



Jewish Federation
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS, SOUTHEAST MISSOURI
AND WESTERN KENTUCKY



הסוכנות היהודית לארץ ישראל
Jewish Agency for Israel

Israel Update

A Jewish and Israeli update

A New Format!

A new year, with a new format for the newsletter.

Here you'll find more articles about cultural life from Israel, Jewish content and more of what you want to read about.

At the end of this newsletter you can find a short and simple survey (that works only if you are connected to the internet) in case you wish to let us know what you think about the newsletter.



THE PLACE WHERE WE ARE RIGHT—YEHUDA AMICHAI

FROM THE PLACE WHERE WE ARE RIGHT
FLOWERS WILL NEVER GROW
IN THE SPRING.

THE PLACE WHERE WE ARE RIGHT
IS HARD AND TRAMPLED
LIKE A YARD.

BUT DOUBTS AND LOVES
DIG UP THE WORLD
LIKE A MOLE, A PLOW.

AND A WHISPER WILL BE HEARD IN THE PLACE
WHERE THE RUINED
HOUSE ONCE STOOD.

DEDICATED TO BARBARA GOLDENHERSH



A Sweet and Happy New Year
Shanah Tova and Gmar Chatima Tova

Opinion

Are Israelis too spoiled?

A few weeks ago, Radio and Television broadcaster Glen Beck arrived in Israel and shared his opinion about the “social justice” protest with the local media. He mocked demands such as mortgage relief, stopping the privatization of health facilities, raising the minimum wage and providing free education to children from the age of three months.

Other politician, columnist and specialists in Israel and abroad are attacking the protest by saying Israelis live a life of luxury in a much higher level than they can afford. The average salary in Israel is about 8,000 shekels (about \$2200). As a student of economics I always found the term “average” to be funny. I see my self as an average person and so are my friends. Unfortunately the only member of my friends circle who actually earns more than the average is far from living an average life. The rest of the earn 4500-6000 shekels gross a month (about 1250-1700 dollars).

Monthly expenses for an “average” family are about 14,000 shekels . Basic calculation tells us that it just doesn't add up.

But when Israelis discovered that most of the funds the spend on food, gas, housing, education and more goes to taxes and marketing margins, than they have no other choice but changing their complaining mode to protesting mode.

Living in Israel is not easy, we all realize that. I can give many examples of Israelis that had other choices of living and still chose Israel as their home.

You won't see anyone demonstrate for having too many days of reserve duty, for having to built a bomb shelter in every new house on your own expenses or for having a



Iron Dome– Can't be spoiled and stand that noise for long

noisy and scary anti-rocket system in you back yard. But when you have to rely on your parents when you're a parent yourself, even if you got a good job (and so does your wife). When you can't afford to buy an apartment, not in the center of Tel Aviv but on the outskirts of Petah Tikva. When you get a phone call from your bank manager on a weekly basis even though you haven't had a family vacation in three years and you canceled cable TV a long time ago. That is a breaking point for many Israelis who decided to get themselves out of the house and let the government know that they can't take it anymore.

So saying that Israelis are spoiled would be wrong. Saying they can handle it would be rude. Saying they need to cut their life style- that would just be mean. For the upcoming new year- I wish for Social Justice!

Did you know? MEDICAL

An Israel NPO called “Save a Child's Heart” performs open heart surgeries for underprivileged children from around the world. Including many Arab countries.

Israel was among the first on the scene in Haiti to provide disaster relief. “The Israeli Hospital received cases that other hospitals found difficult to manage”- Time

Organ donation and Judaism

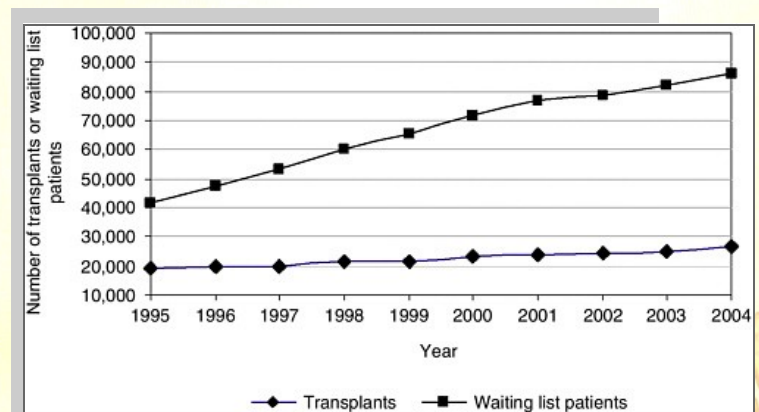
For many years, since modern medicine allowed organ donations, were the Jewish Halacha rulers in a dilemma surrounding this matter. On the one hand comes to question of taking a live organ out of a body; on the other hand comes the verse: “The one who saves a soul— as if saved an entire world”, basically saying life is more important. For years, Jewish Halakhic arbiters debated on building ground rules for organ donation, until 25 years ago when the Chief Rabbinate in Jerusalem created a criteria for declaring a human as brain dead, while his organs still fit for transplant.

Now, some of you would be amazed as for the amount of non Orthodox, possibly not even religious people in Israel and the United States who are not signing a donor card in fear of the after life. Quoting Rabbi Yuval Sharlo which many people including myself, share tremendous respect to, “Precisely the spiritual and Halakhic world, acting in power of Torah should be the one who pushes and encourage the transformation of this religious duty into a great element in pro-life struggle. That sanctity also requires that a person does not stand on his neighbor's blood; but to see it as a binding mission to do everything possible to save a life.”

In Israel you stipulate your signature on a donor card in a condition that a religious leader approves your donation. Even after signing, your family can still object to your donation. In past years (and even after the Chief Rabbinate's ruling on the matter) most Rabbis refused to declare donation of a living organ from an individual who was declared brain— dead. But if recent

years something changed; Rabbis who received their education in this field announced that once the brain-stem is dead, there is no chance of saving a person's life; and since we know what happens to a living tissue in the grave, there is no Halakhic restriction to donate that person's live organs.

Quoting Rabbi Sharlo again : “Some avoid organ donation, because of their desire to be buried whole, assuming it to be the right a person has when arriving to the next world. However, given what we learned in Jewish law and legend ever we see , there is no greater right, than saving lives”. And with that being said we learn that, for the Jewish person, strictly religious or not, allowing organ donations after we pass away, should be taken into consideration in our life time.



No. of transplants and people waiting for transplant

*Percentage of organ donation among Jews is the lowest of all ethnic groups.
By 2007 only 4% of Israelis have signed a donor card
Compared with about 30% in other western countries*

The News

Palestinian Unilateral Declaration of Independence

As the U.S. and some of the European countries continued putting pressure on Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas, it was not clear what's going to be the outcome of his intention to declare statehood at the U.N summit. But on Friday, September 23rd Abbas turned to the U.N Security council and demanded that Palestine would be recognized as a full state member.

It wasn't an easy week for Israel at the U.N. Arab leaders and others went to the podium, and one by one kept lashing Israel, as it's being accused for genocide, apartheid, deliberately damaging the peace process, and even for planning the 9/11 attacks.

Though President Obama insisted that the U.S. would use its veto right, if needed, to dismiss the request, the Palestinian kept on preparing to submit their application.

President Abbas knows that even if he would not accomplish his goal at the U.N, he has already came back home triumphant. Received in Ramallah as a winner, he probably feels that he can move to the next step of negotiations having the upper hand.

Relations with Turkey and Egypt

Recent events in Egypt and Turkey are defiantly causing Israeli and American officials to lose some sleep. An Egyptian mob burst into the Israeli embassy in Cairo, removing the Israeli flag off the building and almost lynching 6 security guards; during that time Egyptian officials ignored calls from Israeli Prime Minister (PM).

Earlier that week Turkey has suspended military ties with Israel, expelled top Israeli diplomats and threatened additional actions unless Israel apologizes for the 2010 raid. It seems that the Obama administration is scrambling to avoid further deterioration in ties between US allies Israel and Turkey and "defuse" the crisis.

Days after Egyptian interim PM declared that Egypt will not hesitate to demand changes in the peace agreement between the two states. An announcement that seemed to alarm Israeli officials, who on their behalf declared there would be no changes in the contract.

It is important to know that the peace treaty is strategically vital to the Egyptians as it is to the Israelis. Turkey– Israeli relations are a question of who's the boss in Ankara.

Gas wars?

Late September, the new bully in the Middle East, Turkish Prime Minister (PM) Erdogan declared he will send a drilling rig escorted by navy ships to the northern part of Cyprus in order to explore gas discovery. As well known last year, Israel discovered an enormous gas reservoir in international water near the coast of Haifa. The discovery, of what seemed to be the second largest reservoir in the world, awoken all nations of that area to demand the discovery for their own. The Turkish PM decided to use his occupation of northern Cyprus in order their recent drilling actions to himself, declaring "Turkish military will use planes, frigates and missile boats to supervise the exclusive economic zone in the eastern Mediterranean". Turkey conquered the northern part of Cyprus on 1974. The annexation was never approved by the UN. In past months the Turkish government also declared it supports Lebanon's claim of ownership over the Israeli gas discoveries. Turkey has been pursuing an increasingly muscular foreign policy since the reelection of its religiously rooted government in June. Earlier in September it expelled the Israeli ambassador.

The Dilemma

Excessive commercialism or needed service? On the new McDonalds at Masada

As part of a development process in Masada, it was decided to renovate the visitor center on the site. At the end of that renovation we discovered that a new McDonalds branch is now available for visitors.

Masada is the most touristic site in Israel with more than a million visitors a year. The site where famous archaeological excavations were held in the early 60's, became a well toured site in the 90's and was declared as a "World Heritage Site" by UNESCO.

In recent years the site began hosting opera concerts. In order to do so, a large area beneath Masada was cleared causing great damage to unique and rare pieces of nature.

But it seems that everyone agreed with past events, some refuse to agree with the new shopping center opened on the site. Probably there wouldn't be such a shout if not for the symbol of all commercialization— McDonalds - "The most symbolic archaeological site in Israel is becoming an economic enterprise these days. ethically uninhibited and with no respect to the site and its surroundings".

On the other hand

"The important status of Masada on the map of tourist sites in Israel and abroad, requires its preservation and development with the highest international standards" says Masada site manager. "It is important to find the delicate thread connecting the ancient history and traditions in the present; with the understanding that by doing so it will remain relevant today.

As the "battle" on the hearts and pockets of tourists is growing; basically being Just Masada is not enough for the marvelous site to attract tourists, it seems that extreme steps are taken for that cause. At the end it's only a question of taste and perspective. So now we just have to wait and see who's next...



The new McDonalds at Masada



Golden arches on the Golden Dome? Who's next? (illustration)



Masada— Over a million tourist a year

Supreme court's hardest decision

As the deal to release Gilad is near Israel's High Court of Justice needs to be decided

In the past five and a half years only one voice was heard on the question of releasing Gilad Shalit from his Hamas captivity. Shalit's family was aggressive in its campaign to public opinion— release him at any cost, and do it now. As more information on the true names behind the deal reveal, different— lauder voices appear in Israeli public opinion— trying to make sure the deal does not happen in its current conditions.

1027 prisoners are scheduled to be released as part of the deal: 450 men at the same time Gilad is released , together with 27 women. 550 other prisoners will be released within two months of Gilad's release.

And the list which was released on the Sunday before the deal is scheduled to occur has much blood on it:

One prisoner was sentenced to 16 life sentences after he ran a bus full of passenger off a cliff outside Jerusalem

Another received 36 life sentences being responsible for 3 different suicide bombings

And another was given 29 life sentences for leading the Passover massacre in 2002

One of the women being released is Amna Muna who seduced a 16 year old kid to a meeting in Jerusalem after talking to him in a chat room. She never expressed remorse for the murder .

And now it is up to the High court of Justice in Jerusalem to decide. Excepting the appeals against the deal would mean Israel has to back out of an international agreement it has already signed, delaying the release of Gilad Shalit— possibly costing him his life.

Rejecting the appeals will also mean rejecting the pain of hundreds of families who had lost their loved ones in some of the most horrifying attacks in the country's history.

It can also mean, that some of this families will decide to take the law into their own hands and punish the murderers in a way they see fit.

Just Hours before the deal is scheduled to take place— a decision must be made.



Shavuel s'chivschorder— Lost 5 family members in a suicide bombing in 2001. Threatens to kill the terrorists himself



In the center— Noam Shalit. "I plea the court not to stop the deal, maybe costing Gilad his life"

What do you think about the newsletter

Please press on the button and answer a short online survey (only one question)
Thank you.



*If you wish to stop receiving notice
about the newsletter please press on
the attached link.*

Or send an email to:

Assaf.shaliach@gmail.com

