

YISE Programs and Listings

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 or email 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 Chessed 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 or Miriam Friedman, 301-754-1517, 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>

Community Programs & Listings

Virtual Religion: Halachic Perspectives on Telepresence - a virtual Lunch & Learn with Rabbi Yitzhak Grossman. Monday, April 6, 12 Noon, Zoom - Meeting ID: 746 455 2195, call in 301-715-8592

Making A Great Solo Seder - Presented by Rebbetzin Chani Silver, Rebbetzin of the Young Israel of Greater Pittsburgh. Sunday, April 5, 5:00 PM, <https://join.freeconferencecall.com/bhammer8> or dial in 978-990-5000, access code: 690709#. For more information or to ask questions for Rebbetzin Silver, email rebbetzins@youngisrael.org A program of the National Council of Young Israel.

HaMizrachi Pesach 5780 - Download and print at www.rza.org/hamizrachipesach

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

Free Webinar on Job Search - Wednesday, April 8, 12 Noon, on networking. For more information, please visit <https://www.sixfigurestart.com/about/upcoming-events/>

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 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 vp@kempmilltoastmasters.com for more info. Zoom meeting ID: 986 546 841

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 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. With Pesach coming soon, we expect that to increase. 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 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 for additional and updated information.

Capital Kosher Pantry: Annual Chometz-Be-Gone Drive - As you clean your home for Pesach, please donate unwanted Chometz to the Capital Kosher Pantry. Food should be shelf-stable, in sealed containers, well within the sell-by date and have kosher certification. Please deposit food in our collection bins located outside KMS, YISE and the Woodside Shul; in Shalom Kosher and Moti's Market; and outside our Pantry at 1910 University Blvd West. All bins are checked daily. Please do not bring any Chometz after April 7.

The Franco Foundation - Helping the community from within the community. The Foundation helps our community's needy all year long, and distributes more around Pesach to cover additional expenses. It is distributing assistance through Shalom scrip as well as financial assistance. If you know of a family or individual that requires assistance for Pesach or is in a financial bind, please contact the Foundation at its email address, below. Your suggestion will remain anonymous. Please send your generous tax-deductible donation to: The Franco Foundation/613 Bromley Street/Silver Spring, MD 20902, or through PayPal, at thefrancofoundation@gmail.com

Daily Halacha Program from Rabbi Eliyahu Reingold - Receive one every day in your inbox. Visit 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

The Week Ahead	Sunday April 5	Monday April 6	Tuesday April 7	Wednesday, April 8 Erev Pesach	Thursday April 9 - Pesach	Friday April 10 - Pesach
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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 5 - 7 at 7:25 PM (Ashkenazi)/7:20 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 on Hilchos Pesach in the evenings (Sunday through Thursday, 7:30 PM) using Zoom A listed above.

Halachic Times: Earliest Talis and Tefillin: 5:52 AM, Latest Krias Shma: 9:53 AM, Earliest Mincha: 1:44 PM

Upcoming Events

Sunday, April 5	Seder for Newbies, 8:00 PM
Monday, April 13	Conversations in Coping, 8:00 PM

Pesach

April 8 - 16, 2020, 15 - 22 Nissan 5780

Full schedule will be available soon. Erev Pesach times:
Finish eating Chametz by 10:33 AM, Recite Kol Chamira by 11:51 AM
Light Candles 7:21 PM, Seder starts after 8:20 PM

Next Shabbos Shorts Deadline: Tuesday, April 7 at 12:00 Noon

Submit items for the Shabbos Shorts to:
announce@yise.org Office Phone: 301-593-4465 Office
Fax: 301-593-2330 Eruv line: 301-593-5561

E-Mail: office@yise.org Website: www.yise.org

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

Wednesday - Friday - Closed for Pesach

Rabbi Dovid Rosenbaum	Sammy Franco - President
Rabbi Binyamin Silver - Asst. Rabbi	Simi Franco - Office Manager

CONVERSATIONS IN COPING: 3 SEPARATE SESSIONS

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DURING CORONAVIRUS**



Young Israel Shomrai Emunah



MANAGING ANXIETY IN CHALLENGING TIMES
DR. RACHEL RAVIN, PH.D, CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST
MONDAY 3/30 -- 9PM



**ANXIETY, SELF-CARE, AND USING COVID-19 TO ENHANCE OUR
RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS**
DR. EMILY FRIEDMAN, PSY.D, CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST
WEDNESDAY 4/1 -- 9PM



**CORONA, CATASTROPHIZING, CAPPUCCHINO, COPING AND
HAKADOSH BARUCH HU: SOME THOUGHTS FROM A PSYCHOLOGIST**
DR. HOWIE SCHULMAN, PH.D, CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST
MONDAY 4/13 -- 8PM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/4169639000>

Meeting ID: 416 963 9000

One tap mobile

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No pin necessary

OPEN TO THE COMMUNITY

Please email questions in advance to: Esteesilver13@gmail.com



YISE



Sunday, 4/5

9:00 am Tehillim & Parsha, Rabbi Rosenbaum

9:30 am Women's Musar Shiur, Rabbi Rosenbaum

7:30 pm Tehillim & Halacha, Rabbi Rosenbaum

8:00 pm Seder Guide for Newbies, Rabbi Silver

Monday, 4/6

8:30 am Tehillim & Parsha, Rabbi Rosenbaum

7:30 pm Tehillim & Halacha, Rabbi Rosenbaum

Tuesday, 4/7

6:00 am Mens' Gemora, Rabbi Rosenbaum

8:30 am Tehillim & Parsha, Rabbi Rosenbaum

7:30 pm Tehillim & Halacha, Rabbi Rosenbaum

Wednesday, 4/8

7:00 am Erev Pesach Siyum

8:00 am Erev Pesach Siyum

9:00 am Erev Pesach Siyum

**Join us on Zoom
for all events**

Meeting ID: 416 963 9000

Call in: (301) 715-8592

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www.yise.org/whatsapp

This week, we continue the book of the Torah devoted to the laws of *Korbanot* / sacrificial offerings. Based on verses in our *Parashah* such as, "This is the Torah of the *Olah* / burnt-offering" (*Vayikra* 6:2); "This is the Torah of the *Minchah* / meal-offering" (6:7); and similar verses, the *Gemara* (*Menachot* 110a) derives that: "If one studies the Torah section dealing with the *Korban Olah* or the *Korban Minchah* or another *Korban*, the Torah views it as if he brought that offering." [Until here from the *Gemara*]

Rabbeinu Bachya ben Asher z"l (Spain; 1255-1340) writes: Our Sages refer to one who examines the meaning of the verses, who searches for what they are hinting and conveying. In that way, the "eyes of his mind" will be enlightened, and they will grasp wonders in the verses discussing the sacrificial offerings. That, in turn, will inspire one to try harder to observe the Torah and *Mitzvot*, and his sins will be forgiven as if he brought a *Korban*. The *Gemara* cannot be referring to someone who just reads the verses superficially without looking into their meaning.

Rabbeinu Bachya continues: This is the meaning, as well, of statements such as (*Berachot* 4b), "One who recites *Tehilah Le'David*" every day is guaranteed a portion in the World-to-Come." [This refers to "*Ashrei*," which we recite thrice daily because of this *Gemara*.] The idea is that if one reflects on the meaning of the verses, he will recognize G-d's wonders and will strengthen his own *Emunah* and his own Divine service; then he will merit *Olam Ha'ba*. (*Rabbeinu Bachya Al Ha'Torah*)

Shabbat Ha'gadol

"Behold! I am sending you Eliyahu the prophet, before the great and awesome day of Hashem." (*Malachi* 3:23 - *Haftarah* for *Shabbat Ha'gadol*)

R' Avraham Yoffen z"l (1887-1970; *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Novardok Yeshiva in Bialystok, Poland; New York and Yerushalayim) writes: This verse reminds us of Moshe Rabbeinu's announcement to *Bnei Yisrael* in Egypt that they would be redeemed. The fact that our Sages enacted reading this on the *Shabbat* before *Pesach* teaches us that, in this month of redemption, we not only must remind ourselves anew of the Exodus from Egypt, we also must prepare ourselves for the future redemption. The roots of the future redemption are found within the Exodus, as the *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 91b) observes in connection with the verse (*Shmot* 15:1), "Then Moshe and *Bnei Yisrael* will sing." The *Gemara* notes: The verse does not say, "sang," as would have been appropriate for an event that occurred long ago at the *Yam Suf*, but rather, "will sing." This is an allusion in the Torah to the future *Techiyat Ha'metim* / Resurrection of the Dead. [Until here from the *Gemara*]

Therefore, continues R' Yoffen, it is incumbent upon us, as we busy ourselves with remembering the Exodus, to also examine our present state and determine whether we are preparing ourselves for the Redemption. We must ask ourselves whether we have fulfilled (*Shmot* 12:21), "Draw forth and buy for yourselves a sheep for your families, and slaughter the *Pesach*-offering," according to the interpretation of the *Midrash Mechilta*: "Draw yourselves away from false gods and cling to *Mitzvot*."

- Continued in box inside -

Hamaayan / The Torah Spring

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“What is left over from the flesh of the feast-offering on the third day shall be burned in the fire.” (7:17)

The *Peshat* of this verse commands us to burn the leftovers of a *Korban* once the time allotted by the Torah for eating it has expired.

R' Menachem Mendel Stern z"l (rabbi of Sighet, Hungary; died 1834) interprets the verse allegorically: We are taught that, on *Shabbat*, one may “repair” the weekdays that preceded it. We also are taught that the “light” of the previous *Shabbat* lasts through the third day of the week, whereas the “light” of the coming *Shabbat* begins to appear on the fourth day of the week. Therefore, says our verse, be sure that whatever is left over from the previous week that needs to be repaired is eradicated by the “third day,” *i.e.*, the third day of the new week.

Even that, notes R' Stern, is not the ideal. Preferably, says the preceding verse, “it must be eaten on the day he offered his feast-offering.” If one has something to repair or fix – *i.e.*, a need to repent – he should do so on the very same day that he sinned. *(Derech Emunah)*

– Continued from back page –

R' Yoffen continues: The *Haftarah* speaks of a general malaise in the Jewish People’s service of G-d; for example (3:13), “You said, ‘Serving *Elokim* is useless, and what did we gain from keeping His charge or from walking submissively before *Hashem*, Master of Legions?’” The prophet speaks of a world where it appears that dishonesty does pay, where successful people take advantage of widows and orphans without consequence to themselves; a world that advances in all areas of science, leading it to deny the existence of higher values.

In such an age, one might think that the quality of our *Mitzvot* does not matter; as long as we are going through the motions of performing *Mitzvot*, G-d is pleased. To counter this view, writes R' Yoffen, the prophet says (3:18), “Then you will return and see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves *Elokim* and one who does not serve Him.” The *Gemara* (*Chagigah* 9b) teaches that “one who serves *Elokim*” refers to a person who reviews his learning 101 times, while “one who does not serve Him” refers to a person who reviews his learning “only” 100 times. Each additional bit of effort that is put into a *Mitzvah* is noticed by *Hashem* and makes a difference. *Hashem* values every single good deed, even a single good word, and, on the other hand, the depth of G-d’s judgment for any laxity in serving Him is great. No detail is ignored!

(Ha'mussar Ve'ha'da'at: Shmot/Vayikra p.143)

“This is the Torah of the *Olah-offering*; it is the *Olah-offering* . . .” (6:2)

[As noted on the front page, the *Gemara* (*Menachot* 110a) derives from this verse and similar verses that: “If one studies the Torah section dealing with the *Korban Olah* or the *Korban Minchah* or another *Korban*, the Torah views it as if he brought that offering.”]

R' Moshe Cheifetz z"l (Italy; 1664-1711) writes: Studying a *Korban's* laws cannot fully substitute for offering that *Korban*, because, even if one fulfills his obligation to *Hashem* thereby, the *Kohanim* are nevertheless deprived of their share, *i.e.*, the meat they would have received from each offering were the *Bet Ha'mikdash* standing. Thus, the only offering that can be replaced fully by studying is the *Olah*, which is burnt entirely on the altar and not eaten by the *Kohanim*. That is why our verse adds: “it is the *Olah-offering*,” – the Torah of the *Olah-offering* is like the offering itself.

(Melechet Machshevet)

“If he shall offer it for a *Todah* / thanksgiving-offering . . .” (7:12)

Rashi z"l writes: This refers to one who brings an offering on account of a matter that requires thanksgiving, *i.e.*, on account of a miraculous deliverance that he experienced, specifically: one who made a sea-voyage, one who traveled in the wilderness, one who was in prison, or one who was sick and was healed. [Until here from *Rashi*]

R' Menachem Mendel Schneerson z"l (1902-1994; *Lubavitcher Rebbe*) asks: *Rashi's* stated goal is to explain the *Peshat* / “simple meaning” of the verses. If so, what forced *Rashi* to interpret our verse as referring to someone who experienced a miracle? Maybe anyone who needs to thank *Hashem* should bring a *Todah* offering!

He explains: If the obligation to bring a *Todah* offering applied to everyone who needs to thank *Hashem*, every Jew would have to bring a *Todah* offering every single day, for G-d performs kindnesses for every person at every moment. It is not plausible, however, that the Torah is demanding that we bring a *Todah* offering every day. Therefore, *Rashi* had to interpret the verse differently.

Still, why did *Rashi* limit the obligation to bring a *Todah* offering to one who experiences specific miracles? The *Lubavitcher Rebbe* explains: Moshe Rabbeinu was speaking to the Generation of the Desert, which saw miracles every day, including the *Mahn*, the Clouds of Glory, and the Well of Miriam. If all miracles required a *Todah* offering, they would have needed to bring a *Todah* every day, and that, too, is not plausible.

(Be'urei Ha'Chumash)

Likutei Divrei Torah

Gleanings of Divrei Torah on Parashat Hashavuah
via the Internet

In memory of our beloved mother,
Evelyn G. Butler Morris, a"h
(Chava Gitel Bas Shraga Feivel HaLevi V'Michla Reichel)
6 Nisan
Bev Morris (Silver Spring)
Burton D. Morris (Harrisburg)
Elayne Mayerfeld (Los Angeles)

Volume 27, Issue 24

Shabbat HaGadol - Parashat Tzav

5781 - B"H

Covenant and Conversation: R. Jonathan Sacks

Destructive & Self-Destructive - This sedra, speaking about sacrifices, prohibits the eating of blood: Wherever you live, you must not eat the blood of any bird or animal. If anyone eats blood, that person must be cut off from his people. This is not just one prohibition among others. The ban on eating blood is fundamental to the Torah. For example, it occupies a central place in the covenant God makes with Noah – and through him, all of humanity – after the Flood: “But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it”. So too, Moses returns to the subject in his great closing addresses in the book of Deuteronomy: But be sure you do not eat the blood, because the blood is the life, and you must not eat the life with the meat. You must not eat the blood; pour it out on the ground like water. Do not eat it, so that it may go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is right in the eyes of the Lord.

What is so wrong about eating blood? Maimonides and Nahmanides offer conflicting interpretations. For Maimonides – consistent with his programme throughout *The Guide for the Perplexed* – it is forbidden as part of the Torah's extended battle against idolatry. He notes that the Torah uses identical language about idolatry and eating blood:

I will set My face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from his people.

I will set My face against that man [who engages in Moloch worship] and his family and will cut him off from his people.

In no context other than blood and idolatry is the expression “set My face against” used. Idolaters, says Maimonides, believed that blood was the food of the spirits, and that by eating it, they would have “something in common with the spirits.” Eating blood is forbidden because of its association with idolatry.

Nahmanides says, contrariwise, that the ban has to do with human nature. We are affected by what we eat:

If one were to eat the life of all flesh, and it would then attach itself to one's own blood, and they would become united in one's heart, and the result would be a thickening and coarseness of the human soul so that it would closely approach the nature of the animal soul which resided in what he ate...

Eating blood, implies Nahmanides, makes us cruel, bestial, animal-like.

Which explanation is correct? We now have copious evidence, through archaeology and anthropology, that both are. Maimonides was quite right to see the eating of blood as an idolatrous rite. Human sacrifice was widespread in the ancient world. Among the Greeks, for example, the god Kronos required human victims. The Maenads, female worshippers of Dionysus, were said to tear living victims apart with their hands and eat them. The Aztecs of South America practised human sacrifice on a vast scale, believing that without its meals of human blood, the sun would die:

“Convinced that in order to avoid the final cataclysm it was necessary to fortify the sun, they undertook for themselves the mission of furnishing it with the

vital energy found only in the precious liquid which keeps man alive.”

Barbara Ehrenreich, from whose book *Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War*, these facts come, argues that one of the most formative experiences of the first human beings must have been the terror of being attacked by an animal predator. They knew that the likely outcome was that one of the group, usually an outsider, an invalid, a child, or perhaps an animal, would fall as prey, giving the others a chance to escape. It was this embedded memory that became the basis of subsequent sacrificial rites.

Ehrenreich's thesis is that “the sacrificial ritual in many ways mimics the crisis of a predator's attack. An animal or perhaps a human member of the group is singled out for slaughter, often in a spectacularly bloody manner.” The eating of the victim and his or its blood temporarily occupies the predator, allowing the rest of the group to escape in safety. That is why blood is offered to the gods. As Mircea Eliade noted, “the divine beings who play a part in initiation ceremonies are usually imagined as beasts of prey – lions and leopards (initiatory animals par excellence) in Africa, jaguars in South America, crocodiles and marine monsters in Oceania.” Blood sacrifice appears when human beings are sufficiently well organised in groups to make the transition from prey to predator. They then relive their fears of being attacked and eaten.

Ehrenreich does not end there, however. Her view is that this emotional reaction – fear and guilt – survives to the present as part of our genetic endowment from earlier times. It leaves two legacies: one, the human tendency to band together in the face of an external threat; the other, the willingness to risk self-sacrifice for the sake of the group. These emotions appear at times of war. They are not the cause of war, but they invest it with “the profound feelings – dread, awe, and the willingness to sacrifice – that make it ‘sacred’ to us.” They help explain why it is so easy to mobilise people by conjuring up the spectre of an external enemy.

War is a destructive and self-destructive activity. Why then does it persist? Ehrenreich's insight suggests an answer. It is the dysfunctional survival of instincts, profoundly necessary in an age of hunter-gatherers, into an era in which such responses are no longer necessary. Human beings still thrill at the prospect of shedding blood.

Maimonides was right to see in the blood sacrifice a central idolatrous practice. Nahmanides was equally correct to see it as a symptom of human cruelty. We now sense the profound wisdom of the law forbidding the eating of blood. Only thus could human beings be gradually cured of the deeply ingrained instinct, deriving from a world of predators and prey, in which the key choice is to kill or be killed.

Evolutionary psychology has taught us about these genetic residues from earlier times which – because they are not rational – cannot be cured by reason alone, but only by ritual, strict prohibition, and habituation. The contemporary world continues to be scarred by violence and terror. Sadly, the ban against blood sacrifice is still relevant. The instinct against

which it is a protest – sacrificing life to exorcise fear – still lives on.

Where there is fear, it is easy to turn against those we see as “the other” and learn to hate them. Which is why each of us, especially we leaders, have to take a stand against the instinct to fear, and against the corrosive power of hate. All it takes for evil to flourish is for good people to do nothing.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

“And [Moses] brought near the second ram, the consecration-inauguration ram, and Aaron and his sons leaned their hands upon the head of the ram. And [Moses] slaughtered it”

The second part of our portion of Tzav deals with the seven-day induction ceremony of Aaron and his sons as the priests-kohanim of the Sanctuary. Moses the Prophet conducts the proceedings: First he “invests” them, dressing them in their unique priestly garb, father and sons; and then he slaughters the second ram, the consecration-inauguration ram, “which fills and completes the function of the priests [father and sons] within their priesthood”.

I would submit that the seemingly insignificant phrase “and [Moses] slaughtered it” in the introductory text to our commentary, is one of the most poignant and moving phrases of the entire Bible which also illuminates the purpose of the priest-kohen in contrast to the prophet. The secret to understanding Moses' tragedy and Aaron's gift lies in the nuances of interpretation which emanate from a rare cantillation “trope” – the shalshelet – which appears above the letter “het” in the Hebrew word *vayishhat* (“and he (Moses) slaughtered.”) The cantillation tropes provide the musical accompaniment to the words of the Bible, telling the Torah reader when to pause (as in a comma), when to stop (at the end of a verse), when to sound decisive and when to strike a high note. None of the tropes are as distinctive, or as lengthy, as is the shalshelet; it appears only four times in the Bible, usually connoting the drama of confused hesitancy and deep apprehension.

For example, when Joseph is alone with Mrs. Potiphar, and she attempts to seduce him, he refuses – “*vayi'ma'en*.” Remember he is lonely and alone, a stranger in a strange land, feeling rejected by his family and needy for even a fleeting moment of warmth and physical connection. He is mindful of how his father would view such an act of adultery, and yet apprehensive that a refusal could cause this powerful woman to destroy him. The lengthy and meandering shalshelet atop the alef of *va'yi'ma'en* suggests all of the conflicting complexities within Joseph's refusal.

But what is complex about slaughtering a ram? Why does the evocative and dramatic shalshelet appear in our verse describing the consecration of Aaron and his sons? In order to understand this, we must realize that the initial plan was for Moses to have received the Kehuna – priesthood, the hereditary leadership function in Israel.

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However, when the Almighty suggests to Moses that he be His emissary to Pharaoh to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, Moses demurs, again and again refusing the mantle of leadership, declaring himself to be unworthy. At length, “the Lord became angry with Moses, and He said, ‘Is there not Aaron your brother, the Levite? He will surely speak... he will be your mouthpiece, and you will provide for him [the words] of God.’” In this context, God initially refers to Aaron as the Levite, not as the kohen-priest; But when Moses keeps refusing to be the emissary, God removes the dynastic priesthood from Moses and bestows it upon Aaron.

And I believe that this switch in role was much more than a result of God’s anger; it rather had to do with the different functions of priest and prophet and the different personalities and functions of Aaron and Moses.

Moses was a man of God; his active intellect actually “kissed” the active intellect of the Divine, and so Moses was able, by dint of his almost “super human” qualities of mind and soul, to communicate God’s Torah to Israel and all posterity. We do see from here, however, that Moses had no difficulty in communication; indeed he communicated in his words the biblical book of Deuteronomy (see the Abarbanel) so why does Moses describe himself as “heavy of speech”? I believe that what he meant was that he had little patience for small talk, for human fellowship, he was totally immersed in his discussions with God, in learning and communicating Torah. So involved was he with Divine that he divorces his wife; he even neglects to circumcise his son Eliezer.

Moses only seeks Divine fellowship and Divine Torah talk; and such endowments of intellect and spirit cannot be passed down as an inheritance to the next generation; they are sui generis, to the one greatest prophet who ever lived. As the Bible confirms, “Never again has there arisen in Israel a Prophet like Moses, whom Hashem has known “face to face”.

Aaron, on the other hand, was a man of the people, who loved making peace between individuals. He loved all of humanity and through loving acts and words, brought everyone close to Torah.

Moses acquired the Torah intellectually, but Aaron taught it to the masses with love. And acts of loving-kindness can be passed down from parent to child, from generation to generation; to speak loving words and to do loving deeds can be learned and bequeathed. And so Aaron is blessed with the Kehunah-Priesthood, sanctifying him and his descendants to bless the nation Israel with love. Aaron was the loving Kohen-Priest teacher of the nation of Israel; Moses was the lonely servant of God who faithfully provided the Torah for all eternity.

Nevertheless, Moses the human being would have loved to see his sons assume religious leadership positions in Israel; but they do not. And when he is thrust in the position of directing the investiture of Aaron and his sons, and especially when he slaughters the consecration-inauguration ram expressing the dynastic aspect of the priesthood, Moses cannot help but hesitate to give vent to feelings of loss, frustration and even a little jealousy, as well as apprehension as to his own continuity within his own family line. Moses, who gave himself over completely to God and nation, understands at this pivotal moment the personal sacrifice it had cost, the loss of family closeness and continuity it had engendered. This I believe is the message of the shalshela, the tragedy of Moses’ life although – or perhaps because – he was God’s most faithful servant to all eternity. His pre-occupation with God may have been the reason he failed to bring the Israelites into the Promised Land; but because of that

pre-occupation, the world receive its greatest legacy – God’s and Moses’ Torah!

The Person in the Parsha: R. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

Increasing Gratitude - There are certain phrases or expressions that many of us find hard to say. “I love you” is one of them. Another such phrase is “thank you”.

Although these words are difficult for us to pronounce, they each reflect powerful emotions and, when finally uttered, have an unbelievable impact upon the person to whom they are addressed. It is wonderful to hear that one is loved, and it is also wonderful to learn that another person is grateful and appreciative of what one has done for him or her.

In our tradition, gratitude is a primary value. Bachya ibn Pakuda, in his Duties of the Heart, stresses the centrality of gratitude in the religious experience. For him, the worship of God begins with a sense of gratitude for being alive, for being healthy, for having one’s needs met.

It is no wonder, then, that as the book of Leviticus enumerates the many types of sacrificial offerings which comprise the ancient Temple service, the korban todah, or thanksgiving offering, is prominently included. In Tzav, the sacrifice known as the korban shelamim, or peace offering, is described in detail. Generally speaking, when a person makes a vow to offer such a sacrifice, whether in a time of distress or when remembering God’s tender mercies, he must bring an animal offering. He brings it to the Temple, the kohen (priest) performs various ritual procedures, and then most of the meat can be consumed by the individual who donated the offering, as long as he finishes it all during the day he brings it, and the following night and day, providing the individual with much more than 24 hours within which to consume the meat.

But the passage which deals with this offering begins with a subtype of the shelamim – the todah. In this instance, besides bringing an animal sacrifice, the donor must also bring four types of bread, and ten breads of each type, totaling forty loaves. The meat and the accompanying loaves of bread must be consumed by daybreak after the night following the preparation of the sacrifice.

The Netziv suggests that the thanksgiving offering, or todah, must be accompanied by a public celebration with many guests invited. Therefore, unlike the ordinary shelamim, the numerous loaves of bread are prescribed so that all the guests can partake of the meal. The time within which the meat and breads can be consumed is limited to much less than 24 hours, necessitating the invitation of numerous guests to share in the thanksgiving. The Netziv teaches us here that expressions of gratitude should ideally not be kept private. Thankfulness is an emotion to share with others in a public celebration.

Not long ago, I came across an article in an academic journal of psychology. The article was entitled Can Prayer Increase Gratitude? The authors quote numerous research studies which correlate gratitude with mental health. They therefore seek ways to promote the feeling of gratitude to foster increased mental health. One way they tried to instill gratitude in their subjects was to encourage them to engage in prayer.

How consistent their findings were to the teachings of Judaism! They found that when people engaged in prayer, they became more aware not of what they were lacking, but of the blessings they had to be thankful for. The very act of prayer inculcated an attitude of gratitude.

The sacrifices offered in our ancient Temple were forcibly discontinued two millennia ago. Our sages teach us that our prayers, although they are mere words, substitute for the sacrifices of old. Whereas once upon a time a Jew would express his gratitude

Likutei Divrei Torah

by bringing a thanksgiving offering, today he recites a prayer instead.

The article in the psychology journal teaches us that the relationship between prayer and gratitude is a mutual one. Not only does gratitude lead to thankful prayer, but prayer leads to increased thankfulness.

Thus, for those of us who come by our sense of gratitude naturally and with ease, these sacrificial offerings, or these days, the appropriate prayers, can help us express that gratitude.

But for those of us whose sense of gratitude is numbed, prayer is one way to free feelings of thankfulness which are otherwise locked up within us. It allows those feelings to well up and to be effectively expressed.

We often hear the admonition to “count our blessings”. Many of us, either because of our inborn pessimism, or because of the difficulties of life which seem to overshadow our blessings, find it difficult to acknowledge the positives of our life. Without such acknowledgment, gratitude is impossible.

In this week’s Torah portion, we learn not only that gratitude deserves celebration in the holy Temple, but that temple worship can help us feel grateful for what we do have. And we also learn, following the Netziv, of how worthwhile it is to express gratitude in a circle of family and friends.

That gratitude is the most pleasant of human emotions is so well expressed in these lines from the poet Thomas Gray’s Ode for Music:

Sweet is the breath of vernal shower,
The bees collected treasures sweet,
Sweet music’s melting fall, but sweeter yet
The still small voice of gratitude.

The sage advice we can derive from this week’s Torah portion is: Express gratitude, and not in a “still small voice”, but in a resounding and booming voice for others to hear so that they can share in the emotions of the grateful person, and so that the grateful person can feel those emotions in every fiber of his being.

Dvar Torah: Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Miracles are happening for you right now. Maybe you realise it, maybe you don’t. Parashat Tzav presents us with details of the ‘korban shelamim’, the peace offering, for peace in the world and for peace in one’s home. Then the Torah presents us with a subset of that category – the ‘korban toda’ – the thanksgiving offering, to come and thank Hashem when a miracle has taken place in one’s life.

For the korban shelamim, the peace offering, one is entitled to eat from the animal on the day that one has bought the sacrifice, through the following night and also on the following day. With regard to the korban toda, the thanksgiving offering, the Torah says it must be eaten on the day that it is sacrificed and also through the following night, but not on the second day. But hold on – the toda is one of the shlamim, so why is it different from them?

The Imrei Emet, one of the previous Rebbes of Gur, says: On every single day of our lives God performs miracles for us, that’s why in our Amida prayer we thank Hashem for all the miracles which are with us on every single day and for all his wonders and for all the goodness that never leaves us in the evening, in the morning and in the afternoon.

You see, sometimes we notice a miracle that has happened for us, but mostly we are oblivious to the miracles that happen to us. Isn’t it incredible? it’s an act of God that I can speak to you now, that I can see, that I can hear, that we can function as human beings, that the world can function in the most remarkable and extraordinary way. Therefore, says the Imrei Emet, when I notice a miracle and I come to celebrate it, I only celebrate it today. And why is it restricted only to today? Because tomorrow, please G-d, there’ll be many more miracles! [Excerpt]

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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YAMINA THREATEN TO 'TOPPLE NETANYAHU' IF NEW GOVERNMENT IS NOT TO THEIR LIKING (Israel Hayom 3/20/20)

As the Likud and Blue and White parties continued with their efforts to cobble together a national unity government, many in the right-wing bloc expressed concerns about the large number of portfolios Blue and White leader Benny Gantz is expected to secure for his faction.

At this stage of the negotiations, both blocs have laid claim to 15 portfolios, a serious step down for the right-wing bloc's current 28 portfolios.

The potential division of ministries affects mostly Yamina, the alliance of Habayit Hayehudi, the National Union, and the New Right.

The faction, which currently holds three ministries— Defense for Naftali Bennett, Transportation for Bezalel Smotrich, and Education for Rafi Peretz— lambasted Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "for not even considering Yamina for a major portfolio."

Netanyahu "sold everything that is important to the ideological Right to Blue and White, and the Justice Ministry will probably go to [MK Avi] Nissenkorn, which is a disaster for the Right given that his is very left-wing," one Yamina official told Israel Hayom.

"He sold the Defense, Economy, and Communications portfolio to the Left," he continued. "Netanyahu is basically forming a left-wing government. He made sure the haredim get what they want, but he didn't even think about giving the Interior, Health, or Religious Affairs portfolios to Blue and White."

According to the current understanding between Gantz and Netanyahu both Interior Minister Aryeh Deri (Shas) and Health Minister Yakov Litzman (United Torah Judaism) will remain in office.

Likud officials said in response that "Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke on the phone with the heads of the national camp and made it clear to them that the preservation of the national camp is more important than ever during efforts to establish a unity government.

"The PM made it clear to the faction leaders that the media reports about the negotiations, including the division of portfolios, are false."

NUMBER OF NEW CORONAVIRUS CASES IN HAREDI CITIES SKYROCKETS (Ynet 4/1/20)

The latest statistics reveal the large percentage of new coronavirus cases in Israel in recent days have been recorded in Bnei Brak and Jerusalem, two high-profile ultra-Orthodox cities.

The Health Ministry confirmed on Wednesday the total number of COVID-19 cases in the country now stands at 5,591, with at least 97 people remaining in a serious condition, including 76 patients on ventilators. The death toll from complications related to coronavirus now stands at 21.

According to the latest data, while in most Israeli cities the number of coronavirus patients over the past 24 hours have increased by less than 15 cases, in Bnei Brak - a center of Haredi Judaism - the number of infected is up by 159 with a total count of 730 diagnoses.

In Jerusalem, meanwhile, the number of new coronavirus cases over the past 24 hours has risen by 131, bringing the total number of infected in the city to 781. The city of El'ad, Israel's only officially designated religious municipality, has 79 COVID-19 patients, while the Haredi settlement of Modi'in Illit has 64 cases.

The Haredi community has recently come under scrutiny for failing to comply with the health officials' guidelines meant to prevent the spread of the virus. On Saturday evening some 400 people participated in a funeral proceeding in Bnei Brak, which police forces failed to stop.

In addition, a top Health Ministry official said he's "worried" about a potential mass coronavirus outbreak in Bnei Brak.

"I am very concerned about the large number of residents there, it could be [spreading] like wildfire because of the population density," Dr. Boaz Lev, the head of the Health Ministry's epidemic unit, told Ynet on Wednesday.

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"The high rate [of infection in Bnei Brak] has surprised us, and the more people we test, the more infected we find ... which will result in a further burden on our health care system," he added.

CLOSURE ORDER EXPECTED FOR BNEI BRAK (Arutz-7 4/4/20)

The government will hold a conference call on Thursday at 4:30 PM, during which the ministers will be asked to impose strict traffic restrictions on the city of Bnei Brak. The regulations that were brought before the ministers would define Bnei Brak as a "restricted area" - where restrictions on movement will be enforced, and regulations banning civilians from leaving their homes could be put into effect.

Earlier, Director of Maccabi Health Services, Professor Ran Saar, reported to the Knesset's Coronavirus Committee that over a third of the residents of Bnei Brak could be infected with the coronavirus.

"Around half of Bnei Brak's residents belong to the Maccabi health fund," he said. "According to our data, around 38% of the city's residents are already infected with coronavirus, which translates to around 75,000 people.

"I hope the government will send a large police contingent to the city before Pesach in order to save the situation from deteriorating still further," he added. "There is a relatively large proportion of elderly in Bnei Brak who are especially vulnerable to coronavirus and we could find ourselves with a large number of dead if steps are not taken."

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Around 200,000 people live in Bnei Brak which has a population density of around 73,000 people per square mile. By contrast, nearby Tel Aviv has a population density of just 20,000 people per square mile.

HEALTH MINISTER YA'ACOV LITZMAN AND WIFE DIAGNOSED WITH CORONAVIRUS (JPost 4/2/20)

Health minister Ya'acov Litzman and his wife have been diagnosed with the coronavirus and will go into home-quarantine, according to a spokesperson for the Health Ministry.

"The health minister is feeling well," a statement by the Health Ministry informed the public on Thursday.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been informed of the situation. Litzman will continue to serve in his role from home, in accordance with medical recommendations.

An epidemiological investigation is being carried out, and messages will be sent to those who came into contact with Litzman and are required to enter isolation. It is expected that the head of the National Security Council Meir Ben-Shabbat and Health Ministry director-general Moshe Bar Siman Tov, as well as several other senior officials, will be asked to home-quarantine.

Litzman is a follower of the Ger Hasidic movement and a member of the ultra-Orthodox community, which has until recently failed to keep the guidelines recommended by the Health Ministry. More than 700 people have so far tested positive for the novel coronavirus in Bnei Brak, for example, a city of slightly less than 200,000.

The health minister lives in Jerusalem, where certain neighborhoods have also struggled to keep the necessary guidelines to stop the spread of COVID-19. Litzman is among the high-risk population - born in September 1948, he is nearly 72 years old.

AMID GLOBAL SHORTAGE, ISRAEL RACES TO DEVELOP VENTILATORS (Ha'aretz 4/2/20)

Like much of the world, Israel is in desperate need of ventilators for coronavirus patients. The Health Ministry estimates there are about 1,400 of the devices available for immediate use and another few hundred that can be made available. But if the scenario that sees 5,000 sufferers needing the devices at the epidemic's peak comes to pass, there won't be nearly enough. Faced with that big gap between supply and possible demand, Israel is seeking to get ventilators from wherever possible. The Health Ministry says it has placed orders for 12,000 from overseas suppliers, but it will take time for them to come and the global competition over them is intense.

Medtronic, one the world's biggest makers of medical devices, has stepped up production and is cooperating with the automaker Tesla, among others, to convert production lines for solar panels to making ventilators.

"We've received hundreds of orders from the Health Ministry and we've succeeded in obtaining a few score ventilators that will be here by the end of April. Later, we'll get more," said Yaron Itzhari, director for Medtronic Israel.

Meanwhile, the company is collecting ventilators that have been sitting in hospital and medical clinic storerooms because they have some kind of mechanical problem. "Our lab, which had 10 engineers and technicians, has stopped working on everything else and is working now exclusively to make these ventilators usable. So far, we've finished work on 15 and delivered them to hospitals," said Itzhari.

Meanwhile, a collaboration between the Defense Ministry, state-owned Israel Aerospace Industries and medical device maker Inovytech has begun producing the devices on a converted missile production line, the Defense Ministry said Tuesday.

The retooling of the production line was completed in days and some 30 ventilators have been delivered to the Health Ministry, the statement said. It did not say how many machines it planned to produce daily.

Meanwhile, a group of Israeli startups and independent developers are competing in a race against time to develop and produce ventilators. Sources

say that all kinds of engineers, researchers and investors are coming forward with ideas for improved ventilation machines that can be produced quickly and at low cost.

Some of these efforts are being done in coordination with the Defense Ministry. Defense Minister Naftali Bennett said the ministry had purchased 3,000 of the devices, a third of which will be delivered within a month.

Two devices that have been developed over the last few weeks are now being examined by the Health Ministry. Their developers have met with ministry experts and senior doctors, who have examined the prototypes and recommended improvements.

How quickly these ventilators can be put into use is unclear. They will have to undergo trials with human patients and a fast-track regulatory approval process for medical devices.

One of these ventilators is being developed by the Nazareth-based startup Guide In Medical, which developed its Lifescan Medical respirator together with ImpactLabs, a Tel Aviv-based facility that helps inventors to take an idea from concept to production-ready product.

The simplified ventilator is an automatic device based on a manual resuscitator from the Danish company Ambu. The device is designed to provide medical teams with a device they can get to patients as a first step. "Within a week we succeeded in producing five working units through a massive effort and by sourcing parts from all over the country. The device is now being evaluated at Sheba Medical Center [at Tel Hashomer] and we're working to bring it into production. We're working with [arms manufacturers] Elbit Systems and IAI," said ImpactLabs CEO Sefi Attias.

Assuming it gets regulatory approval from the Health Ministry, ImpactLabs says it hopes to start manufacturing 150 units within the first 10 days and then ramp up to scores of devices daily.

Meanwhile, MDSG Innovation, a startup based in Rehovot and backed by investor Marius Nacht's aMoon venture capital fund, has halted all its ordinary activities and is dedicating itself to developing a ventilator. CEO Dr. Benny Rousso divided his 10 engineers into two development teams to work on different concepts using only locally sourced components.

Sources say the undertaking has elicited an unusual level of volunteerism. One engineer posted a Facebook call for components that could be made by 3D printing. Within an hour he received 80 responses offering help. Today the company is producing prototypes and within 2-3 weeks, subject to regulatory clearance, defense companies could be manufacturing them.

Another undertaking had its origins in the Israel Air Force's electronics and computing unit: a simplified device, also using an Ambu manual resuscitator, operated by a motor. Anyone can manufacture it because the instructions for making it are open to the public. The device was developed by the First Robotics League, with help from Microsoft Israel's research and development center, Ichilov Hospital and Magen David Adom.

These projects have received wide television coverage, but none of these devices can substitute for the kind of ventilator used in intensive care units. They are simple devices for use in extreme situations, which it is hoped will not emerge.

"They'll only be used in an apocalyptic kind of situation when the choice is for a patient to continue to breathe with it or not to breathe at all," said one source involved in the undertaking.

"Nice ideas are popping up, maybe one of them will surprise us," said a source in the biomedical industry, who asked not to be identified. "An Ambu-based system can keep a patient alive in the early stages, but it's not an advanced respirator capable of keeping a patient alive for long."

Another source was more critical: "It's all nonsense. Such devices could be suitable for soldiers with strong lungs, but they can't serve an 84-year-old that requires two weeks of ventilation."

A hospital ventilator doesn't just pump air into a patient's lungs, but is a sophisticated medical device that regulates the respiratory rate, filters the air, has a battery backup in case of a power failure, and is designed to gradually

release a person from dependency on it.

Developers of these other, simple devices are aware of the complexity of ventilators and acknowledge that accelerated development might turn out to be dangerous in the end.

"You have to worry about not blowing up someone's lungs and adjust the level to the patient's breathing rate and intake. There are a lot of things that make a device reliable," Attias of ImpactLabs explained. "Rapid development can be risky, but it's all a matter of risk management. In an emergency situation, there are expedited approval processes, and something that has only passed certain tests and not all of them is the lesser of two evils."

ISRAEL LINKS CORONAVIRUS AID FOR GAZA TO RECOVERING MISSING SOLDIERS (Israel Hayom 4/2/20)

Israel on Wednesday linked any assistance it might offer for the Gaza Strip's efforts against coronavirus to progress in its attempt to recover two Israeli soldiers who were killed during the 2014 war in the Palestinian enclave and whose remains are held by Hamas, the terrorist group controlling Gaza.

Gaza has so far reported 12 coronavirus cases and authorities worry that local health facilities – with just 96 ventilators for a population of 2 million – are insufficient to contain the contagion.

Both Israel and Hamas have closed the Gaza border to non-essential traffic as a precaution against the spread of the infection. But with Gaza authorities appealing for humanitarian assistance, Israel has been weighing its role.

"The moment there is talk of the humanitarian world in Gaza – Israel also has humanitarian needs, which are mainly the recovery of the fallen," Defense Minister Naftali Bennett told reporters, referring to fatalities sustained during Operation Protective Edge, fought in the summer of 2014.

"I think that we need to enter a broad dialogue about Gaza's and our humanitarian needs. It would not be right to disconnect these things ... and certainly, our hearts would be open to many things."

It was not immediately clear if Bennett was speaking of a possible condition on Israel providing direct aid, or also on it enabling the transfer of other aid over its border with Gaza.

Palestinian officials on Wednesday said 1,500 testing kits would be brought into Gaza, with the help of the World Health Organization, after they were donated by the Palestinian administration in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Hamas said returning the two soldiers – as well as two Israeli civilians who crossed into the territory – would require negotiating a prisoner swap and would not be done in exchange for humanitarian aid.

"Israel bears responsibility for any consequences should the disease spread in Gaza because it has been blockading it for 13 years," said Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum.

"A prisoner swap deal is a separate track," he said.

ISRAELI BASKETBALL PHENOM DENI AVDIJA DRAFTED INTO IDF (JPost 4/1/20)

Israel's rising basketball star Deni Avdija joined the Israel Defense Forces on Wednesday to fulfill his mandatory army service to the country. The Maccabi Tel Aviv and Israel National Team forward is expected to be a lottery pick in the upcoming NBA entry draft and is slated to be selected with one of the top five picks this coming summer.

Avdija arrived at the Tel HaShomer military base with his parents, Zuber and Sharon, as well as his agent, Matan Siman Tov, for his induction to the IDF and will complete his service in North America as an "Exceptional Athlete."

After winning back-to-back Under-20 European Championships with the Israel National Team, many of Avdija's teammates were drafted into the IDF, but his service was delayed due to his commitment with Maccabi Tel Aviv and playing in the Euroleague.

However with the basketball season currently on an extended hiatus due to coronavirus, Avdija enlisted.

"I am happy and proud to join the IDF just like every other citizen of my age,"

said Avdija right after being drafted into Tzahal. "I will do whatever is asked of me just like I do on the basketball court."

In 21 Israeli league games this season, the 19-year-old Avdija is averaging 12.3 points, 5.9 rebounds and 24 assists per game in over 27 minutes of playing time, while in the Euroleague he's averaging 4.0 points and 2.6 rebounds in 14 minutes per game, having featured in all 26 of the yellow-and-blue's continental contests.

GANTZ BROKE THE ISRAELI LEFT'S HEART; LABOR LEADER STUCK A DAGGER IN IT (Chemi Shalev, Ha'aretz 4/1/20)

The Israeli left suffered a devastating blow in the elections held on March 2, which was less a month ago but seems like eons in the chronogram of coronavirus. The remnants of the movement that founded Israel and ruled it for decades, Labor and Meretz, were forced to band together to avert electoral extinction; they wound up with 5.83 per cent of the vote, which yielded a grand total of 7 seats in the new Knesset. Sic Transit Gloria Mundi, for sure.

In reality, even their measly seven seats were only six: One belonged to Orly Levy-Abekasis, the social-minded right winger imported by Labor leader Amir Peretz, who quickly bolted once elections were over. Placing the surviving sextet on a graph showing the steep decline of both Labor and Meretz from a combined 56 in 1992, 29 in 2015, 11 in September 2019 and six today, the trend is crystal clear: The next and last stop is six feet under.

The sense of failure on the Israeli left was compounded by what appeared to be, on election night, a resounding victory for archenemy Benjamin Netanyahu and a third straight defeat for the leader of his opposition, Benny Gantz. But the despondency was shared by the entire center-left, mitigating the gloom of hardcore Zionist leftists, in accordance with the Jewish saying, "Shared misery is half a consolation", which has a pertinent and prescient variant: "Shared misery is the consolation of fools."

Then, out of the blue, slivers of sunshine began to break through the darkness of the center-left's despair. The near-universal perception that Netanyahu had won the elections turned out to be a mirage: His Likud party had indeed gone up from 32 seats in the previous elections in September to 36 now, but once the dust had settled over his premature election celebration – a chronic Israeli phenomenon – it turned out that Netanyahu had failed to garner the 61 seats he needed to form a government.

Moreover, and far more surprisingly, it was the declared loser Gantz who seemed to be holding the winning hand. The hitherto uninspiring leader of Kachol Lavan finally and belatedly showed some spunk. Turned out that in his long and exhausting first year in politics, Gantz had absorbed some of Netanyahu's renowned talents for trickery and alchemy and borrowed from the prime minister's vast arsenal of tricks and shticks.

Much to the Jewish left's delight, Gantz immediately reneged on his campaign pledge not to rely on the Joint List's 15 new Knesset members, enlisting their endorsement for President Rivlin's appointment to form a new government. He stitched together a coalition of the impossible, nurturing an ad-hoc majority of 61 that included not only Kachol Lavan and Labor-Meretz but the Joint List and their greatest detractor in politics, Avigdor Lieberman, as well. Wonders, it seemed, never cease.

Gantz wielded his newfound freak of nature not only to secure Rivlin's nod but also to ward off Netanyahu's blatant efforts to consolidate his hold on power under the guise of the coronavirus crisis. Gantz rallied his troops, laid siege to the Knesset, manned parliamentary committees and fought tooth and nail with former Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein, who ultimately resigned rather than adhere to a High Court verdict compelling him to schedule a vote on his successor.

Gantz's combative resurgence instilled new hopes in the Israeli left: Suddenly he was the tough and uncompromising leader they had pined for all along. Staring down right wing incitement, Gantz had reached out his hand over the divide separating Jewish politics from Arabs, inviting the Joint List into his

tent. No previous leader, with the possible exception of Rabin himself, had gone so quickly so far.

In their newfound euphoria, Israeli leftists conveniently forgot the disappointments of election night, their own meager six seats and the fact that Gantz, in fact, was no leftist at all. He is a centrist hawk, at best, and one who had made no secret of his preference for a coalition with Likud rather than the un-wieldable makeshift dream team of Joint List with Lieberman that the hard leftists were yearning for.

Which is why Gantz's abrupt decision to abandon the fight and join forces with Netanyahu dealt such a harsh blow to the Zionist left. His post-election defiance had invigorated Israeli leftists, but the higher they climb, the harder they fall. Delusions of a Gantz-led government that would fulfill their wishes and oust Netanyahu evaporated overnight. Illusions of common cause with a grand Arab-Jewish majority were shattered. The dream turned into nightmare.

As Kachol Lavan convulsed in internal split and the Joint List wore a smug "We told you so" look for having distrusted Gantz from the outset, the Israeli left found itself alone, out in the cold, forced for the first time to squarely confront their horrid performance in the last elections and the possibility, if not probability, of their early and inevitable demise.

And then, in their moment of deepest depression and greatest despair, at a time when they most needed guidance and reassurance, Israeli leftists were betrayed by their own. After all, Gantz and his Kachol Lavan colleague Gabi Ashkenazi, who had pushed for joining Netanyahu all along, owed them no formal or ideological allegiance. It was Peretz, leader of the combined Labor-Gesher-Meretz list, along with his number 2, Itzik Shmuley, who truly deserted them in their time of need, sold them down the river, hung them out to dry, drove a poisoned dagger into their collective hearts.

Peretz's decision to follow Gantz into a government with Netanyahu – still no done deal at this hour – effectively decapitated both the Labor-Meretz union as well as Labor itself. With Peretz and Shmuley gone, the Israeli left is left with one Labor refugee, Meirav Michaeli, and three Meretz members, led by Nitzan Horowitz. They are the last remnants of the last survivors.

Unlike Gantz, Peretz is not critical to forming a new government; it could live without him. Gantz and Kachol Lavan can claim to be fighting for democracy; Peretz and Shmuley are abandoning their principles for two ministerial portfolios in a ludicrously and corruptly inflated Netanyahu cabinet; Gantz is taking in tow the nucleus of Hosen L'Yisrael, the party he set up a year ago, which later fused with Yair Lapid's Yesh Atid to form Kachol Lavan; Peretz and Shmuley are leaving their party, and more importantly their voters, in tatters.

Meretz and Michaeli, four of 120 Knesset seats, will henceforth represent the entirety of Israel's Zionist left. Horowitz is now the titular leader of the remnants, though many view the blunt and outspoken Yair Golan, the former army deputy chief of staff who made it into the Knesset by the skin of his teeth, as the left's new leader, the only one capable of resuscitating it and getting it back on its feet.

Whoever emerges as the leader of the camp, their task will be formidable, if not impossible: They will have to re-instill morale among remaining loyalists while trying to prevent mass defections to Lapid and Yesh Atid, who have proven their stalwart opposition to Netanyahu, or to the non-Zionist and mostly Arab Joint List.

They will have to prove that the once-proud and now-defeated left will live to fight another day. If not, they will go down in history as the undertakers tasked with burying the still warm corpse of the Israeli left, with Peretz's dagger still embedded in its heart.

NO, EVERYTHING WON'T 'BE FINE' IN ISRAEL (Dan Ben David, YNet 3/31/20)

Welcome to the land of "Everything will be fine." This is the country that has sent its sons and daughters into the greatest war since its creation with

depleted stockpiles and empty arsenals - and expects them to just wing it with resourcefulness.

The same country has dispatched its medical teams to fight the most dangerous virus with no supplies because we Israelis know how to improvise. The price we will have to pay for this is still unclear.

This is also the same country that is providing a third-world education to half of its population, the fastest-growing sector - and believes "everything will be fine" when these kids grow up uneducated and unable to catch up.

This is the same country, despite having built the largest number of hospitals in its first two decades of existence, has since the late 1970s allowed the number of hospital beds per capita to drop to the lowest among industrialized nations. But hey, everything will be fine.

Depleting the health service has also led to a shortage of doctors and nurses, leaving Israel with the lowest number of professional medical staff per capita in the West.

In the land of "Everything will be fine," there is no recognition of the fact that long-term neglect is destined to eventually blow up in our faces with unbearable hospital overcrowding and a shortage of critical equipment and experts.

Israel's annual mortality rate from infections has doubled over the past two decades, with 73% more cases than any European country - and that was before the coronavirus pandemic.

The writing has been on the wall but those responsible for the policy of neglect were not made to vacate their posts.

And it is only medicine that has been neglected. Many other fields have suffered the same fate while our leaders blind us to reality with inconsequential matters while placing our futures under threat.

A country that excuses one-fifth of its school kids from studying basic language, math, science, and history – inconceivable in any other modern society – thinks it will all be fine.

A growing number of graduates from the Haredi education system are realizing that they need to be educated, but most are unable to complete university studies and more than half drop out.

Half of all Israelis will be Haredi within two generations, considering the high birthrate in that community (7.1 children per family compared to 3.1 in the general population,) and none of them will become the future doctors, engineers, architects, physicist or any other professionals a modern 21st-century society needs.

Who will pay taxes in the future - as it is laid out before us - when 92% of all tax revenue already comes from only 20% of the population?

The land of "Everything will be fine" is urging its military chiefs to spread falsehoods about the number of Haredi IDF conscripts because politicians fear conflict with religious leaders.

Surely the soon-to-be minority of secular Israelis will rush to enlist and protect those who are exempt from national service.

When a community is excused from adhering to laws and norms of modern society it is no wonder that they resist Health Ministry directives.

The risk of coronavirus spread is of no interest to them and anyway, if people get sick, they can go to the hospital, because "everything will be fine."

This maxim applies Israel's policy in other matters as well. Elected officials are leading us steadily towards a one-state solution with the Palestinians, putting our entire democracy at risk.

Democracy as a concept is misunderstood by politicians who weaken our judicial system and challenge the very foundations of a democratic society.

The same politicians legislate for their personal advantage while demonizing anyone who calls them out.

In the land of "Everything will be fine," a man under criminal indictment can be prime minister.

But there must be a limits in this land that is also our country.

While there is still time, I urge our leaders to realize that the coronavirus won't destroy Israel but this policy of "everything will be fine" actually will.