



RABBI DR. NATAN OPHIR (OFFENBACHER)

GUEST DVAR TORAH



The Secret of עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי



This guest Dvar Torah for Torah Tidbits is devoted to my beloved nephew Naftali Yonah Gordon Hy"d who was killed in his tank in Gaza erev Chanukah 2023 as a tribute on his *Shloshim*.

Our rallying cry since the current war began on Simchat Torah has been עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי. It is an inspirational slogan proclaiming we are alive and will continue to exist despite perennial threats. Question: When and why was this slogan invented?

The first time the Torah refers to Israel as a nation (עַם) is in this week's parsha, Shemot. Before that, Jacob's family were 70 individuals, "sons of Yisrael". After they settled in Egypt and multiplied rapidly, Pharoh identified עַם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל as a fifth column who will fight the Egyptians and leave the country (Exodus 1,9). Our parsha sets the contours towards the future theme of the Torah that עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי will fulfill its mission as a nation. But the actual phrase עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי does not appear in the Torah, Tenach or liturgy. It is not in the Talmud, Midrash or medieval Jewish sources. It is mentioned in a legend attributed to Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschutz, but its origin

as a rallying call was invented by the pioneers of the "First Aliyah" (1881/2). David Gordon, a leading activist in *Hibbat Zion*, wrote in *HaMaggid*, the first Hebrew language weekly newspaper, עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי וְחַיָּה וְעוֹד חַיָּה יִהְיֶה. He thus combined the futuristic hope of חַיָּה וְחַיָּה from Ezekiel 18, 21 with Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi's optimistic message (*Rosh Hashana* 25a) that דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיָּים יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי וְקַיָּים.

Soon עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי transformed into a popular Zionist tune. In 1914 Eliezer Ben Yehudah reported that Jerusalem youth sang and danced עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי to celebrate the Turkish government's willingness to create the first Jewish army unit. In November 1917 after the Balfour Declaration, Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hacohen Kook who was then in London, encouraged the Jewish Legion stationed in Plymouth, England and wrote עוֹד יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי וְחַיָּה יִהְיֶה עַד בְּלֵי דַי. Later, Rav Kook mentions that the song עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי was sung on Hanukah.

Abraham Idelsohn was a musicologist who made aliyah in 1907. He innovated the six-word ditty, עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי עַד בְּלֵי דַי, and recorded it professionally with a cantor and pianist. He also published it in a 1922 Zionist songbook entitled *Sefer haShirim*. The song underwent several transformations, e.g. as עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי בְּנֵה עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי in a Zionist song book in 1929. It was later used in post Holocaust responses. As a result, Jacob Birnbaum, founder of the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry (SSSJ),

asked Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach to use the words עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי to create a protest song for SSSJ. Thus, in April 1965, Reb Shlomo created his most popular tune, עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי, עוד אָבִינוּ חַי.

Now in 2024, following an especially fractious time in Israeli history and a devastating war that is not yet over, עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי has become a proud announcement of solidarity and determination. Like my beloved nephew did, many of our devoted soldiers sacrifice their lives so that עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי can thrive in יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי. ■

Rabbi Dr. Natan Ophir (Offenbacher) graduated from Yeshiva University, then Yeshivat Mercaz Harav where he received semicha from the Chief Rabbinate. He received his MA and PhD in Jewish Philosophy from Hebrew University where he served as the campus rabbi for 16 years. He has taught Jewish meditation and a variety of topics at Israeli universities and colleges.

HELPING OUR SOLDIERS ASSISTING THE NEEDY



**THIS WEEK: Collecting for
Terror Victim's Medical
and Psychological Support**

See What We Do
www.Yeshezra.org

Bank transfer: Mercantile (17),
Branch 642, A/C 79747843
(Send Asmachta for tax receipt)

Checks: "Yesh Ezra," POB 31476,
Romema, Jerusalem

Credit Card: Sara – 077-820-0196.
Sun/Mon/Wed (10:15am-2.45 pm)

Inquiries: Menachem Persoff
050-570-1067 | menpmp@gmail.com

**KIM
BASH**
Real Estate



ISRAEL'S REAL ESTATE MATCHMAKER

WE CONTINUE TO PRAY FOR THE
RETURN OF OUR HOSTAGES AND
THE SAFETY OF OUR SOLDIERS

JERUSALEM

MAMILLA

250 sqm, One Level, 4 Bedrooms,
3 Bathrooms, Parking & Storage,
Old City Views. **\$6.2 million usd**

OLD CITY

3 Bedrooms Duplex, Quiet, Located in the
Rova, For full Renovation. **7 million nis**

CITY CENTER

2 Bedrooms, 2 Bathrooms,
Beautifully Decorated, Doorman
Building. **5 million nis**

RAMAT BEIT SHEMESH - ALEPH

5 Bedrooms & Playroom, Fully Renovated,
Excellent Location, Elevator,
Magnificent Views. **3.7 million nis**

HARISH

Brand new! 3 Bedrooms, 2 Bathrooms,
Upgraded Kitchen, Garden, Double Parking &
Storage, Anglo Neighbourhood.
2.3 million nis

MOSHAV ZECHARIA

5 Bedrooms, Inground Pool, Sauna, Jacuzzi,
Gym, 750sqm Indoors, 1040 sqm Outdoors
26 million nis

NEW PROJECTS - PRESALE PRICES

Ramat Beit Shemesh
Netanya
Carmel Gat
Hadera



+972 54 441 5704

KimBashRealEstate.com