

Remembering Dore Gold as the diplomat who defended Israel's borders and history

written by David M. Weinberg | 11.03.2025

Gold's prescient work on defensible borders and combating Palestinian denialism remains crucial in today's geopolitical landscape.

The Lies of 'No Other Land'

written by Lahav Harkov | 11.03.2025

No number of glitzy Hollywood events can change the fact that there is a preponderance of evidence showing that Masafer Yatta is a recent invention built up by activists, NGOs and foreign governments as a battering ram against Israel.

Does the IDF Code of Ethics Represent Torah Values?

written by Brig. Gen. (res.) Ari Singer | 11.03.2025

The IDF's code of ethics, known as "*Ruach Tzahal - Spirit of the IDF*," was compiled in 1994 by a committee chaired by Asa Kasher. In 2000, Brigadier General Elazar Stern, then the Chief Education Officer, led another committee composed of professors of Philosophy of Ethics to revise the first version. The manifest is divided into four fundamental values: Defense of the State of Israel and its residents, Patriotism and loyalty to Israel, Human Dignity, and Statehood. There are ten values derived from these fundamental values: Perseverance in the

Mission and Pursuit of Victory, Responsibility, Reliability and Trustworthiness, Personal Example, Human Life, Purity of Arms, Professionalism, Discipline, Camaraderie, and a Sense of Mission. In the original document, these values are in alphabetical order except for the first value, considered the most essential of any army – victory!

The first draft generated much controversy from those who claimed that the Ethical Code had no trace of any Jewish or Zionist substance. As a result of this criticism, the fundamental value of **Patriotism and loyalty to Israel** (*ahavat haMoledet veNe'emanut laMedina*) was added as a fundamental value. A more “Jewish” translation would use “Love of the Homeland” instead of the *parve* word “patriotism” used in the IDF’s official translation. The second version also included four sources of inspiration for the Code, one being “The tradition of the Jewish people throughout their history,” which precedes the fourth source, “Universal moral values based on the value and dignity of human life.”

Controversy continued after the second version. Opponents of the second version claimed that most of the authors, especially Asa Kasher, are identified with the extreme left of the Israeli political spectrum. Many of the committee members were on record justifying their refusal to serve in the IDF as a morally valid method of political protest. The opponents claim there is a need for a different, more Jewish creed that better represents the fighting spirit of soldiers who fought in the Swords of Iron War and were faced with exceptional ethical challenges in a prolonged war in an urban theater of operations against a sub-conventional terrorist army.

In the current social climate, trying to change the code of ethics would be a mistake. But I also believe that changes are not necessary. A deeper look reveals terms that carry great significance in Jewish thought.

The first value, “Perseverance in the Mission and Pursuit of Victory,” is a translation of *deveikut ba’mesima ve’chatira l’nitzachon*. The word *deveikut* is translated as perseverance, which does not capture its meaning. *Deveikut* epitomizes the most profound connection between a man and his wife (Bereishit 2:24) and the aspiration to have the same relationship with G-d (Devarim 13:18). The *Tanya* describes it as “the cleaving of spirit to spirit – the ultimate attachment and union as a result of love” (*Iggeret HaTeshuva* 9). *Nitzachon*, Hebrew for “victory,” also derives

from *netzach*, “eternity.”

This value teaches two key lessons for modern warfare: Fighting spirit matters more than technology and weapons, particularly against enemies who spread fear and doubt. Additionally, mission planning must focus on *netzach*, on eternal objectives, rather than short-term gains.

The final value, *Shlichut*, goes deeper than its translations of “sense of mission,” “loyalty,” or “representativeness.” In Jewish thought, *shlichut* describes a relationship between an emissary (*shaliach*) and their sender (*meshalaiach*). When I ask soldiers “Who is your sender?” their answers vary: active personnel typically name their commanding officer, while reservists say “my country.” I suggest a broader view: our sender is our nation across all generations – past, present, and future. While soldiers do take orders from commanders and the IDF follows government directives, the Jewish concept of *shlichut* sees the emissary as the “extended hand” (*yada arichta*) of the sender. This creates a more profound connection than the U.S. Army’s concept of “selfless service.”

I’ve analyzed many IDF values rooted in Jewish thought beyond the examples discussed above. While a full analysis of each value exceeds this article’s scope, consider the value “Purity of Arms” (*Tohar haNeshek*). This phrase appears contradictory in Jewish thought, which is why I prefer the traditional rabbinic term “Holiness of the Camp” (*Kedushat haMachaneh*).

This discussion extends beyond theory. While most After-Action Reviews focus on technical and operational aspects, I use the IDF values (*Erkei Tzahal*) to evaluate the ethical and behavioral dimensions – what Jewish tradition calls *middot* – of military operations. Understanding these values through their Jewish context elevates soldiers beyond mere tactical considerations, fostering a deeper sense of purpose and resilience.

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Keep drying the swamps and eliminating the waste

written by David M. Weinberg | 11.03.2025
And end funding for anti-Israel boondoggles.

Nine million hostages

written by David M. Weinberg | 11.03.2025

Like all Israelis, I have shed buckets of tears in recent weeks watching the scenes of Israelis kidnapped (and to a great extent tortured) by Hamas returning to their families. Tears of joy and tears of horror. But mostly tears of relief.

Like all Israelis, I hope and pray that “stage one” of the deal negotiated by the Biden administration will be completed in full, including the additional tranches of live hostage releases planned for the coming weekends (which also include return of eight bodies of killed Israelis).

I hope and pray that President Trump’s new plan to evacuate all Palestinians from Gaza, Hamas’ ongoing drip-drip torture tactics against Israel, and Israel’s clear intention to yet drive Hamas leadership out of Gaza – don’t upset completion of the hostage-for-terrorist release deal in the near term. Managing these contradictory impulses and aims remains extraordinarily difficult.

Still, for obvious reasons, stages two and three of Biden’s Israel-Hamas deal were never realistic. Hamas never is going to release all Israeli hostages because they are the terrorist organization’s self-protection insurance policy and its most effective weapon for tearing Israeli society apart from within.

Israel is not going to lock-stock-and-barrel withdraw all IDF troops from Gaza and all-together forgo the security perimeter it has created inside Gaza, nor “permanently end” the war against Hamas – including interdiction of weapon shipments into Gaza and real-time strikes on Hamas terrorist offenses – as

stipulated in Biden's outline - because Israel cannot lose this war. It will not rest until Hamas' military and dictatorial-ruling strength in Gaza is more decisively destroyed.

To this one must now add Trump's decision to re-work the architecture of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict by denying the annihilationist orthodoxies of the Palestinian national movement and its radical Islamist-jihadist supporters around the world; and rejecting the notion that "only" a unified Palestinian state in Gaza and Judea and Samaria and Jerusalem is the path to peace.

Hamas, of course, has no interest in playing along with Trump's attempt to reset regional diplomacy or with Israel's desire to see Trump's gambit succeed.

And it is clear to anybody looking beyond the hostage issue at the broader strategic picture that Biden's long-term outline for Hamas-Israel truce is both unwise and unrealistic.

In this regard, colder calculation and less emotional thinking in Israeli society are necessary. The increasingly shrill and even violent demand by protesters that the Netanyahu government cut "any" deal for "all" the hostages to be released "now" is perhaps understandable from a personal perspective (especially when it comes from hostage families) but it is questionable from national and strategic ones.

I certainly do not accept the most recent slogan of protesters that brands the government a "war criminal" government unless it "immediately" (and miraculously) obtains the release of "all hostages now, now, now, now!"

The streets of Tel Aviv and the front pages of almost all newspapers are plastered with this new slogan: "A government that doesn't obtain all hostage release now is a war criminal government." This echoes the worst defamatory language of Israel's enemies everywhere: the commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

According to this unbalanced internal discourse, amplified by around-the-clock television reporting that is uniformly vicious towards Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and his right-wing/haredi coalition, the Israeli government is now guilty of war crimes not only against the Palestinians but against its own people.

According to this unbalanced internal discourse, the 76 remaining Israeli

hostages held alive and dead by Hamas in Gaza are not the only hostages. All nine million Israeli Jews have been taken hostage by Netanyahu. Hostage to his personal political fortunes, hostage to his Trump-fed “delusions” of total victory.

IN MY VIEW, this is going many steps too far. Not every deprecatory assault is acceptable in the political campaign to drive Netanyahu out of office. Not every slanderous slogan is kosher even in the struggle for hostage freedom.

And if we are talking in terms of nine million hostages, I say that nine million Israelis must not be taken prisoner in further reckless deals with Hamas that will neither work for the hostages nor bring security to the entire country.

This is the place to recall the dangers of the “stage one” deal already being implemented and the even more wild dangers of potential stage two and three deals: the release of thousands more of Palestinian terrorists.

The released terrorists assuredly will strike again, with God-only-knows how many Israeli casualties in the future. Their release certainly will incentivize future kidnappings, pour gasoline onto the terrorist fires already raging in Judea and Samaria, and catapult Hamas towards its intended takeover of Judea and Samaria.

I know this to be a fact because this has been the case with every previous terrorist release. Israel repeatedly has erred by letting terrorists loose to murder more Israelis.

And each time, in advance of every deal, the Israeli “security establishment” arrogantly and falsely has assured Israeli politicians and the public that it “will know how to manage the situation,” i.e., how to track the terrorists and crush any nascent return to terrorist activity without too much harm done.

But this has never proven to be true. Every deal involving the release of terrorists has led to much bloodshed – planned and conducted by these released terrorists.

In short, dealing Palestinian terrorists for Israeli hostages might be the most necessary thing in the world to do, but it also is a difficult thing to do. The cost will pay out over a prolonged period, and it will be steep. This is important to keep in mind.

THEREFORE, a bit of self-discipline is incumbent on everybody in Israel when

demanding that the Netanyahu government cut “any” deal at “any” price on “any” terms for “all” the hostages, who “must” be released “now, now, now.”

(Bang the drums, block the roads, strike the ports and airports, and scream “now, now, now” at the top of your lungs in Knesset too.)

Again, many Israelis will say that hostage release deals are sad but necessary; that it is the government’s moral obligation to free as many hostages as possible, as soon as possible, despite high prices; that the suffering of our hostages and their families is intolerable.

Many will say that giving freed hostages one big national hug is the greatest triumph of all, something so necessary for Israel’s collective spirit and its resilience over the long term. Even if Hamas retains power and survives to fight another day.

This is a legitimate perspective, as far as it goes.

As such, I am glad that as he took office Trump pushed through implementation of Biden’s “stage one” – so that I and all Israelis can rejoice a bit in the hostage lives that have been saved. I look forward to shedding additional buckets of tears of relief as more Israeli hostages are released soon, as healthy as possible.

But nobody has the right to declare skeptics of the current deal, and those of us concerned about imprudent next stage deals, to be “war criminals.” Nobody has the right to take me and nine million other Israelis hostage in an untamed campaign of complete character assassination.

It may be politically incorrect these days to question the tactics – never mind the goals and total discourse dominance – of the movement for hostage release, “now, now, now.” I have been told that it is “brave” and even “unwise” to pen an op-ed column like this. But I think some restraint and rethinking is necessary.

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Trump, disrupter-in-chief

written by David M. Weinberg | 11.03.2025

Upending stale thinking about the Arab-Israeli conflict is a good thing.

Israel needs a new approach to 'hasbara'

written by David M. Weinberg | 11.03.2025

We are no longer powerless. It is time to engage in the fight for Israel with passion and conviction, not apologetics or apprehension.

The fifty percent Haredi discount

written by David M. Weinberg | 11.03.2025

Defense Minister Israel Katz says that if his new haredi (ultra-Orthodox) IDF draft bill were adopted, the number of haredim serving in the IDF per year would jump to 4,800 in 2025, 5,700 in 2026, and steadily reach 50% eligibility by 2032, the seventh year of the bill's implementation.

This, out of a pool of more than 60,000 young haredi men who currently exempt themselves from military or national service.

Deputy Attorney-General Gil Limon immediately retorted that the scope of Katz's proposed draft does not meet constitutional standards of equality, as insisted upon by the Israeli Supreme Court (and as expected by most Israelis).

More relevant and poignant was the response delivered at a Wednesday meeting

of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee by Noa Mevorach of the Religious Zionist “Shutafot LaSheirut” movement (Partners in Service).

In a passionate address, Mevorach held up her husband’s conscription notice for reserve duty, what would be his fifth tour of reserve duty in the IDF since the Simchat Torah (October 7, 2023) invasion of Israel and the massacres led by Hamas. This next tour of duty would take him away from home and from his four kids for the upcoming holidays of Purim and Pesach, just as he was absent from home for Rosh Hashana and Succot.

“The blood of great (Torah) scholars from my community who went to battle for Israel over the past year, the husbands of my friends who were killed in battle and whose kids are orphans – cries out from the ground,” exclaimed Mrs. Mevorach.

“I hear the discussion here in this committee where it is said over and over that haredi men cannot be drafted except by consensus, that they cannot be drafted against their will, that force won’t work. And that the great goal of the proposed new draft legislation is to softly and slowly reach a 50% draft of haredi men.”

“So take another look at my husband’s fifth draft notice! I ask every member of Knesset to consider this: Why am I not eligible for a 50% discount too, for a 50% reduction in the army burden placed on my husband and on the shoulders of my family? Give me a 50% reduction! I’ll take either the holidays of Tishrei (Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, and Succot) or the holidays of Nissan (Pesach) in this cutback, so that my husband can be home for 50% of the holidays and we won’t have to sit at the holiday table alone or go to my parents.”

“Why am I not eligible for 50% savings? Who decided and with what authority was it decided that one particular population in the State of Israel, the haredi public, is entitled to a 50% discount? I also want the option to choose such a bargain!”

Of course, Noa Mevorach’s demand for relief and true sharing of the military burden is justified on religious, ideological, social, legal, and political grounds. And Defense Minister Katz’s draft/non-draft legislation is a weak, sad sop to the power that haredi factions hold in Israeli politics.

The enforcement mechanisms in the proposed bill – supposed financial sanctions against any yeshiva that does not meet its quota and against men who are issued draft orders but do not show up – are a joke too.

Moreover, the extent of haredi draft that Katz aims for does not meet the IDF's immediate needs, which is about 10,000 new soldiers, including 6,000 to 7,000 combat soldiers.

Alas, I see no solution for this painful issue, no matter what draft/draft exemption law is passed in this Knesset or the next; no matter what sanctions are imposed on haredi families and institutions.

Haredi leaders are mostly 90+ year old scholars locked into an ideological framework that mistakenly posits spiritual primacy of their Torah study above all else. They are incapable of adjusting to the realities and necessities of Jewish statehood, and unwilling to risk the vast changes in haredi society that would surely follow any significant draft of haredim, even in frameworks that are super-finely tuned to haredi sensibilities.

It would be nice to believe that the trauma and suffering of the past 15 months in the general Israeli public and in the "Torani" (ardent Religious Zionist) community as represented by Mrs. Mevorah, would shock the haredi community out of its crushingly insular shell and nudge it forward towards national service – but nada. It has not happened to any significant degree nor will it.

This is an historic grand tragedy that has the potential to crash the modern State of Israel, no less, in the Heavens and on earth.

I don't dismiss the slew of impressive efforts to integrate older haredi men and women in soft military and civilian-security frameworks such as the military industries and regional rapid-response Homefront defense squads – such as those being bravely advanced by Eli Paley of the Haredi Institute for Public Affairs. In fact, I salute him.

Nor should one dismiss the gargantuan effort now being made by the IDF, for the first time, to provide a truly haredi-friendly military environment for haredi inductees.

The IDF just drafted a first cohort into its new "Hasmonean" haredi brigade, complete with its own sequestered training base where haredi religious standards on everything from kashrut and tefilot to gender separation and ideological indoctrination are to be scrupulously observed. This impressive effort is headed-up by a smart and sensitive military commander, Col. Avinoam Emunah. (He was

chased and hounded by haredi hooligans in Bnei Brak several weeks ago.)

Alas, these fine initiatives only nibble at the edges of the military, societal, and ideological need, which is significant draft to the fighting army of 18 to 26 years old haredi men.

And thus, the arrangements now proposed by the defense minister are both an outrage and a fiction.

Outrage, because they perpetuate mass draft desertion by the haredi community. They fail to nudge haredi leaders towards reluctant recognition of the post-October 7 changed situation and towards even grudging validation of military/national service for mainstream (not just marginal) haredim, yeshiva boys and kollel men.

Fiction, because the target numbers are a boondoggle. Like the previous frameworks for haredi draft over the past decades (the Tal, Plesner, Shaked, and other plans), the numbers will never be met, or they will be massaged to include lots of inductees who are not really haredi at their core, and thus “satisfy” the target goals.

I want to add my voice to Noa Mevorach’s cry. Two of my sons – serious religious men, Torah scholars even, with young families – just received their fourth call-up notices, covering another ten weeks of reserve duty on the Gaza and Judea and Samaria fronts, for the Purim-Pesach holiday period. I too demand a 50% discount for them.

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****The opinions expressed in Misgav publications are the authors’ alone.****

2025 crystal ball: Israel will knock

out Iran but face soaring taxes

written by David M. Weinberg | 11.03.2025

Know Comment: I see knockback against Iran, conflict with Turkey, a deal with Saudi Arabia, and ever-higher taxes.

Incontrovertibly indigenous in Israel

written by David M. Weinberg | 11.03.2025

Palestinianism seeks to strip justice and authenticity from Israel's very existence and to upend its alliance with the democratic world.