



**ISRAEL NEWS**  
*A collection of the week's news from Israel*  
*From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of*  
*Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

The voice of the pilot from above declared: "We pilots of Israel, flying in the skies above the camp of horrors, rose from the ashes of the millions of victims and salute their courage and promise to be the shield of the Jewish people." I frequently

watch that ceremony on YouTube. Likewise, I keep a copy of the film With All Your Soul, the story of Roi Klein, on my desk, revisiting it to remind myself of the enormity of the loss and the debt we owe our soldiers.

Wondering about the origins of Klein's extraordinary heroism, I spoke to Shoshana Klein, Roi's mother. I wasn't surprised to hear that she, like her husband came from a family that had experienced the Holocaust.

Shoshana was born here to a pioneer mother who had left Europe before the war, but all her siblings and parents were left behind. Two aunts became partisan fighters in the forests of Eastern Europe. The rest of the family perished in the ghettos of Lithuania.

Roi wasn't named after any of the murdered relatives. Instead, his sabra mother preferred a name that means "shepherd." "What could be nicer than to be a shepherd of Israel," asked Shoshana. "Roi knew about the family Holocaust background of course. How could we ignore it?"

Roi enjoyed an idyllic childhood in Ra'anana. A quiet and serious boy, intelligent and creative, with a broad endearing smile and a sense of humor, he was good at just about everything and handsome as well. An excellent student, he was talented in music, sports and acting. But even as a child, he was committed to public service. When he was only in second grade, a neighbor's child went missing for an hour, and he insisted on searching for her. He volunteered as a youth leader in Bnei Akiva and on Shabbat read the Torah for immigrants in the nearby absorption center.

When he turned 18, Roi spent a year at the pre-military yeshiva Bnei David in Eli before beginning four years of challenging military service in the elite and dangerous Orev and Egoz special units which required both leadership and teamwork. Later, he was called back to the IDF, and became a platoon commander. Somehow, he managed also to complete an engineering degree with distinction, marry his sweetheart, Sara Sjalim, and to be a devoted dad to their two small sons, Gilad and Yoav. All the while, Roi continued serious Torah studies, daily picking up an admired older rabbi before dawn so that he could enjoy a private study session with him. His personal motto was "difficult is good."

How much he had to give up. But on that fatal morning in Bint Jbail, Maj. Roi Klein made a conscious decision to give his life to save the men under his command. As he leaped forward, he shouted, "Shma Yisrael Adoshem Elokeinu Adoshem Echad, Hear O Israel, the Lord Our God, the Lord is One." The blast tore his body, but he refused to die until he had passed on the valuable coded transmitter to his comrades. Maj. Roi Klein was buried at Mount Herzl on his 31st birthday.

Shma Yisrael. These have always been the parting words of our people, those of us who were murdered in the Holocaust and those who fight to keep our fledgling nation alive. Just as in his life Roi Klein was a bridge between the Holocaust heroism and sabra heroism, so was he at his death. We remember him, we thank him, we honor him and through him, all our beloved and irreplaceable human treasures whom he so ably represents. On earth, Roi, we need to keep your memories alive with good deeds and resilience through difficulty. In heaven, the doors surely flew wide open for you. (Jerusalem Post Apr 23)

## Commentary...

### The Origins Of Heroism By Barbara Sofer

Outside, rain fell relentlessly on the countryside. Inside the train, more Nazi officers crowded into the compartments, their voices loud and grating. Menahem Klein glanced at his watch once again. The time was now. His heart pounding, he nodded to his young cousin and trying to look inconspicuous, they made their way to the door in the farthest passage. They were on the run. They had already left Düsseldorf, Germany for Lille, in the north of France, but then the Nazis had conquered France, too.

Time to jump. They were passing the spot where they were to meet their contact. He leaned against the door, but it wouldn't open. The train sped on. Klein pushed with all his might, and at last, managing to wedge the door open a bit, the two fugitives jumped, tumbling from the speeding train. Klein eventually gained sanctuary for his wife and children in Switzerland. After the war, in 1945, the Kleins made aliya. The terror of that unyielding door, he'd told his son Aharon, haunted him throughout his life.

Six decades later, Menahem Klein's grandson stood outside a closed door in the village of Bint Jbail in southern Lebanon. He was a major in the IDF and a deputy battalion commander in the Golani infantry brigade. On July 24, 2006, his soldiers had been hastily shifted from fighting in the south to the Second Lebanon War's most difficult battle with Hizbullah. Supplies were meager and the intelligence maps of the town were out of date.

For Major Klein, this wasn't the first time he had been in Bint Jbail. He and his special troops had been the last soldiers to leave Lebanon in 2000, isolated in that very village when the IDF evacuated earlier than originally scheduled.

Now he was back, but after two days of fighting, Klein's unit received orders to leave Bint Jbail. Then inexplicably the orders were changed again. They were to stay one additional day and carry out a mission to get behind the town wall.

Before dawn, three homes near the wall were to be taken over on the way to breaching the wall. The soldiers moved forward. The first door was easily opened. The second proved more difficult. But a steel door barred entry to the third house. Battering, bullets and explosives wouldn't budge it. The delay and noise alerted the enemy and elicited gunfire. Several soldiers tried a detour, circumventing the house through an adjoining olive grove, but soon found themselves facing a higher wall.

Caught in the open, they were ambushed from three sides. The crackle of the radio brought deputy commander Roi Klein the dire news. "Kodkod my commanding officer, I'm wounded. Need evacuation." Under fire, Klein traced their path through the olive trees. Gunfire and grenades rained down on them. As Klein bent to lift an injured officer onto a stretcher, a live hand grenade tumbled near his feet. Klein leapt forward and covered it with his body, shielding his comrades from the deadly blast.

Holocaust Remembrance Day and Remembrance Day come soon after our glorious celebration of liberation and redemption on Passover, sobering reminders of the agonizing, ongoing struggles for survival of the Jewish people. I've stopped thinking of the two memorial days as separate events but as bracketing a seven-day period of mourning and reflection, a time when it is our duty to express appreciation for those who gave their lives to enable us to live ours with confidence and dignity in Israel and in the Diaspora.

As some mistakenly assume, the determination and fortitude of the IDF did not rise in contradistinction to a lack of courage in Europe. Just the opposite. It is as a continuation of the unbreakable spirit of the Jewish people that endured with courage and resilience unspeakable horror and debasement.

Until 2003 when so many IDF pilots wanted to take part in the Auschwitz fly-past, few realized how many were grandchildren of Holocaust survivors. Brig.-Gen. Amir Eshel - his feet in the ashes of Auschwitz and his eyes on the IDF pilots in the sky - correctly identified the fighting spirit of the IDF as a continuation of that of the Holocaust.

### When Hatemongering is Common Currency

By Itamar Marcus and Barbara Crook

The world reacted with outrage at the speech by Iranian President Ahmadinejad at the Durban Review Conference on Racism in Geneva. European countries stormed out of his talk and released an array of statements condemning his words.

But the real problem is not that an Ahmadinejad exists, or that he proudly and vociferously spews hatred against Jews and blames Zionism for the world's evils. The problem is that his views are anything but unique in the Muslim world.

Tragically, it seems that Western leaders are using Ahmadinejad as their radical Islamic whipping boy in order to content themselves that they are doing all they can to fight growing radical Islamic racism, its calls for a world without Israel and genocide of Jews, and its espousal of Holocaust

denial. In reality, the strong media and government reactions to Ahmadinejad's hate promotion serve only to highlight their hypocrisy in ignoring the same ideology when it's expressed by Arab leaders who have succeeded in making the Western world's list of "good guys."

Saudi King Abdullah - whom President George W. Bush kissed and to whom President Barack Obama bowed earlier this month -- has blamed Israel for terror attacks in Saudi Arabia: "We can be certain that Zionism is behind everything ... I don't say 100 percent, but 95 percent." [Saudi 1 Television, May 2, 2004]

Grade 9 children in Saudi Arabia are taught that "the hour [of judgment] will not come until the Muslims fight the Jews and kill them, until the Jew hides behind rocks and trees, until the rocks or the trees say, 'O Muslim! O servant of God! There is a Jew behind me. Come and kill him!'"

Earlier this year, the head of the Department of Islamic Studies at Saud University pronounced that "Jews are the enemies of Allah." Dr. Walid Al-Rashudi also prayed for the extermination of all Jews: "Kill them one by one and don't leave even one." [Al-Aqsa (Hamas) TV, Jan. 12, 2009.]

It is the very existence of the Jews, not their actions or even their Zionism, that fuels the rhetoric of many Islamic political and religious leaders. "If the Jews left Palestine to us, would we start loving them? Of course not. . . . They are enemies not because they occupied Palestine. They would have been enemies even if they did not occupy a thing," said Egyptian cleric Muhammad Hussein Ya'qoub. ". . . You must believe that we will fight, defeat, and annihilate them, until not a single Jew remains on the face of the Earth." [Al-Rahma TV (Egypt), Jan. 17, 2009]

Is this any different from Ahmadinejad's calls for a world without Israel?

And look at Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas, depicted by the West as a moderate to whom Israel is supposed to offer statehood. But the TV channel directly controlled by Abbas's office regularly runs educational programs to teach Palestinian adults and children alike that there is no state called Israel, and that all Israel's land is actually "occupied Palestine." Palestinian children are taught that Israeli cities throughout the entire country - from Haifa in the North, to Jaffa (part of Tel Aviv), to Eilat in the south, are all actually Palestinian cities. Videos feature songs about a "Palestine" that erases Israel and a future when the Israeli cities Jaffa and Haifa will be "liberated."

Hamas, which has convinced many Western leaders and journalists that it spends more time building schools than bombing civilians, broadcast a sermon earlier this month depicting the Jews as enemies of humanity, inherently evil, seeking to rule the world and a dangerous threat to Muslims. "The time will come, by Allah's will, when their property will be destroyed and their children will be exterminated, and no Jew or Zionist will be left on the face of this earth." [Hamas (Al-Aqsa) TV, April 3, 2009]

Why is Ahmadinejad's Holocaust denial so passionately denounced when Palestinian Holocaust denial is so utterly ignored? Hamas TV broadcast a special documentary last year, explaining that the Holocaust was a Zionist scheme to rid the world of elderly and handicapped, and to gain world sympathy. Fatah's PA TV broadcast a children's program that said explicitly that Israel burned Palestinians in ovens. (Click to view)

So why is Abbas presented as a peace partner, Egypt as a peace broker and Abdullah as a friend of the West? Why does the world not react with outrage to calls for "extermination" of Jews from anyone other than Ahmadinejad?

If the West is serious about peace, then all hatred must be condemned. And we must recognize that the real enemies of peace are not only the Ahmadinejads of the world, but the "friends" who have mastered the doublespeak of calling for peace in English while inciting hatred in Arabic. (Ottawa Citizen Apr 24)

---

### **Israel's Arab Cheerleaders** By Caroline Glick

It is a strange situation when Egypt and Jordan feel it necessary to defend Israel against American criticism. But this is the situation in which we find ourselves today.

Last Friday, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee that Arab support for Israel's bid to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons is contingent on its agreeing to support the rapid establishment of a Palestinian state. In her words, "For Israel to get the kind of strong support it's looking for vis-a-vis Iran, it can't stay on the sidelines with respect to the Palestinians and the peace efforts." As far as Clinton is concerned, the two, "go hand-in-hand."

But just around the time that Clinton was making this statement, Jordan's King Abdullah II was telling The Washington Post that he is satisfied with the Netanyahu government's position on the Palestinians. In his words, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has "sent a message that he's committed to peace with the Arabs. All the words I heard were the right words."

As for Egypt, in spite of the media's hysteria that Egypt won't deal with the Netanyahu government and the Obama administration's warning that Israel can only expect Egypt to support its position that Iran must be denied nuclear weapons if it gives Jerusalem to the PLO, last week's visit by Egypt's intelligence chief Omar Suleiman clearly demonstrated that Egypt wishes to work with the government on a whole host of issues. Coming as it did on the heels of Egypt's revelation that Iranian-controlled Hizbullah agents were arrested for planning strategic attacks against it, Suleiman's visit was a clear sign that Egypt is as keen as Israel to neutralize Iranian power in the region by preventing it from acquiring nuclear weapons.

And Egypt and Jordan are not alone in supporting Israel's commitment to preventing Iran from becoming a nuclear power. American and other Western sources who have visited the Persian Gulf in recent months report that leaders of the Gulf states from Bahrain - which Iran refers to as its 14th province - to Saudi Arabia to Kuwait and, of course, to Iraq - are praying for Israel to strike Iran's nuclear facilities and only complain that it has waited so long to attack them.

As one American who recently met with Persian Gulf leaders explained last week, "As far as the Gulf leaders are concerned, Israel cannot attack Iran fast enough. They understand what the stakes are."

Unfortunately, the nature of those stakes has clearly eluded the Obama administration. As the Arabs line up behind Israel, the Obama administration is operating under the delusion that the Iranians will be convinced to give up their nuclear program if Israel destroys its communities in Judea and Samaria.

According to reports published last week in Yediot Aharonot and Haaretz, President Barack Obama's in-house post-Zionist, White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emmanuel, told an American Jewish leader that for Israel to receive the administration's support for preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, it must not only say that it supports establishing a Palestinian state in Judea, Samaria, Jerusalem and Gaza, it must begin expelling its citizens from their homes and communities in Judea and Samaria to prove its good faith.

With just months separating Iran from either joining the nuclear club or from being barred entry to the clubhouse, the Obama administration's apparent obsession with Judea and Samaria tells us that unlike Israel and the Arab world, its Middle East policies are based on a willful denial of reality.

The cold hard facts are that the Middle East will be a very different place if Iran becomes a nuclear power. Today American policy-makers and other opponents of using military force to prevent Iran from building nuclear weapons compare the current situation to what the region could look like in the aftermath of an Israeli campaign against Iran's nuclear installations. They warn that Hizbullah and Hamas may launch massive retaliatory missile attacks against Israel, Egypt, Jordan and other states, and that US military personnel and installations in the region will likely be similarly attacked by Iranian and Syrian proxies.

Indeed, proponents and opponents of an Israeli strike against Iran's nuclear installations alike warn that Iran's deployment of terror proxies from Beirut to Bolivia, from Managua to Marseilles, and from Gaza to Giza means that things could get very ugly worldwide in the aftermath of an Israeli attack.

But all of that ugliness, all of that instability and death will look like a walk in the park compared to how the region - and indeed how the world - will look if Iran becomes a nuclear power. This is something that the Arabs understand. And this is why they support and pray for an Israeli strike against Iran's nuclear installations.

If Iran acquires nuclear weapons, the Obama administration can throw its hopes for Middle East peace out the window. Today, even without nuclear weapons, Iran is the major force behind the continued Palestinian war against Israel. Iran exerts complete control over Hamas and Islamic Jihad and partial control over Fatah.

In and of itself, Iran's current control over Palestinian terror groups suffices to expose the Obama administration's plan to force Israel to destroy its communities in Judea and Samaria as misguided in the extreme. With Iran calling the shots for the Palestinians, it is clear that any

land Israel vacates will fall under Iranian control. That is, every concession the US forces Israel to make will redound directly to Iran's benefit. This is why Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's claim that it will be impossible to resolve the conflict with the Palestinians without first neutralizing Iran rings so true.

If Iran acquires nuclear weapons, the situation will become even more destructive. A nuclear-armed Iran means that any chance of marginalizing these Iranian-controlled forces in Palestinian society will disappear. For Israel, the best case scenario in the age of a nuclear-armed mullocracy would involve continuous war with Iranian proxies - sort of expanded versions of the Second Lebanon War and Operation Cast Lead - in which it has little option for victory because the terror armies would fight under Iran's nuclear umbrella.

Regionally, a nuclear-armed Iran would in short order compel both Egypt and Jordan to abrogate their peace treaties with Israel. The exposure of the Iranian sabotage ring in Egypt last week makes clear that Iran seeks to either overthrow or dominate the Arab world with its nuclear arsenal. If Iran becomes a nuclear power, roundups of Iranian agents like the one in Egypt will be inconceivable. Iranian agents will be given free reign both regionally and worldwide.

For Israel, the abrogation of its peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan would raise the danger of regional war to an all-time high. Goaded by Iran, and operating with Iran's US- and Turkish-armed Lebanese proxy and Teheran's Syrian slave, Egypt and Jordan may well be made to decide that the time has come to invade Israel again.

These scenarios, of course, are likely because they compare favorably to the worst case scenarios in which a nuclear-armed Iran decides to simply detonate its nuclear bombs over Israel, either in the form of an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) attack or in the form of a direct nuclear strike. An EMP attack would not immediately kill anyone, but would destroy the country's electricity grid and permanently paralyze its military and civilian infrastructures, rendering the population defenseless not merely from its neighbors, but from disease and starvation. If successful, a direct nuclear strike would likely kill between 50,000 and several million Israelis, depending on how many warheads reached their targets.

Globally of course, a nuclear-armed Iran would be well positioned to take over the world's oil markets. With Saudi Arabia's main oil installations located in the predominantly Shi'ite eastern provinces, it would be able to credibly threaten to destroy Saudi oil installations and so assert control over them. With Iran's strategic alliance with Venezuela, once it controls Saudi oil fields, it hard to see how it would not become the undisputed ruler of the oil economy.

Certainly Europe would put up no resistance. Today, with much of Europe already within range of Iran's ballistic missiles, with Iranian-controlled terror cells fanned out throughout the continent and with Europe dependent on Persian Gulf oil, there is little doubt of the direction its foreign policy would take in the event that Iran becomes a nuclear power. Obviously any thought of economic sanctions would disappear as European energy giants lined up to develop Iranian gas fields, and European banks clamored to finance the projects.

Finally, there is America. With Israel either barely surviving or destroyed, with the Arab world and Europe bowing before the mullahs, with much of Central and South America fully integrated into the Iranian axis, America would arguably find itself at greater risk of economic destruction and catastrophic attack than at any time in its history since the War of 1812. An EMP attack that could potentially send the US back to the pre-industrial age would become a real possibility. An Iranian controlled oil economy, financed by euros, would threaten to displace the dollar and the US economy as the backbone of the global economy. The US's military options - particularly given Obama's stated intention to all but end US missile defense programs and scrap much of its already aging nuclear arsenal - would be more apparent than real.

Yet what Clinton's statements before Congress, Emmanuel's statements to that American Jewish leader and Obama's unremitting pandering to Teheran and its Syrian and Turkish allies all make clear is that none of these reasonable scenarios has made a dent in the administration's thinking. As far as the Obama White House is concerned, Iran will be talked out of its plans for regional and global domination the minute that Israel agrees to give its land to the Palestinians. The fact that no evidence exists that could possibly support this assertion is irrelevant.

On Sunday, Washington Post columnist Jim Hoagland claimed that Obama will not publish his administration's policy on Iran until after he meets with Netanyahu at the White House on May 18. It will be during that

meeting, Hoagland wrote, that Obama will seek to convince Netanyahu that there is no reason to attack Iran.

The fact that Obama could even raise such an argument, when by Israel's calculations Iran will either become a nuclear power or be denied nuclear weapons within the next 180 days, shows that his arguments are based on a denial of the danger a nuclear Iran poses to Israel and to global security as a whole.

It is true that you can't help but get a funny feeling when you see the Arabs defending Israel from American criticism. But with the Obama administration's Middle East policy firmly grounded in La La Land, what choice do they have? They understand that today all that stands between them and enslavement to the mullahs is the Israel Air Force and Binyamin Netanyahu's courage. (Jerusalem Post Apr 27)

---

### **Extraordinary Jews** By Caroline B. Glick

Over the past few years I have given lectures to Jewish communities all over the United States and Canada. More often than not - particularly in the U.S. - these lectures have taken place in small cities and towns. And more often than not, the people who invited me to their communities did not work for major Jewish organizations. Instead they worked for small organizations -- often tiny organizations - with no more than a handful of committed members. Yet working alone, they have arguably each done more to bring pro-Israel voices to their communities than the major Jewish organization combined.

For instance, in 2007 I was invited to Detroit by the Zionist Organization of America's local office. That office was actually one person - a small businessman named Mark Segel who runs the ZOA office in his spare time. In 2008 I was invited to Fresno, California by the Republican Jewish Coalition. Last year the Fresno RJC amounted to two people - a frog farmer named Stuart Weil and an obstetrician named Linda Halderman. And this month an organization called the Committee for Truth and Justice brought me to Milwaukee. The group has two members - Ivan Lang and Nancy Weiss-McQuide.

In all of these cases, the individuals who invited me organized every aspect of my visit. They not only ordered my tickets and raised money for my appearances, they solicited media interviews, meetings with local politicians and Jewish machers. They advertised my community lectures, and worked to guarantee high attendance. They approached both major and minor Jewish and non-Jewish organizations to seek co-sponsorship for the events and encouraged Jewish students from local universities to attend.

In all these cases, inviting me to speak was not a one-time effort for the activists who brought me to their towns. I was just one of dozens of Jewish and non-Jewish pro-Israel, anti-jihadist speakers they have brought to their communities in recent years.

These Jewish activists from around the U.S. receive no payment for their efforts. They also receive scant thanks from their fellow Jews for the work they do. When they have asked local offices of major American Jewish organizations like the Federation, the JCRCs or AIPAC to co-sponsor their events, more often than not their requests have been rejected or ignored. On the rare occasions where major Jewish groups have agreed to co-sponsor their events, that co-sponsorship has involved no significant financial support for their efforts.

When I asked Segel of the Detroit ZOA why he works so hard, he explained that he does it for his son. He wants to make sure his child understands why Israel is a great country, and that there are things worth defending, no matter how hard it can be. Other activists have given similar responses, or just shrugged their shoulders as if to say, "Well, someone has to do it."

There are two reasons why these stories ought to be of interest for American Jews. First, they show that individuals can make an enormous difference in their communities even when they operate outside the framework of the organized Jewish community. People like Segel, Halderman, Weil, Weiss-McQuide and Lang are consummate activists and natural leaders. They do not allow others to tell them what to do and whom to listen to.

These men and women are part of a growing army of individual Jews throughout the U.S. who are moved to act by their conviction that Israel must be defended against the expanding alliance of the international Left and the forces of global jihad. They believe that by defending Israel they are also defending the U.S., whose national security is directly linked to Israel's ability to survive and prosper.

Their willingness to devote their time and effort to the increasingly lonely task of defending Israel makes them all extraordinary Jews.

And this brings us to the second reason that efforts by men and women like Weil, Segel, Halderman, Lang and Weiss-McQuide are noteworthy. All of these people and thousands of like-minded Jewish activists throughout the U.S. are moved to act by their sense that Israel and Israel's alliance with America are not being effectively defended by the organized Jewish community.

Today Israel faces an existential threat from Iran's nuclear weapons program. This threat is exacerbated by the weakening of America's commitment to Israel's defense under the Obama administration. It is also made worse by the organized Jewish community's unwillingness to defend Israel from a hostile Democratic administration.

The long-term trends impacting Israel's relations with American Jews are similarly bleak. The coming generation of American Jewish leaders has been indoctrinated at American universities to believe that Zionism is a form of racism rather than the national liberation movement of the Jewish people and one of the most successful and most justified revolutionary movements in human history. The Joseph Liebermans, Mort Zuckermans and Malcolm Hoenleins of tomorrow have been taught that Israel isn't worth defending.

It is against this darkening backdrop, as Israel celebrates its 61st birthday this week, that the importance of the work of lone American Zionist activists must be celebrated. More likely than not, it will be due to the commitment of individual Jewish American activists like Segel, Weil, Halderman, Weiss-McQuide and Lang and small-time donors who support them - whether they operate within larger organizational frameworks or through personal websites, synagogues and small organizations - that American Jewry's support for Israel will be cultivated and maintained.

And it will be due to their grass-roots community activism that new pro-Israel coalitions with likeminded non-Jewish Americans will be nurtured. (Jewish Press Apr 29)

---

### **The Rabbi and the Professor** By Rabbi Ari D. Kahn

Many years ago when I was a relatively young yeshiva student I had the opportunity to study with one of the great rabbis of the previous generation. His name was Rabbi Yisroel Zeev Gustman and he may have been one of the greatest rabbis of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was certainly the greatest "unknown" rabbi: While he fastidiously avoided the limelight and was therefore unfamiliar to the general public, he was well known to connoisseurs of Torah learning.

His meteoric rise from child prodigy to the exalted position of religious judge in the Rabbinical Court of Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinski at around the age of twenty was the stuff of legend – but nonetheless fact. Many years later, I heard Rav Gustman's own modest version of the events leading to this appointment: A singular (brilliant) insight which he shared with his fellow students was later repeated to the visiting Rav Chaim Ozer, who invited the young student to repeat this same insight the following day in his office in Vilna. Unbeknownst to Rav Gustman, the insight clinched an argument in a complex case that had been debated among the judges in Rav Chaim Ozer's court – and allowed a woman to remarry.

One of the judges adjudicating the case in question, Rabbi Meir Bassin, made inquiries about this young man, and soon a marriage was arranged with his daughter Sarah. When Rabbi Bassin passed away before the wedding, Rabbi Gustman was tapped to take his place as rabbi of Shnipishok and to take his seat on the court. Although Rav Gustman claimed that he was simply "in the right place at the right time," it was clear that Rav Bassin and Rav Chaim Ozer had seen greatness in this young man. While a long, productive career on the outskirts of Vilna could have been anticipated, Jewish life in and around Vilna was obliterated by World War II. Rav Gustman escaped, though not unscathed. He hid among corpses. He hid in caves. He hid in a pig pen. Somehow, he survived.

For me, Rav Gustman was the living link to the Jewish world destroyed by the Nazis. I never had to wonder what a Rav in Vilna before the war looked like, for I had seen Rav Gustman, 35 years after the war. At the head of a small yeshiva in the Rechavia section of Jerusalem, Rav Gustman taught a small group of loyal students six days a week. But on Thursdays at noon, the study hall would fill to capacity: Rabbis, intellectuals, religious court judges, a Supreme Court justice and various professors would join along with any and all who sought a high - level Talmud *shiur* that offered a taste of what had been nearly destroyed. When Rav Gustman gave *shiur*, Vilna was once again alive and vibrant.

One of the regular participants was a professor at the Hebrew University, Robert J. (Yisrael) Aumann. Once a promising yeshiva student, he had eventually decided to pursue a career in academia, but made his weekly participation in Rav Gustman's *shiur* part of his schedule, along with many other more or less illustrious residents of Rechavia and Jerusalem.

The year was 1982. Once again, Israel was at war. Soldiers were mobilized, reserve units activated. Among those called to duty was a Reserves soldier, a university student who made his living as a high school teacher: Shlomo Aumann, Professor Yisrael Aumann's son. On the eve of the 19<sup>th</sup> of Sivan, in particularly fierce combat, Shlomo fell in battle.

Rav Gustman mobilized his yeshiva: All of his students joined him in performing the mitzvah of burying the dead. At the cemetery, Rav Gustman was agitated: He surveyed the rows of graves of the young men, soldiers who died defending the Land. On the way back from the cemetery, Rav Gustman turned to another passenger in the car and said, "They are all holy." Another passenger questioned the rabbi: "Even the non-religious soldiers?" Rav Gustman replied: "Every single one of them". He then turned to the driver and said, "Take me to Professor Aumann's home."

The family had just returned from the cemetery and would now begin the week of *shiv'a* – mourning for their son, brother, husband and father. (Shlomo was married and had one child. His widow, Shlomit, gave birth to their second daughter shortly after he was killed.)

Rav Gustman entered and asked to sit next to Professor Aumann, who said: "Rabbi, I so appreciate your coming to the cemetery, but now is time for you to return to your Yeshiva". Rav Gustman spoke, first in Yiddish and then in Hebrew, so that all those assembled would understand: "I am sure that you don't know this, but I had a son named Meir. He was a beautiful child. He was taken from my arms and executed. I escaped. I later bartered my child's shoes so that we would have food, but I was never able to eat the food – I gave it away to others. My Meir is a *kadosh* – he is holy – he and all the six million who perished are holy."

Rav Gustman then added: "I will tell you what is transpiring now in the World of Truth in *Gan Eden* – in Heaven. My Meir is welcoming your Shlomo into the *minyan* and is saying to him 'I died because I am a Jew – but I wasn't able to save anyone else. But you – Shlomo, you died defending the Jewish People and the Land of Israel'. My Meir is a *kadosh*, he is holy – but your Shlomo is a *Shaliach Zibbur* – in that holy, heavenly *minyan*."

Rav Gustman continued: "I never had the opportunity to sit *shiv'a* for my Meir; let me sit here with you just a little longer."

Professor Aumann replied, "I thought I could never be comforted, but Rabbi, you have comforted me."

Rav Gustman did not allow his painful memories to control his life. He found solace in his students, his daughter his grandchildren, and in every Jewish child. He and his wife would attend an annual parade (on *Yom Yerushalayim*) where children would march on Jerusalem in song and dance. A rabbi who happened upon them one year asked the Rabbi why he spent his valuable time in such a frivolous activity. Rav Gustman explained, "We who saw a generation of children die, will take pleasure in a generation of children who sing and dance in these streets."

A student once implored Rav Gustman to share his memories of the ghetto and the war more publicly and more frequently. He asked him to tell people about his son, about his son's shoes, to which the Rav replied, "I can't, but I think about those shoes every day of my life. I see them every night before I go to sleep."

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of Sivan 5751 (1991), Rav Gustman passed away. Thousands marched through the streets of Jerusalem accompanying Rav Gustman on his final journey. As night fell on the 29<sup>th</sup> of Sivan, 9 years after Shlomo Aumann fell in battle, Rav Gustman was buried on the Mount of Olives. I am sure that upon entering Heaven he was reunited with his wife, his teachers and his son Meir. I am also sure that Shlomo Aumann and all the other holy soldiers who died defending the People and the Land of Israel were there to greet this extraordinary Rabbi.

On December 10<sup>th</sup> 2005, Professor Robert J. Aumann was awarded the Nobel Prize in economics. I am sure he took with him to Stockholm memories of his late wife Esther, and his son Shlomo. I suspect he also took memories of his Rabbi, Rav Gustman.

May it be the will of God that the People of Israel sanctify His Name by living lives of holiness which will serve as a light to the nations – and may no more children, soldiers or yeshiva students ever need to join that holy *minyan* in Heaven. (rabbiarikahn.com)