

And all of [these angels] were arranged in orderly camps, banner by banner, as it states, *surrounded with myriad angels* [הגול מרכבה] ^[30] (Song of Songs 5:10). שהם בין שראו אותן ושראל שהם — When Israel saw that [the angels] were arranged banner by banner, התחילו מתאווים לדגלים — they, too, began to desire to be arranged by banners. אמרו: אלואי כך אנו — [Israel] said: Would it be that we would be arranged according to banners surrounding the Divine Presence like [the angels]!

אמר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא:

The Holy One, blessed is He, said to [Israel], "What do you desire? To be arranged according to banners?" חייכם שאני ממלא משאלותיכם — I swear by your lives that I will fulfill your request." — "ימלא ה' כל משאלותיך." — Thus it states immediately afterward in the *Psalms* verse, *HASHEM will fulfill all your requests*. מיד הודיע הקדוש ברוך הוא אהבתו — Thereupon, the Holy One, blessed is He, made known His love for Israel and said to Moses, "Go and arrange them into banners around the Tabernacle as they desired (והתאוו)." ^[36]

אף בלעם

2 Also Balaam gazed at [Israel] in order to find an opportunity to curse them, ^[47] ויצאת עינו בנגדן שלא היה יכול ליגע — and "his evil eye went forth against them" ^[48] when he realized, upon witnessing how Israel was divided according to their banners, that he was unable to harm them, ^[49] שנאמר "וישא שניאמר" — as it states, *Balaam raised his eyes and saw Israel "dwelling according to its tribes"* (below, v. 24:2) — this being a reference to the banners. — Thereupon, he began to say, "Who can harm these people, מבירין את אבותיהם ואת משפחותיהם — who are aware of the exact lineage of their fathers and their families?" ^[50] שנאמר "שכן לשבטיו" — as it states, ... *dwelling according to its tribes* (ibid.). מוכן למדנו שהיו הדגלים גרולה — וגרר לישראל — From here we learn that the banners were a source of greatness and honor for Israel. ^[51] לבך נאמר "איש על דגלו" — Thus it states in our verse, *each man by his banner*.

שנאמר כהן א

3 When sublime feelings his heart fill, He is mantled in the colors of his country He stands in prayer, wrapped In a sparkling robe of white. The hems of the white robe Are crowned with broad stripes of blue; Like the robe of the High Priest, Adorned with bands of blue threads. These are the colors of the beloved country, [15] Blue and white are the borders of Judah; White is the radiance of the priesthood, And blue, the splendors of the firmament

Ludwig August Frankl Leipzig 1864

4 "At the behest of our leader Herzl, I came to Basel to make preparations for the Zionist Congress. Among many other problems that occupied me then was one that contained something of the essence of the Jewish problem. What flag would we hang in the Congress Hall? Then an idea struck me. We have a flag — and it is blue and white. The talit with which we wrap ourselves when we pray: that is our symbol. Let us take this talit from its bag and unroll it before the eyes of Israel and the eyes of all nations. So I ordered a blue and white flag with the Shield of David painted upon it. That is how the national flag that flew over Congress Hall came into being." David Wolffsohn Vice President World Zionist Congress

Proclamation of the Flag of the State of Israel

The Provisional Council of State hereby proclaims that the flag of the State of Israel shall be as illustrated and described below: The flag is 220 cm. long and 160 cm. wide. The background is white and on it are two stripes of dark sky-blue, 25 cm. broad, over the whole length of the flag, at a distance of 15 cm. from the top and from the bottom of the flag. In the middle of the white background, between the two blue stripes and at equal distance from each stripe is a Star of David, composed of six dark sky-blue stripes, 5.5 cm. broad, which form two equilateral triangles, the bases of which are parallel to the two horizontal stripes.

25 Tishrei 5709 (28 October 1948) Provisional Council of State Joseph Sprinzak, Speaker

5 "And even though we don't have an exact source for the Magen David, there should be no hesitation about incorporating it in a shul. Within the image of the Magen David is the symbolism that Hashem rules over us completely- above, below and in all four corners of the world. I do not know of any connection to King David, but perhaps we can suggest that it is indeed a fitting connection, since David, through all of his wars placed his faith in Hashem and understood that His dominion extended over heavens and earth and the four corners of the world. The Star of David symbolizes that King David was not afraid of any foreign kings or invading armies, as is alluded to in the Torah" (Igrot Moshe, Orech Chaim 3:15)

It was taught, "Rabbi Meir used to say, 'How is t'cheilet differentiated from all the colors? Because t'cheilet is similar to the sea, and the sea is similar to the sky, and the sky is similar to the Throne of Glory, as it is stated, "And there was under His feet the like of a paved work of sapphire stone, and the like of the very heaven for clearness," and it is written, "a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone."

מסכת מנחות, מג:

ר' מאיר אומר מה נשתנה תכלת מכל מיני צבעונין
מפני שהתכלת דומה לים וים דומה לרקיע ורקיע
לכסא הכבוד שנאמר (שמות כד) ותחת רגליו כמעשה
לבנת הספיר וכעצם השמים לטהר וכתוב (שמות כד)
כמראה אבן ספיר דמות כסא

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik zt"l, one of the greatest proponents of Religious Zionism in the twentieth century, explains the significance of the Israeli flag in a different, rather novel fashion. We will quote the Rav's idea as it appears in *Nefesh HaRav* (pp. 99-100), by one of his foremost disciples, Rav Hershel Schachter *shlita*:

One of Agudat Yisrael's yearly conventions (called "The Great Assembly") was held in a Jerusalem hotel whose roof was adorned with a blue and white flag of Israel. Some of the delegates felt a little uncomfortable with this, but they realized that it would be improper to ask the hotel to remove the flag. Finally, someone suggested that they decorate the roof with the flags of all the countries from which people came to participate in the convention, and so they did. Thus, the [offended] delegates no longer felt uncomfortable having the Israeli flag wave [on their hotel], since it was surrounded by the flags of America, France, England, etc.

When the secular reporters heard about this, they immediately attacked the Agudah. One of the many points they raised was the fact that the British had been so cruel during World War II, refusing to allow Jewish refugees into "Palestine," which was under their control at the time. Their flag (known as the "Union Jack") flew atop their ships in the Mediterranean Sea as they sent boatloads of refugees back to Europe, to certain death. And now, after the establishment of the State, the Union Jack [was needed] to sanction the flag of Israel. How absurd! ...

That year, Rav [Soloveitchik] spoke briefly about the Israeli flag at the Mizrahi convention. [First he pointed out] that there seems to be no eternal *halachah* regarding flags. All we find [in the Torah] is a temporary ruling that when [the Israelites] traveled [in the desert] they encamped *each man by his banner according to their fathers household* (see *BeMidbar* 2:1). Nonetheless, the Rav felt that there was a passage in the *Shulchan Aruch* that related to the flag of the State.

At the end of *Mo ed Kattan* (27a-b), the Talmud cites a Tana'itic decree that all Jews should be buried in simple shrouds. The *Shulchan Aruch* also cites this ruling: "One may not bury the deceased in expensive shrouds, even if he was a leader of Israel" (*Yoreh De'ah* 352:1). [Elsewhere], the *Shulchan Aruch* quotes *Rishonim* who say that if a Jew is found murdered, he should be buried as he was found [in his bloody clothes], without shrouds (*ibid.* 364:4). The *Shach* (*ibid.* subsec. 11) explains the reason for this practice: "[If he was killed by a heathen... we bury him as he was found] in order to enkindle anger and take revenge." That is, God will see how this person was buried differently from all others, without the usual shrouds, and that will arouse His mercy [and cause Him to avenge the murder]...

This idea applies to the flag of the State, as well. Towards the end of the War of Independence, the United Nations set a specific date by which [the two sides] could seize territory. [By that date], any piece of land captured by the Jews (verified by raising the Israeli flag on the spot) would remain under Jewish control, and any piece of land in Arab hands would remain outside the borders of the State... During that period, a great deal of Jewish blood was spilled in an attempt to raise the Israeli flag over large areas of land (in order to acquire them for the fledgling Jewish state). Many fighters sacrificed their lives for no other reason than to raise the Jewish flag. Therefore, the Rav felt that the Israeli flag had - to a certain degree - the status of a murdered Jew's clothing, for it symbolized spilt Jewish blood. And when the flag flies, it arouses divine compassion for the Jewish people.

8
אשרי מי שקרא - "And I heard them saying: 'Fortunate is he who comes here and his learning is in his hand.'"^[10] - ושמעתי שהיו אומרים - And I also heard them saying: 'Those executed by the government enjoy such an exalted level here that no other person can stand in their enclosure.'"^[11]
The Gemara inquires:
ומאן נקדו - Who are these holy martyrs of whom Rav Yosef speaks? - אייליא ורבי עקיבא וחביריו - If we say that he refers to R' Akiva and his colleagues,^[12] - משום הרוגי מלכות - is it merely because they were executed by the government that they attained such a lofty level, וחו לא - and for no other reason?! But this would imply they had no other quality that would merit this distinction!^[13]
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Reshaim 50 a