



Dear Friends,

As we near the 150th day of the war in Israel and past the 20th Shabbat spent under the shadows of this tragic reality, we think of the promise of protection that once inspired our ancient people to complete their trek there: "It is a land which the Lord your God looks after, on which your God always keeps His eye, from year's beginning to year's end" (Deut. 11:12). We need God's eyes to observe our pain, to take us out of harm's way, and to see an end to this war and to bring us there.

Based on this verse and two others, Rabbi Yehuda, in the Talmud, states that, "Three matters require a plea for mercy to bring them about: A good king, a good year, and a good dream" (BT *Brakhot* 55a). These three desires that require compassion are interwoven. When we have good leadership, we believe that that good things will come our way in the near future. And when we live in a spirit of goodness, we can nurture big dreams because we are carried by the belief that there are leaders who can actualize them. This is no less true today than it was when Rabbi Yehuda first taught these words.

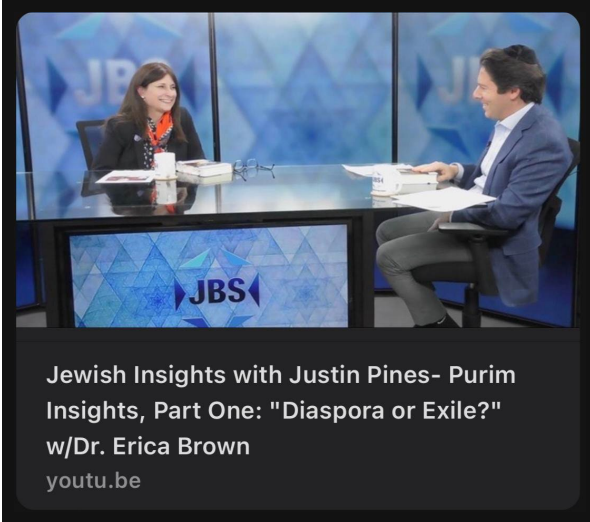
Every day, three times a day, right before we say the prayer of *Modim*, we recite, "May our eyes behold Your merciful return to Zion." We ask that God's eyes and our eyes focus on Zion and only then do we offer a prayer of thanksgiving.

In the spirit of gratitude, I'm grateful for Rabbi Dr. Mordechai Schiffman's insights on this week's Torah reading below. Continue learning with the Sacks-Herenstein Center: register for Dr. David Shatz' free three-part course on ethics this March. I am also proud to welcome our new undergraduate cohort of [Leadership Scholars](#). Next year, we will have 30 Leadership Scholars on campus!

These promising young people fill me with hope and remind us to keep our eyes on the prize - an Israel free of terror, where we can live, grow, love and worship in peace.

Shabbat Shalom,
Erica

Dr. Erica Brown
Vice Provost, Rabbi Sacks-Herenstein Center for Values and Leadership



Purim Insights Part 1: Diaspora or Exile?

The Jewish Broadcasting System hosted Dr. Erica Brown in the first in a series of conversations on Purim. Justin Pines in conversation with Dr. Brown, author of [Esther: Power, Fate and Fragility in Exile](#), discussed themes of Purim as they relate to our world today.

[Click here](#) to view the conversation.

Introducing Leadership Scholars Cohort III

Yeshiva University

Office for Values and Leadership

Leadership Scholars Cohort III



Maya August

Cleveland, OH • Fuchs Mizrahi • Midreshet HaRova

Maya August was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio. She graduated from Fuchs Mizrahi School in 2023. During her high school career, Maya was awarded both the Chein v'Chessed Award and the Nitzan Award in recognition of her leadership and commitment to her community. Over the course of high school, Maya served as a school ambassador, Jr. NCSY advisor, and a head of Bnei Akiva Cleveland's leadership board. Additionally, during the summer she worked as a Rosh at Moshava Ba'ir Cleveland and has interned at the Jewish Education Center. Maya is currently studying at Midreshet HaRova and is eager to embrace her new role as a Leadership Scholar.



Ayelet Friedman

Baltimore, MD • Bais Yaakov of Baltimore • MMY

Ayelet E. Friedman was raised in Baltimore, Maryland, where she graduated from Bais Yaakov of Baltimore, earning the Citizenship Award from faculty and peers. Throughout high school, she pursued her love for English and writing, serving as Editor-in-Chief of her high school newspaper and as captain of the English Literature team. She was awarded 1st place in The Associated's writing contest and a bronze for the Tikvah Online Academy Essay Contest. She participated in numerous Tikvah Fund programs throughout high school and while in Israel. Ayelet paired with college students from the University of Maryland and The Image Center of Maryland to further develop her CJIE award-winning prototype, the Hug-a-Bear, designed to alleviate depression and anxiety among different age groups. In the summer following high school graduation, she interned in the office of Congressman C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger (D-MD). Ayelet then attended Michlelet Mevaseret Yerushalayim (MMY), where she was Editor-in-Chief of the school journal, Kol Mevaseret.



Yosef Kryzman

Teaneck, NJ • TABC • Yeshivat Hakotel

Yosef Kryzman is from Teaneck, New Jersey where he attended Torah Academy of Bergen County. Yosef is now learning in Yeshivat HaKotel. During his time at TABC, Yosef served as the President of the Israel Advocacy Club, facilitating discussions and spearheading events to promote awareness and understanding of Israeli affairs. After completing an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) course at the Bergen County EMS Training Center, Yosef volunteered as an EMT at the Teaneck Volunteer Ambulance Corps. Yosef's commitment to Israel advocacy extended to his participation in Write On For Israel, where he engaged with journalists and experts to address complex geopolitical issues. Furthermore, he participated in TABC's Distinguished Scholars Program, conducting research in behavioral economics. Yosef also served as a Yachad Counselor, fostering meaningful connections with individuals and promoting inclusivity.



Dena Libesman

Philadelphia, PA • Kosloff Torah Academy Girls High School • Michlalah

Dena Libesman grew up in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where she attended Kosloff Torah Academy Girls High School. Throughout high school, Dena led and participated in numerous school programs and clubs such as Production, Big sister-Little sister, EITC advocacy, Basketball, Debate, and Choir. Outside of school, she contributed to many community volunteering organizations including Bikur cholim, Adopt-a-Bubby, Shul youth groups, and tutoring. She spent her summers as a counselor at Camp Sternberg, as well as interning at a law firm, a hospital, and shadowing an OB-GYN. She is currently learning at Michlalah in Yerushalayim and plans on studying education at Stern in the fall.



Ben Meisels

Los Angeles, CA • YULA • Torat Shraga

Ben Meisels hails from Los Angeles, California. He went to YULA Boys High School and is currently learning at Yeshivat Torat Shraga. As an aspiring entrepreneur, Ben founded a company that buys, sells, and trades gold, silver, and other precious metals across America and Puerto Rico. Ben was the Captain of his high school's Varsity Golf team. Ben founded YULA's Future Investors Club, which assisted in educating students on financial literacy. Ben has a passion for real estate and worked at a leading Los Angeles real estate firm this past summer.



Mark S. Mosseri

Brooklyn, NY • Yeshivah of Flatbush • Yeshivat Moreshet Yerushalayim

Mark S. Mosseri grew up in Brooklyn, New York and is a graduate of Yeshivah of Flatbush Joel Braverman High School. Mark was the President & Founder of the Leaders-in-Business Club and served as President of Fundraising on the Tzedakah Committee. Additionally, he spearheaded the Little Red Box initiative, spreading positivity in school, raising awareness, and donating profits to Ukraine relief. In his community, Mark is a committee member of Sephardic Bikur Holim Youth Division and the Young Adult President of Mikdash Eliyahu Synagogue. Mark spent summers in various leadership and learning experiences, including the Leadership in the Business World program at Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. Mark is currently studying at Yeshivat Moreshet Yerushalayim in Jerusalem, Israel.



Gideon Rone

Baltimore, MD • Beth Tfiloh High School • Yeshivat Orayta

Gideon grew up in Baltimore, Maryland where he attended Beth Tfiloh High School. During his years there, he was the student body President as well as Captain of the Model UN team and Varsity Basketball team. Raised by two parents who work as professionals in the Jewish nonprofit world, Gideon inherited a love for Judaism and a drive to do his part in strengthening the Jewish community and bettering our world. His most fulfilling work experience has been serving on the leadership team of Imadi where he has helped to launch and facilitate this program at Eagle Point, a sleepaway summer program for kids with cancer and special needs. Gideon is currently finishing his second year in Yeshivat Orayta in Jerusalem and upon his return will be studying Psychology at Yeshiva College.



Hannah Schachter

Bergenfield, NJ • Frisch • Sha'alavim for Women

Hannah Schachter grew up in Bergenfield, NJ with her parents and two brothers. Hannah graduated from The Frisch School, where she was President of Student Council, Captain of the Girls Varsity Basketball team, and Grade Representative for two years. Outside of her academics, Hannah was President of Yachad for Frisch and volunteered at I-Shine, the Jewish Youth Network Encounter Program, and Friendship Circle in New Jersey. Hannah volunteers at the Shalva National Center in Jerusalem, Israel. She is currently studying at Sha'alvim for Women and looks forward to attending Stern College for Women in the Fall of 2024.



Leah Solomon

Long Island, NY • Manhattan High School for Girls • Michlalah

Leah Solomon grew up in North Woodmere, New York, and attended Manhattan High School for Girls. There, she was an Editor for the Literary and Arts Journal and served as Class President in both her sophomore and senior years. In addition, Leah was a youth group leader at her shul and helped run a local Shabbos group for children with special needs. To address a pressing need she saw in the larger Orthodox community, Leah founded After The School Bell, a nonprofit that connects high school volunteers with elementary school students for accessible tutoring. Today, she manages the US/Canada team on the ground from Israel, where she is studying at Michlalah Jerusalem College. Leah is committed to bettering the Jewish community and is planning to study Strategy and Entrepreneurship at the Sy Syms School of Business with the hope of gaining skills to effectively impact the Jewish world.



Benjamin Winters

Silver Spring, MD • Berman Hebrew Academy • Torat Shraga

Benjamin Winters is an energetic leader from Silver Spring, Maryland. He went to Berman Hebrew Academy, where he was the Captain of the Basketball, Soccer, Baseball, and Model UN teams. Outside of school, Ben regularly leined and davened, and took over as Gabbai in the Youth Minyan at Kemp Mill Synagogue, and also took a leadership position in communal organizations such as Imadi and Chai Lifeline. During the summer, Ben has been a counselor in Moshava IO for the past three years, and this past summer, he was the Machal Rosh Beit Midrash. Ben currently volunteers at Shalva and started a post-night seder learning program at Torat Shraga called Players Only Meeting. Ben looks forward to joining a cohort of motivated young adults, spearheading new projects and ideas both inside and outside the Jewish community and learning from some of the greatest leaders of our generation.



Yeshiva University
THE RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS-HERENSTEIN
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presents



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Please contact Dr. Shira Weiss with questions: sweiss2@yu.edu


Maimonides & Medicine

Wednesday, February 21, 2024 • 6:30 p.m.
 Guided tours of the Yeshiva University Museum exhibition, The Golden Path: Maimonides Across Eight Centuries, will be offered at 5:30 and 8:00.
 To register visit www.yum.cjh.org





Dr. Jeremy Brown
The Surprising Influence of Maimonides' Treatise on Poisons
Jeremy Brown is an emergency physician and historian of science who works at the National Institutes of Health. His most recent book, *The Eleventh Plague: Jews and Pandemics from the Bible to COVID-19* (OUP 2023) won the 2024 National Jewish Book Award for Modern Jewish Thought.



Dr. Edward Reichman
If the Rambam Were Alive Today: Contemporary Jewish Medical Ethics Through the Eyes of Maimonides
Edward Reichman is a Professor of Emergency Medicine at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, where he also teaches Jewish medical ethics, and holds the Rabbi Isaac and Bella Tendler Chair in Jewish Medical Ethics at Yeshiva College. His most recent book, *The Anatomy of Jewish Law*

Download the Full Text of the Dvar Torah here



the **TORAH**
of **CHARACTER**
 with **Rabbi Dr. Mordechai Schiffman**
 Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks–Herenstein Center for Values & Leadership at Yeshiva University

Ki Tissa 5784

Love of Learning

Throughout the closing fourteen chapters of Exodus, we observe with awe the creative genius and masterful craftsmanship that helped ensure the construction of the Tabernacle, its vessels, and the priestly clothing. From where did these newly freed slaves become adept at woodworking, stonemasonry, and craftwork? When did they acquire the skills, abilities, and knowledge to design,

weave, thread, and embroider? How did they become expert goldsmiths, silversmiths, and coppersmiths?

The only possible resolution, writes Nahmanides, is Divine intervention. God singled out Bezalel and “endowed him with a divine spirit” (Ex. 31:3), which enabled him to carry out the construction contract. Why was Bezalel chosen as the leader of this project? There is no explicit indication in the verses as to his particular propensities. We know little of his background. We are afforded no accompanying aptitude test, previous employment history, or remarkable resume.

There is one clue provided, not regarding Bezalel’s chosenness, but in describing the skilled artisans who assisted Bezalel in constructing the Tabernacle. For them, instead of just stating that God granted them a “Divine spirit,” the verse relays that “in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom” (Ex 31:6). The prerequisite for Divine wisdom was wise heartedness. If they did not possess any previous experience or expertise, what does it mean that they were wise hearted?

Turning to the story of Solomon for a parallel, Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz in his *Sichot Mussar*, suggests that being wise hearted denotes demonstrating a deep and burning desire for wisdom. Solomon was granted wisdom by God precisely because he desired it. Instead of requesting long life, riches, or military victory, he beseeched God for discernment in dispensing justice (I Kings 3:11-12). The artisans’ wise heartedness, argues Rabbi Shmuelevitz, is precisely this love of learning and strong desire to discover. This virtue signaled to God to endow them with the further wisdom necessary for the task.

Midrash Tanhuma connects the model of the wise hearted artisans to Joshua the son of Nun. God also supplemented Joshua’s wisdom with Divine wisdom, filling him with the “spirit of wisdom” (Deut. 34:9). Like Solomon, we find indication that Joshua too was an exemplar possessing an unquenching thirst for knowledge. The verse states that Moses’ “servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man (*naar*), did not depart out of the Tent” (Ex. 33:11). Following the chronological calculations of the Sages, Ibn Ezra questions the description of Joshua as “a young man,” as he was fifty-six years old at the time. Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Sorotzkin, in his *Rinat Yitzchak*, suggests that “young man” is not a description of age, but of attitude and mindset. Despite his older age Joshua embodied an intense yearning for knowledge and growth. He viewed himself and interacted with others as someone with so much more to learn and achieve. It was his desire to learn that kept him young at heart.

Positive psychology points to love of learning as one of their 24 character strengths important for flourishing. Love of learning is a primary predictor of school satisfaction and school achievement and is one of only two strengths that independently predicts well-being. Resonant of Joshua’s description as a “young man,” Dr. Ben Kean suggests that “a love of learning may be particularly valuable during older age in that it may prevent cognitive decline.”

Observing the artisans’ craving for wisdom, Solomon’s pleading for discernment, and Joshua’s youthful exuberance for knowledge, we would do well to cultivate our own love of learning and passion for continual growth.

Character Challenge: Learn something new every day this week and share it enthusiastically with others.

Quote from Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt”l: “Hence the Torah ends with the last command – to keep writing and studying Torah. And this is epitomised in the beautiful custom, on Simchat Torah, to move immediately from reading the end of the Torah to reading the beginning. The last word in the Torah is *Yisrael*; the last letter is a *lamed*. The first word of the Torah is *Bereishit*; the first letter is *beit*. *Lamed* followed by *beit* spells *lev*, “heart.” *So long as the Jewish people never stop learning, the Jewish heart will never stop beating*” (“The Heart, the Home, the Text,” *Covenant & Conversation*).

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