



CONGREGATION AGUDATH JACOB

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From the Desk of
Rabbi Ben-Zion Lanxner

WHY NOW?

A few weeks ago, I was reading the national bestseller list published in one of Israel's popular Newspaper, **Israel Hayom**, when I noticed something surprising. There, sitting in the top ten among all the new releases, was a book first translated into the Hebrew language fifty years ago: "**Man's Search for Meaning**" by Viktor Frankl.

In 2026, in the middle of a war, this book, amazingly is one of the ten bestselling books in Israel.

I have read **Man's Search for Meaning** many times. It is one of those books you can never forget, a book that has stayed with me since I first read it when I was preparing a lecture I gave in Dallas, at Tiferet Israel congregation about 40 years ago, about the Holocaust, as I am a second-generation holocaust survivor.

Frankl was an Austrian Jewish psychiatrist who survived Auschwitz, Dachau, and two other Nazi concentration camps. His central argument, built from everything he experienced in those camps, is this: meaning is not a luxury. It is what keeps people alive.

The prisoners who lost their sense of purpose inevitably lost their will to survive.

Intrigued by the popularity of the book, I asked around, as I called a few colleagues of mine in Israel.

One of them, explained that pre-military academies across Israel buy the book as a year-end gift for their students before they enter the army, which likely explains the spike in sales.

That may be true. But let us think for a minute about what that really means. Out of every book ever written, these academies chose *this* particular one to give Israel's young men and women enlisting in the IDF to become the future defenders and courageous soldiers of Eretz Israel, the Sovereign State of Israel, the Homeland of the Jewish People, Am Israel!

That is definitely not a random decision.

Why now?

“And it shall come to pass afterwards that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy; your elders shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions” (Joel 3:1).

Throughout the Hebrew Bible, the pattern is consistent: the people of Israel drift into corruption and abandon G-d, while a small number of towering individuals — the prophets — stand apart from the nation and rebuke it.

Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah — the prophet is always the exception.

The nation is always the problem.

The prophet speaks precisely because the people are corrupted.

Joel is describing something entirely different. Not one prophet rebuking a corrupt nation, but an entire generation that seeks G-d. Sons and daughters, elders and young men, all of them.

Let us try to understand this phenomenon. As we all know, prophecy was once limited to individuals of exceptional spiritual preparation — but Joel's vision is of HaShem's spirit resting on the nation as a whole.

Let me take this explanation deeper and a little further: what Joel describes is a democratization of Divine inspiration. In earlier generations, prophetic connection with HaShem was the achievement of rare individuals who spent years preparing themselves to receive it. What is so incredible is that the Prophet Joel is promising that this barrier will be removed entirely.

G-d's spirit will no longer be the possession of a spiritual elite, but rather the common experience of an entire generation. This is not a replay of biblical history but its culmination, the moment Israel has been moving toward all along.

Since the beginning of this war of October 7th, for almost 3 years, Israeli soldiers have left careers, graduate programs, businesses, and young families to serve in the most sustained military mobilization in Israel's history.

Hundreds of thousands of reservists have given up their financial security, their comfort, and in too many cases their lives, to defend their people.

When you are sleeping in a tent in Gaza, when your friends are being killed beside you, when you have walked away from everything that defined your comfortable civilian life — Viktor Frankl's question becomes the only question that matters: What am I living for?

That question has cracked open hearts that years of chasing normalcy had sealed shut. **"And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh"** (Ezekiel 36:26).

Today, in 2026 – 5787, Israeli newspapers are filled with stories about the spiritual changes sweeping through secular Israeli society: a musician in Tel Aviv who studies Torah for two hours every morning before her day begins, praying the full morning, afternoon, and evening services; a film student at Tel Aviv University who became religious after October 7; a bereaved mother whose son was killed in the war who now studies Torah from the same Rabbi who taught him, working through material her son had already mastered, holding onto it as her way of staying connected to him.

Surveys across Israel show dramatic growth in belief in G-d, Shabbat observance, and Synagogue attendance among people who were entirely secular just a few years ago. When Israelis are asked what happened, the answer that keeps coming back is: "It's something from within we experienced firsthand in battle: normally, we should not have been alive, but we are, and that is what they call "Etzbah Elo-him" the "Finger of HaShem", there is no other explanation that make sense. HaShem was right there...protecting all of us"! Wow...

הנה ימים באים נאום ה' והשלחתי רעב בארץ לא רעב ללחם ולא לצמא למים כי אם לשמע את דבר ה'

"Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord G-D, "when I will send a famine on the land — not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD" (Amos 8:11). (This is a famous Song that I once sang with Reb Shlomo Carlebach in concert in Belgium, it's one of an addictive melody one can't stop humming).

This is not a handful of individuals, not a small religious revival in one community. It is a broad, unmistakable movement across Israeli society — precisely the kind of widespread yearning for God that Joel described.

Why is *Man's Search for Meaning* on Israel's bestseller list in 2026? Because an entire generation is asking Viktor Frankl's question — and beginning to find the answer.

As Joel prophesied, the day is coming when it will not be only Holy prophets and rare individuals who yearn for HaShem's Divine Providence, "Shechinat-El" and presence, but an entire generation of Israel.

That day, it appears, is coming sooner than we think.

You can now answer yourselves the question of my 2 parts previous articles about "When is the Messiah Coming"?

I sincerely wish that our young generation of American Jews of today would feel the same emotions as their counterparts in Israel, and experience the close feelings of HaShem's presence in their day-to-day lives and take their 3000 old sacred traditions more seriously and participate in each of their Jewish communities more actively, G-d willing, B" H.

Rabbi Ben-Zion Lanxner



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

"*Emunah* is a Two-Way Street: Annual Presidential Address, 5787"

Dr. Jeff Levin

L'shanah tovah. G'mar chatimah tovah.

This is the fourth one of these annual presidential addresses that I have given and, presumably, the final one. It has been a tremendous privilege to serve in this role. Stressful and exhausting, yes; overwhelming at times, admittedly yes; but the greatest honor and privilege imaginable. So I recognize that this may be my last chance to say something meaningful to the entire congregation, aside from my monthly Newsletter messages, of which I still have a couple left to write.

In my time as President, as you know, my monthly messages have focused on many different themes, but I keep coming back, in one way or another, to the concepts of *emunah* (faith) and *bitachon* (trust in G-d). I won't repeat myself here; we all recognize that these are important traits to cultivate, even if they are sometimes challenging. What I wish to suggest, however, is that *emunah* is something of a two-way street. Just like how the word *b'rit*, or covenant, implies a two-way set of obligations—those that we owe to G-d and those that He has promised to fulfill for us—so, too, are belief and faith and trust traits that characterize our reliance on G-d (or should characterize it) and, at the same time, G-d's belief and faith and trust in us. This is a mighty and profound truth, but one that often lies somewhere beneath our conscious awareness.

We live in treacherous times for Jews, and it is easy to become overwhelmed by the awful stories that bombard us on newsfeeds, day after day. I am no different than any of us or any other Jew in that regard. We wonder if we will ever see a better outcome than what we see on the horizon, so we cling to whatever shreds of hope we have that G-d will deliver us in the end, while trying not to sink into pessimism. In such times it is very easy to forget that Hashem has told us, explicitly and often, that deliverance is ours. This is repeated over and over in Torah and in the rabbinic literature, and we see it over and over throughout our history. It will be no different for us now, G-d willing.

In *Devarim*, we are told that Hashem is *ha-El ha-ne'eman* ("the faithful G-d") who "keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations" (Deut. 7:9). Later we are told that He is *El emunah* ("a god of faithfulness") and "without iniquity, [and] just and right" (Deut. 32:4). Earlier, in *Vayikra*, G-d reminds us that He "will not reject [us]" or "break [His] covenant with us" (Lev. 26:44). The Mishnah and Talmud and Midrash weigh in similarly, in more places than I can recount here. Look them up. In our liturgy, too, in so many places in the *siddur*, we are reminded of G-d's faithfulness to us, using the words *emunah* or sometimes variations of *ne'eman*, which comes from the same root. Indeed, G-d's unquestioned and eternal faithfulness to His people—us—seems nearly as prominent a theme in our sacred writings as the call for us to be faithful to Him.

The history of our people reveals over and over the truth of these words. For thousands of years we have been delivered from the most dire straits, our enemies vanquished and our lives restored. If we would spend time reading and taking these passages to heart—truly recognizing what they imply—perhaps this would go a long way toward dissipating the unrelenting worry that consumes so many of us, fed by incessant news reports and social media slop telling us that the end is at hand. Yes, of course, things are becoming bad for Jews throughout the world, but our best response is to press ahead, meeting G-d's faithfulness to us with renewed faith in Him, fighting injustice, speaking the truth, and defending our people. The onslaughts may not stop anytime soon, and so of course we must act decisively and not put our heads in the sand, but we should confront these onslaughts with confidence and reliance on the One who has told us repeatedly that He is and ever will be faithful to us.

Well, this is easier said than done, I know that. It is easy for me to stand up here and say such things, while each of us has to confront the worry and even fear that is circulating out there trying to consume us. Is there something that we can do to help relieve these negative emotions, reinforcing the faith that I have just spoken of? Yes, there is, and maybe some of you are guessing where I am going with this. A tremendous comfort in these times—as it has been throughout our history—is to gather together in fellowship with our brothers and sisters. There are many Hebrew words that reference something akin to this concept: *chavurah*, *chevra*, *achdut*, *re'ut*, *kehillah*, and more. And where is this idea most experienced? That's right, in *shul*.

So this is my longwinded way to make my annual call to everyone here to join with us in *shul*, at services and special events in the coming year. Not only is it a *mitzvah*—we all know that—and not only is it imperative if we are to survive and grow as a congregation—we should know that, too—but it is a bulwark, a defensive wall, against the kind of unrelenting negativity and pessimism that threaten to overwhelm so many of us. I am not suggesting that we turn a blind eye to what is going on in the world, heaven forbid, but I am suggesting that there is somewhere we can come in order to support each other and inspire each other and stand together as we confidently keep in mind that G-d is ever with us.

With that in mind, I would like to suggest—actually, maybe “challenge” is a better word—I would like to challenge every one of us to participate more fully in the life of the *shul* in the coming year. Yes, I am well aware that we have many other commitments and that nobody can come to every single service and every single event. Not even your President! Indeed, if our entire membership appeared at every single service and holiday event, we would probably be the first and only religious congregation of any faith in the history of the world that could say that. So my challenge is much simpler: while we have our regulars who attend on many or most Fridays or Saturdays or both, I would like to ask each of our members to commit to putting in an appearance, first, on our major holidays (which everyone here is already doing, so thank you so very much); second, during the four *yizkor* services throughout the year; and, third, whenever you have a *yahrzeit*. We all have a few of those. I believe that if each of us would come to services at least on those occasions—holidays, *yizkor* services, and *yahrzeits*—even if for some of us attending at other times is difficult or logistically not always possible—understood—then we would likely have strong *minyanim* on an almost constant basis. This would be a great gift to our congregation, as a whole, and also of inestimable benefit to the lives and souls of each of us.

Finally, it is typical of these sorts of annual addresses to say something more specific about ongoing financial needs and summing up the past year's accomplishments in detail, but I plan to save that for our annual congregational meeting coming up in December. At that time, I will name names, so to speak, and pass the torch to our Vice President, Joseph Settle, and that will be an ideal time for us to take stock of where we are and how far we have come and what we have left to do in the coming year and years. In terms of membership, financials, physical plant, leadership, and so on. That meeting will coincide with our annual Chanukah event, as usual, so please join us there.

For now, in closing, let me personally thank our Board of Trustees; our spiritual leader and *mara d'atra*, Rabbi Lanxner, and Rebbetzin Susan; our office administrator, Kathleen Keller; our Sisterhood chair, Inez Bonneville; our Treasurer, Harry Harelik; our VP, Joseph Settle; those members of law enforcement who provide security for our services and for our

shul—a very special thank you; and all of our many volunteers for all of your assistance and financial support and so many other contributions. Thank you, as well, to my predecessor, Judy Hersh, for her continued leadership of our Federation, and we wish her a *refuah shleimah*. And, finally, thank you most of all to the membership of Congregation Agudath Jacob—both current and prospective members—for your continued investment in the life of our *shul* as we move into the Year 5787.

L'shanah tovah. G'mar chatimah tovah. And may we all be inscribed and sealed for a sweet new year.

October Service Schedule

<u>Friday, October 2</u>		<u>Friday, October 16</u>	
Kabbalat Shabbat	6:00 pm	Kabbalat Shabbat	6:00 pm
Candle Lighting	6:54 pm	Candle Lighting	6:37 pm
<u>Saturday, October 3</u>		<u>Saturday, October 17</u>	
Shacharit	10:00 am	Shacharit	10:00 am
Shabbat Ends	7:47 pm	Shabbat Ends	7:31 pm
<u>Friday, October 9</u>		<u>Friday, October 23</u>	
Kabbalat Shabbat	6:00 pm	Kabbalat Shabbat	6:00 pm
Candle Lighting	6:46 pm	Candle Lighting	6:30 pm
<u>Saturday, October 10</u>		<u>Saturday, October 24</u>	
Shacharit	10:00 am	Shacharit	10:00 am
Shabbat Ends	7:39 pm	Shabbat Ends	7:24 pm
		<u>Friday, October 30</u>	
		Kabbalat Shabbat	6:00 pm
		Candle Lighting	6:23 pm
		<u>Saturday, October 31</u>	
		Shacharit	10:00 am
		Shabbat Ends	7:17 pm



October 2
Loren Schwartz
October 9
David Rosen

October 9
Donald Lynn
October 25
Hillary Weidhorn



October 24
Brian & Jasmine Presser

THANK YOU for your donations in September!

Shabbat

Carrie Draher Susan Raphael Inez Bonneville
Paty Haessly Jeff Levin Kathleen Keller
Susan Lanxner

In Memory Of

Marthe Heyman
Benjy Bauer

Stella Somlo Milberger
Susan Raphael

High Holiday Yizkor/Donations

Florence Hersh
Jeff Levin
Susan Raphael
Rabbi & Susan Lanxner
Miguel Perez
Richard & Karen Alpert
Joseph Settle
Semyon & Anna Papernov
Paty Haessly
Paul & Paula Farmer
Laynie Miller
Russel & Teresa Kirk
Ilsa Burns
George & Kathleen Keller
Barbara Dankenbring

Yahrzeit

The following names of dearly departed will be read aloud by the Rabbi preceding the Mourner's Kaddish on Shabbat morning. It is fitting and customary that the nearest of kin be present in the synagogue for the recitation of this special prayer in their memory. Attendance not only honors the departed but also enhances and guarantees that a Minyan is present to recite the Kaddish.

Kaddish will be read on October 2

Tishrei 21	Jacob Aronson Sarah Beerman* Estelle Goldfeder Bess Levinson Dorothy Fridenburg Hirshman Max Udashen*
Tishrei 22	Minna Adams Julia Ellis Harry Lapin Scott Vaughan
Tishrei 23	Frieda Atals Abraham B Blank* Billy Dwayne Brooks J Harold Simon A Rubinsky* Mark Harris* Joe Rubel* Bernice Shapiro
Tishrei 24	Sarah Levy Bell* Joe Rubel
Tishrei 25	Rabbi Charles Blumenthal* Bernard Hersh*
Tishrei 26	Gary Gurkoff Samuel Patlis
Tishrei 27	Eric Engleman Baby Harelik Gertrude Harris* Harvey Goldfeder Elayne Lynn

Kaddish will be read on October 9

Tishrei 28	Rebecca Jacobson Joseph M Schwartz*
Heshvan 1	Reina Bauer Ida Segal
Heshvan 3	Elayne Stein Lynn

Kaddish will be read on October 16

Heshvan 7	Mary G. Settle
Heshvan 8	Esther Hoffman
Heshvan 9	Mariano Joseph Fusco Mrs. Max Harelik*
Heshvan 10	William Ellis* Mrs. Ruben Gandler *
Heshvan 11	Louis Lipsitz

Kaddish will be read on October 23

Heshvan 12	Esther Beerman Betty Greenbaum Bettylee Greenberg L Rosen* Hyman Rosenberg Mrs. Max (Mollie) Siegel*
Heshvan 13	Max Beerman* Morris Commer* Helen Fred* Anna Rae Frindell* Sarah Hoppenstein* Nathan Wolf Koss* Mrs. Toby Novich Margaret Ida Fusco Sevic
Heshvan 14	Mrs. Sophie Levy* Ann Frindell
Heshvan 15	Abe Cohen Jennie Greenberg Sam Reed
Heshvan 16	Johnnie N Campbell Ida Wolkoff Harris* Jennifer Lanxner Joseph Lebowitz Rabbi Max Zucker
Heshvan 18	Evelyn Burchman Aaron Esserman* Jack Shaw

Kaddish will be read on Oct/Nov 30/1

Heshvan 19	Elaine Berman
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Heshvan 20 Maynard J Wizig*
Neal Slansky
Abe Lowich*
Mrs. Max (Mollie) Sigel*
Nathan Wolf Koss*
Mrs. Toby Novich
Margaret Ida Fusco Sevicik
Heshvan 21 Kittie Heineman
Max Schwartz*
Heshvan 22 Betty HersHKovitz*
Heshvan 23 Mrs. Dave Adams
Ida Goldreyer

Carl Meyers
Benjamin Vince Schiller, Sr
Heshvan 25 Al Budin
Anna Korsch
Mayer Lipshitz

****Plaque on memorial wall.***

If you are interested in purchasing a memorial
plaque for your loved one, please contact:
Harry Harelik