

ISRAEL SHELANU יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁלָּנוּ

This newsletter is a nonpolitical, informational and educational publication. Informing about news that does not always make the US headlines. We aim to educate about institutions, constitutions, organizations, history and other small things that makes Israel, Israel Shelanu - Our Israel.

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News

חדשות

Shabbat Start/End Jerusalem: 6:25 / 7:23 Tel Aviv: 6:46 / 7:45

An Officer and a Hero

Capt. David Shapira had just put one of his two young children to sleep when he heard explosions coming from the Merkaz Harav Yeshiva across the street. When he realized that the explosions were gunshots, he grabbed his service weapon and ran out of the house toward the yeshiva where he himself had studied. Shapira entered the building, tracked the terrorist to the library, got within two to three meters of his target, and neutralized him. Then he searched the area to make sure that other terrorists had not taken cover in the building. IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi expressed admiration for the "fast and correct" way in which the captain responded to the attack, adding that this is how he expects "any officer to behave, whether in his unit, on the roads or on leave." (Jerusalem Post)

Angela Merkel

"Standing here before you is a great honor," said German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Hebrew, as she addressed the Knesset on March 19th. "The Shoah fills us Germans with shame. I bow before the victims. I bow before the survivors and before all those who helped them survive," she said, this time in German.

As for the Iranian threat, the German chancellor said: "It is not up to the world to prove that Iran is pursuing a nuclear bomb, but rather up to Iran to prove that it is not. If Iran does not accept this, Germany will push for further sanctions. If Iran were to obtain nuclear weapons, it would have disastrous consequences." (Ynet)

Unusual taxes

Gaza's Hamas government is funding its bureaucracy and rocket-launchers through fees on license plates, birth certificates and the like; taxes on smuggled cigarettes and other items. Cigarettes smuggled through tunnels are taxed at \$3 a pack, increasing the price to \$5. Hamas also charges a levy of \$3,000 from each of 150 underground- tunnel operators. (Bloomberg)

Falling Dollar

Hundreds of charities and nonprofit groups in Israel that depend on funding from abroad fear that the continuing decline of the dollar exchange rate, combined with the growing U.S. economic crisis, will force them to dismiss employees and curtail the services they provide in education, welfare and health.

(Ha'aretz)

Did you know?

הידעת?

Rav Abraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook (1865-1935)

Rav Abraham Isaac Kook, Known widely as haRav "Rabbi." Religious thinker; first Chief Rabbi of Palestine.

Born in Grieve, a small town in north Russia, he was an exceptional student and known as a child prodigy. He studied in the famous yeshiva of Volozhin, Lithuania, and then served as rabbi to communities in Lithuania and Latvia until moving to Eretz Israel in 1904 to become rabbi of Jaffa and the new Zionist settlements.

In 1909 he was faced with the problem of the sabbatical year during which biblical law enjoined that the land be left fallow. In contrast to his colleagues, he issued a lenient ruling which enabled the land to be sold nominally to a non-Jew and cultivation to continue. This decision has been regarded as operative ever since. In 1914 he went to Europe to participate in a rabbinical conference. Because of the outbreak of war the conference did not take place, but Rav Kook could not return. He lived first in Switzerland, and from 1916 was rabbi of London's Mahzikei Hadas congregation. While in London he was active in the negotiations leading to the Balfour Declaration. In 1919 he returned to Palestine as Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi for Jerusalem where he founded a rabbinic academy Merkaz haRav where he taught his students his ideals of Jewish religious nationalism. In 1921, with the establishment by the British of a Chief Rabbinate for Palestine, Rav Kook became the country's first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi, a post he held until his death. His views were bitterly opposed by the more extreme Orthodox who refused to accept his authority and established their own central rabbinical body. He was outstanding in his Torah knowledge and writings and for his devotion to the Jewish people and the Land of Israel. The Jews, he maintained, have a special gift for holiness and this is only fully realizable in the Land of Israel, which is even metaphysically different from the rest of the world, and so the return to Zion is a sacred phenomenon. Rav Kook was the outstanding leader and thinker of the religious Zionist movement, at a time when the great majority of Orthodox Jewry opposed Zionism for refusing to wait for divine redemption and intervention to return the Jews to their land. For Rav Kook, however, Zionism was holy, despite its shortcomings, such as its separation of nationalism from religion. He endeared himself to the non-religious elements in Israel by his sympathy and support for the secular sector, particularly in the agricultural settlements. He regarded all those who immigrated to the Land of Israel and participated in its building to be inspired by holy sparks as they were laying the foundations for messianic redemption - whatever their personal beliefs.

Dictionary of Jewish Biography



זמן חירותינו - A Time to Be Free

Rav Benjy Myers

The focal point of the seder is the retelling and reliving of the exodus from Egypt. It is an evening filled with experiential learning, where all five senses - sight, sound, taste, smell and touch - are used in order to recall the miracle of the redemption.

The main part of the seder is the section of Maggid, where the story is retold in detail, using questions and answers, songs, Torah and Midrash and more. One part of this section is a series of four verses from the book of Devarim (chap. 26) that were, in Temple times, recited at the time of the bringing of the first fruits. It describes our humble beginnings as solitary figures who made their way down to Egypt where they were subjugated and cruelly treated, and goes on to describe the flowering of the nation, the dramatic salvation of the people by God, and bringing the Israelites to the Promised Land where they can fulfill the mitzva of the first fruits.

This description is spread over a number of verses. What is that number? You may well say four, as it is in the Haggada, and indeed that is right. In the Haggada there are four verses quoted and explained. However, if you look back in the Torah, you will discover that there is a fifth verse. A verse that talks of the Jewish people being brought to the Land of Israel.

Why is this verse not in the Haggada? Surely it can't be just because we like the number four!

The answer I believe lies in the names of the festival. Pesach is known by four names: חג הפסח (Festival of Passover), חג המצות (Festival of Matzot), חג האביב (Festival of Spring), and זמן חירותנו (Season of our Freedom). Each of the names represents an important element of the time. We celebrate our redemption through the eating of the Pesach sacrifice and of matzot. We are obligated to ensure that it is celebrated in the Spring. It is appropriate to refer to these things as festivals. Why, however, is Pesach called the Season of our Freedom, and not the Festival?

In the prayer for the State of Israel, we refer to the State as the "beginning of the dawn of our redemption."

Freedom takes time. It takes time to get the Jews out of Egypt, and time to get Egypt out of the Jews. To say that Pesach is the time when we celebrate our ultimate freedom would be inappropriate.

What was true then is true now. It is not enough to physically leave the house of bondage. We must do so mentally and spiritually as well. "This year we are slaves, next year free. This year we are here, next year in the Land of Israel!"

...And speak of them

...וזכרתם בם

If you teach your children 2 facts a week for the next 120 years they will know 12.480 facts about Israel.

- The width of the country, from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Dead Sea in the east, can be crossed by car in about 90 minutes.
- The trip from Metulla, in the far north, to Eilat at the country's southern tip takes about six hours.

Israeli rain in the Texas desert

An Israeli-developed system for generating rain in desert regions has interested Texas officials who hope that it can be useful to increase agricultural production in Texan deserts. Through a new process, scientists hope that they can alter air currents and increase condensation, resulting in increased rainfall. For nearly two decades, the Texas Agriculture Commission has worked to harness the Israeli-designed drip irrigation systems to enhance production for the multitude of large and small agriculture farms and greenhouses throughout the state. (Houston Chronicle)

Some good news and some not so good news

Palestinian Islamic Jihad leader Ramadan Abdallah Shalah told the Qatari newspaper Al-Sharq on March 23 that rocket fire had replaced suicide bombing attacks because Israel had found ways to protect itself from such attacks. "For example, they built a separation fence in the West Bank. We do not deny that it limits the ability of the resistance to arrive deep within [Israeli territory] to carry out suicide bombing attacks." (Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center)

Falling rockets

Senior Israeli defense officials said Thursday (3/27) that Hizbullah has dramatically increased its arsenal of rockets and their range. The officials said Hizbullah has acquired new Iranian rockets with a range of 186 miles that can hit anywhere in Israel's heavily populated center. (AP)

Excuse me your honor

The Palestinian Authority won a major legal victory when U.S. District Judge Victor Marrero Wednesday (3-26) agreed to set aside a judgment of nearly \$200 million awarded to American victims of Palestinian terrorist attacks in Israel and allow a new trial. The judge said that he would vacate the previous legal victory only if the PA put up a \$192.7 million bond to ensure that it does not default again if it loses in court. He also ordered the Palestinians to reimburse the plaintiffs for previous legal expenses. (Washington Post)

The Timeline

ציר הזמן

Here we present a major event that has shaped the modern state of Israel.

Six Day War - June 1967

At the beginning of June 1967, due to tensions on the Israeli-Syrian border, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser deployed more than 100,000 troops and 900 tanks in the Sinai Peninsula, expelled UN peacekeepers from the Egyptian-Israeli border and closed the straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. Fearing a war on three fronts, Israel initiated a pre-emptive strike against Egypt and disabled its army in three days. Israel then turned its attention to the Syrian and Jordanian armies, defeating them and capturing the Golan Heights and the West Bank, including the Old City of Jerusalem.

Source: *The Israel Project*

