More than a month after identifying the first person infected at Jerusalem's Migdal Nofim, the coronavirus continues to rampage through dozens of assisted living facilities, whose residents account for nearly one-third of all deaths caused by COVID-19. No agency has assumed responsibility for addressing the issue, and in the meantime the Health and Social Services Ministries and the army's Home Front Command trade accusations.

To the list of this year's maddening Passover plagues we can add the respective violations of government emergency regulations by Netanyahu and President Reuven Rivlin, each of whom celebrated the seder Wednesday night with family members who do not live with them. (Rivlin at least issued a kind of apology, while Netanyahu merely sicced his attack trolls on the reporters who disclosed his transgression.)

Israelis are being asked to make an enormous sacrifice as part of the effort to flatten the infection curve. Many have forgone their lifestyles, given up their communal religious rituals, curtailed their family ties and consented to unprecedented infringements of privacy. In addition, many are paying a huge economic price that will only increase over time. When the country's leaders openly flout the directives, they send the message that there is one law for them and another for ordinary citizens. The success of the virus mitigation policy depends above all on the cooperation of the public.

In the thick of the crisis, the state is not being transparent about how it is dealing with the pandemic and is not providing sufficient data about the incidence of illness. The latest incidents, which further erode public trust in the government's considerations, are liable to keep the battle against the virus from succeeding.

Kemp Mill Synagogue & Young Israel Shomrai Emunah present the

# 40<sup>th</sup> Annual

# Yom HaShoah v'Hagvurah Program

featuring



# Alex Raden



Alex Raden was born in Warsaw, Poland in 1934. Following the invasion of Poland in 1939, the Nazis confined Alex's family and other Jews to the Warsaw Ghetto where they experienced starvation and ravaging epidemics and witnessed mass deportations. Alex's family escaped from the Ghetto in 1943, shortly before the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Thereafter, Alex was separated from his family and hidden by non-Jews. After the war, Alex was reunited with his mother and sister; his father had been killed. In 1951, he emigrated to the US. Alex married Eva Rosenberg, also a Holocaust survivor, in 1958. The Radens have 3 children and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. They are members of the Baltimore Orthodox community.

**Tuesday, April 21, 2020**

**7:30 pm**

**This program will take place online.**

**Login information will be made available after Pesach**

**Dvar Torah by Rabbi Brahm Weinberg**

**Co-Sponsors:**

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Children grades 6 and above are encouraged to attend with their parents

*Sign language interpreter available  
on request (by April 6) sponsored by Sulam, Inc  
Please email [dkatz@yise.org](mailto:dkatz@yise.org) if interested.*

