



Diaspora Judaism at a CROSSROADS

As part of this issue of Torah To-Go, we convened a symposium on the future of Diaspora Judaism in an age of growing Aliyah. We invited leading rabbis to reflect on the meaning of galus, the rise of antisemitism and the challenges and opportunities facing Diaspora communities in the years ahead.

Please introduce yourself

Rabbi Goldberg: As the Rav of a large and diverse shul, I have the privilege of interacting with a broad cross-section of Klal Yisrael and of listening to and learning from their experiences, perspectives, and attitudes on these and many other issues. My own family is deeply connected to Israel: my siblings and their families have made Aliyah, and my parents spend half the year living there. While I feel a profound yearning to move to Israel myself, it is clear to me that, at this time, my responsibility, mission, and purpose are to serve my community here.

I am often challenged with the premise that if I were to declare my intention to make Aliyah, the community would follow. Unfortunately, experience suggests otherwise, as evidenced by rabbanim who have made that move in the past and in the present without triggering a communal migration.

I strongly believe that Aliyah need not always be viewed in binary terms as an all-or-nothing proposition. For a variety of legitimate reasons, one may primarily reside in the Diaspora while still making a concerted effort to spend meaningful time in Israel and to “live” there as often as possible. While this is obviously

not the same as permanent relocation, paying taxes, or serving the country, fostering an ongoing and meaningful relationship with Israel, including investing in a home there, can deepen connection and help pave a path toward eventual Aliyah.

Rabbi Liss: I have the privilege of serving as both a community rabbi in Highgate, London—where my wife and I have led the community for almost 18 years—and as the Director of Rabbinics for the United Synagogue.

The United Synagogue is the largest Jewish Charity (non-profit organisation) in the UK. It comprises

OUR PANELISTS



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Mara D'asra, Boca Raton Synagogue



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Rabbi Menachem Penner
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Rabbi Shalom Rosner
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Rabbi Larry Rothwachs
*Director of Professional Rabbinics, RIETS,
Rabbi, Congregation Beth Aaron, Teaneck,
incoming Rabbi, Meromei Shemesh, Ramat Beit Shemesh*

56 communities (including Highgate) as well as the Office of the Chief Rabbi, the London Beth Din, KLBD and the United Synagogue Burial Society. It serves the British Jewish community, powering Jewish life in the broadest possible way: teaching Torah in a range of settings, shaping Jewish futures and enabling communities to flourish in a way that is caring, active and welcoming to all.

As Director of Rabbinics, I am responsible for leading the rabbinic recruitment team, for delivering continuous professional development for our rabbis and rebbitzens, and for providing a rabbinic voice at the U.S. Directors table, contributing to policy development, safeguarding oversight, and communications.

And so, this matters. A lot.

In recent years, the Jewish community in the UK has faced a challenging and unsettling period—from the divisions that followed Brexit, through the strains of COVID, to the horrors of the October 7 attacks and the rise in antisemitism that followed.

These events have left many feeling uncertain about the future of British Jewry. And yet there has been increased engagement and vibrancy in our communities, as more Jews feel their connection to Am Yisrael.

This issue is also deeply personal. We were blessed to live in Yerushalayim for nine years, and it is where our eldest daughter, son-in-law and two grandsons are now based.

And let's not pull any punches: Israel is our homeland.

As my late rabbi, Rabbi Isaac Bernstein, zt'l, often put it: Chutz La'aretz is a "station" and Israel is

our "destination." He also quoted the *Meshech Chochmoh* at the end of Parshas Bechukosai, that we must avoid the trap of thinking that "Berlin (or New York or London) *hee Yerushalayim*."

The Diaspora is our temporary home, but while here, we will try, B'Ezras HaShem, to help our Jewish communities flourish as much as possible and feel pride in their Judaism. As Rabbi Shamshon Raphael Hirsch comments (Shemos 19:6), as a *mamleches kohanim v'goy kadosh*—a kingdom of priests and a holy nation—we have a mission to represent Hakadosh Boruch Hu to the rest of humanity. In the face of growing antisemitism, we must be authentic and proud Jewish voices.

Rabbi Penner: I serve as the Executive Vice President of the Rabbinical Council of America and as Dean Emeritus of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary at Yeshiva University. In these roles, I work closely with rabbis, educators, and Jewish leaders across North America, Israel and beyond, helping to strengthen Torah communities and support those who lead them.

Much of my work sits at the intersection of Diaspora Jewish life and the State of Israel. I see rabbis and families considering Aliyah, institutions investing in long-term growth, and communities trying to think responsibly about their future. That vantage point has made these questions not theoretical but practical and personal.

Before moving into national leadership, I served for two decades as a shul rabbi. From that position, I watched families build lives, educate children, struggle with tuition,

consider Aliyah and wrestle in very real ways with the tension between commitment to their local kehillah and love for Eretz Yisrael. My own family's deep connection to Israel—including the Aliyah of all of my grandchildren to date—has only sharpened that perspective. I therefore feel a responsibility to both: to strengthen Torah life wherever Jews live today, and at the same time to keep our eyes firmly on the larger story of the Jewish people and our return home.

Rabbi Rosner: I am presently Rosh Beis Medrash of the English-speaking program at Machon Lev (having also taught at Yeshivat Reishit Yerushalayim for 10 years, and Yeshivat Kerem BYavneh for six years), and Rav of Ohel Ephraim in Nofei Hashemesh, Bet Shemesh.

My wife Tamar and I were *zoche* to make Aliyah 18 years ago, with six children at that time ranging from age four months to 12 years old.

Aliyah had always been a dream for me—a value inculcated in me from my dear parents, z”l, as well as during my years at Yeshivat Shaalvim. Throughout my 20 years on the YU campus, from MTA to Yeshiva College to semicha to Kollel Elyon, and ultimately teaching in the BMP Program, I relished being in such a hallowed and sacred institution. My father studied there and was in the first class of Einstein Medical school. My maternal grandfather, Rabbi Mitchel Eskolsky, also received semicha from YU in the 1920s.

My roots in YU, then, run deep. And yet, I felt a calling—not just the individual calling of a Jew wanting to raise his family in Israel, but something larger: a sense of taking part in the *kibbutz galuyos* of our people, the generational, national destiny calling,

which we have witnessed over the past almost 200 years. We discussed our Aliyah decision with many rabbanim on both sides of the ocean, all of whom of course had their own viewpoint. Ultimately, as our children were getting older and an opportunity opened up for me to be involved both in a yeshiva and a community, we felt that Hashem was sending us the boat, the helicopter—and we jumped. Hashem has given us and our children much bracha, and we daven for the day when we can welcome all Jews to our holy borders.

Rabbi Rothwachs: I have served as the Rabbi of Congregation Beth Aaron in Teaneck, New Jersey, for over two decades, and I currently serve as the Director of Professional Rabbim at RIETS. In parallel with my rabbinic work, I am a licensed clinical social worker, and I work with individuals, couples and families.

My wife, Chaviva, and I are making Aliyah and leading a new community, Meromei Shemesh, in Ramat Beit Shemesh, which is in its early stages. This reflects an effort to bring together two realities we have lived professionally and personally: the remarkable success of Diaspora communities in building warm, supportive religious environments, and the deep truth that Jewish national and spiritual destiny is ultimately realized in the Land of Israel.

As more of our most committed families make Aliyah, what is the strategic case for investing millions in Diaspora religious infrastructure, especially given the rising cost of living in the Diaspora?

Rabbi Liss: Although we are starting to see small examples of this in the UK, this phenomenon is nowhere near as widespread as it is in the USA.

At the same time, Rabbi Berel Wein, zt”l, wrote in “Tending the Vineyard”:

The role of a Rabbi is to make Torah, its knowledge, observances, traditions and values a primary force in the lives and families of our congregants. It is also the ability to give them a sense of perspective: Where do I fit into the story of the Jewish people?

We aspire to help every Jew find their place and give them the tools to enable their Jewish growth. And for that, we need high-class programming and excellent infrastructure. And this is where the kehilla structure of Chutz La’aretz plays a major role, enabling Jews of all levels to connect with their part in the story of the Jewish people and find a place of belonging.

I would also note that strong religious infrastructure in the Diaspora is one of the best ways to produce committed Jews who love and support Israel.

It is not an either/or option. Our desire is for Israel, but for many of us, our current responsibilities are to the Jewish communities in the Diaspora.

Rabbi Penner: The American Jewish community is not on its last leg. Even with increased Aliyah, the reality on the ground suggests that there will be several generations of serious Jewish

life in North America. Responsible leadership means planning for the world as it is likely to be, not only for the world we hope it will become.

Planning is always uncertain. History can shift quickly, and HaKadosh Baruch Hu often moves events in ways we do not anticipate. But if we expect significant communities to remain here for decades, then we have an obligation to build strong schools, shuls, mikvaot and communal structures that allow Torah life to flourish. Weak infrastructure does not inspire commitment; strong institutions do.

Solid Diaspora institutions also play an important role in supporting Israel itself. Communities with stable schools and shuls are the very communities that produce committed Jews, donors, advocates and families who eventually make Aliyah. Investing here is not a contradiction to Israel. In many ways, it is one of the ways we sustain Israel.

Rabbi Rothwachs: The strategic case begins with clarity about what strong Diaspora institutions actually produce. They do not automatically produce Aliyah. What they produce is something more foundational: durable Jewish identity, deep literacy, communal confidence and the psychological and spiritual stability required to make life-defining decisions. Weak Diaspora infrastructure does not lead to more Aliyah. It leads to a thinner identity, weaker belonging and ultimately greater assimilation. People rarely choose to build their lives in Israel because Jewish life was marginal where they grew up. They move because Jewish life was strong enough to convince them that being part of the Jewish story matters.

At the same time, we must acknowledge a real tension. Highly

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successful Diaspora communities can unintentionally normalize permanence. The goal, therefore, is not simply to build strong institutions, but to build institutions that function as launchpads rather than destinations. That means consciously shaping communities that produce confident Jews who see Aliyah as a natural extension of their Jewish lives rather than as a rupture from everything familiar and supportive.

Ultimately, this is not a competition between strengthening the Diaspora and strengthening Israel. Diaspora communities are where identity and communal responsibility are formed. Israel is where Jewish civilization is fully expressed at scale. Strong Diaspora institutions, properly understood, are one of the primary ways we prepare people to step into Jewish destiny.

The responsibility of Diaspora communities, given the affordability challenges, is first to ensure that committed Jewish life is realistically sustainable for families choosing to build their lives there. If we fail to do that, financial exhaustion, rather than values or calling, will determine where families ultimately live.

The long-term communal obligation is therefore twofold. We must build funding structures that preserve access to Torah life and protect the economic dignity of families raising the next generation. And we must recognize

that Jewish history is dynamic, and that some families will choose to build their future in Israel for reasons that go far beyond economics.

Rabbi Rosner: When we made Aliyah, my wife and I resolved that we would never, ever, look down on any Jew who had not yet decided to make Aliyah. Every family has their own unique *peckel*, their own set of factors to weigh in making this life-changing decision. Given that reality—and given that there are still vibrant, robust communities in the Diaspora catering to millions of our Jewish brothers—we must keep investing and supporting the religious institutions in these communities. At the same time, parallel to these investments, we must educate those same communities that the real center of the Jewish past, present, and future is the Land of Israel. That is where our resources also need to be flowing, because that is our ultimate Waze destination.

Rabbi Goldberg: There is something profoundly beautiful about the fact that so many of our most committed families feel drawn to build their lives in Israel. It speaks to the success of the very communities that raised them. When a young person spends a gap year in Israel and chooses to stay, or returns inspired to eventually make Aliyah, that inspiration did not come from nowhere. It was cultivated in the yeshivos and

schools, youth groups, shuls, and homes that invested deeply in their Torah life and instilled those values. When a young person in whom the community invested makes Aliyah, it is not a failure of that investment, it is an incredible return on it.

At the same time, our investment in dynamic, vibrant, and passionate Torah institutions outside of Israel is not only about or measured by Aliyah. These institutions are critical and worthwhile in their own right. While the question of Aliyah should not be *if* but *when*, the reality is that there are legitimate reasons why many people are not yet in a position to make that move. Additionally, there is a meaningful demographic of Israelis who have moved to the Diaspora. They too need leadership, love, support, and serious Torah institutions and infrastructure. So long as there is a Diaspora Jewish community there is a responsibility to inform, inspire, enrich and empower them with Torah institutions and lives.

A thriving Diaspora community is not a contradiction to love and commitment to Israel. On the contrary, it is a critical source of influence and advocacy for Israel and often one of Israel's greatest incubators for those who will immigrate there. And so long as Jews are living outside of Israel, sustaining vibrant Torah life there is both a responsibility to those communities

and a contribution to the Jewish future as a whole.

How do we reconcile the imperative of living in Eretz Yisrael with the reality that for many, Diaspora communities serve as stronger centers of Jewish learning, chesed and religious life?

Rabbi Penner: There is clearly an ideological and halachic pull toward living in Israel. At the same time, many sources recognize that a people must remain in or navigate to a place where they and their family will grow religiously and live responsibly. For some families, that calculation is far from simple. Questions of schooling, parnassah and community carry real weight.

Still, we cannot ignore the larger picture. This moment in Jewish history is one in which the future of the Jewish people is increasingly centered in Israel—a unique sense of peoplehood, of being part of the story itself rather than watching from afar. North America is, for the first time, becoming a suburb of Israel. Each family must weigh its circumstances carefully, but Aliyah should be a serious and compelling aspiration, not merely an abstract ideal.

We need to speak more clearly about Aliyah and Zionism as serious and natural aspirations for our children. Too often these ideas are treated as optional rather than central to Jewish life. Our schools and communities should normalize the possibility that building one's future in Israel is a real and honorable path.

And if we feel we must remain in galut, we must remember that we are in galut. Israel is home, and many of us feel that when we visit. We are, like some Israelis themselves, on *shlichut* (assignment) in Chutz La'aretz, God's agents to serve the needs of our families.

Rabbi Rothwachs: This tension is often treated as self-evident, but the assumption itself is worth questioning. Do we actually have comprehensive data showing that Diaspora communities are stronger centers of Torah learning, chesed or religious vitality than Israel? Much of this belief is shaped by personal experience, specific communities or generational memory. The scale, diversity and intensity of Torah life across Israeli society today make it difficult to sustain that claim in any generalizable sense.

It may be that what people are reacting to is not Torah infrastructure but relational infrastructure. Many Diaspora communities, especially shul-centered ones, function as highly intentional relational ecosystems. In Israel, religious



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life is often embedded in national and municipal structures rather than built around voluntary membership. That difference can shape lived experience even if access to Torah learning and chesed is equal or greater.

The more honest framing may be that we are not reconciling two fixed realities, but comparing two different models of religious life. The Diaspora model emphasizes intentional community because it must. The Israeli model assumes Jewish identity as part of public and cultural life. The challenge for this generation is not deciding which is better, but learning how Israeli communities can increasingly incorporate intentional relational infrastructure, while Diaspora communities prepare people to live inside a national Jewish framework that operates differently from the voluntary community model.

Rabbi Rosner: There is a thought from Rav Kook that I heard many years ago. I used to find it humorous (את (חטאי אני מזכיר היום), but I have come to understand its truth and depth. Many are familiar with the famous question of why the Rambam does not count the mitzvah of *yishuv Eretz Yisrael* as one of the 613 mitzvot. The consensus of most meforshim, based on many other halachos in the Rambam himself, is that it is a *mitzvah D'Oraisa* even today, but it is not counted as an independent, stand-alone mitzvah.

Rav Asher Weiss draws a parallel: just as the Rambam views tefillah as a mitzvah yet does not count it among the 613, so too the Rambam treats *yishuv Eretz Yisrael*. Both are obviously critical, but neither is counted as an independent mitzvah. I heard in the name of Rav Kook that *yishuv Eretz Yisrael* is not counted because it impacts every mitzvah one performs in the Land—

each is elevated by being done in Eretz Yisrael. The roots of this are already found in the Ramban at the end of Acharei Mos, but after living here for 18 years, I can attest that it's not just a kabbalistic, esoteric concept in Heaven, it is felt in *this* world, in our everyday lives. There is an additional spiritual, national element that infuses all parts of our life here.

Given this reality, let's return to the question. We are naturally more comfortable in an environment we know, and growing up in a particular place may shape how we define a "better center of Jewish learning, chesed and religious vitality." But Baruch Hashem, today there are many wonderful kehilot in Israel that embody these values. Our children thank us constantly for bringing them to our country, which defines religious vitality.

And just to add: How does one measure commitment and religious vitality, anyway? Of course, through *shemiras hamitzvos* and Talmud Torah, but there is another element, one that many of us often overlook. I'd like to quote a message I expressed at an *erev chizuk* in my shul a few weeks after October 7:

Baruch Hashem I've had the zechus of being involved in and shaped by major Torah centers for the past 40 years. I was on the YU campus for 20 years, imbibing and growing from all my amazing rebbeim, and for the past 15 years, have been teaching in yeshivot here in Israel. Torah, avodah, giving shiurim, that's what my life has been about. And then came that awful day. Simchas Torah 5784, the day that is seared into our memory forever. Without even knowing what exactly what was happening, putting my son Avraham into a car and watching him drive off to gather his soldiers, then putting my son Yehoshua into another

car and watching him drive off to join his plugah (platoon), and then hearing that my son-in-law Amitai was also on his way to the South, all of my rabbinic training, my semicha, my misabek b'afar ragleihem and dibuk chaverim (learning from teachers and colleagues) did not and could not prepare me for those moments... But I saw it in my boys that they were prepared. They knew what this meant, they recognized the tzav hash'a'ah (the mission of this moment), and they jumped at the opportunity. What was it that they knew, that they felt, that they believed, that I was missing, that I was lacking? And I realized that I was nurtured, trained and shaped in the world of Rav Soloveichik, and that is amazing and wonderful and still guides my every moment of learning and shiurim. It was that Torah of religious Zionism, after all, that motivated my wife and me to bring our family here 15 years ago. But here, now, in this era, in this country, I needed to tap into Torat Eretz Yisrael, an additional world view, that could help us cope and deal with the present situation. That, of course, is the outlook of Rav Kook, and how he teaches me to see the cataclysmic events surrounding me. Though I am not a trained or a seasoned talmid of Rav Kook, I will share one crucial message that he gives us for our times.

In Orot Milchama, he writes כשיש מלחמה גדולה בעולם, מתעורר כח משיח — The milchamot of Am Yisrael represent very powerful, even uplifting moments and they are part of the divine hand, bringing the world to its ultimate state of redemption. כתום המלחמה, מתחדש העולם ברוח חדש ורגלי משיח מתגלים יותר—these major national events, as difficult and painful as they are, are ultimately the harbinger of a brighter and stronger future, paving the way for the footsteps of Mashiach.



But how do we tap into this process, this outlook, this vision? He explains that our outlook has to change, from one of prat (individual) to one of klal (community). Yes of course, to focus on the prat, in terms of our chesed, our tefillah our limud HaTorah, but also in our overall hashkafas hachaim, zooming out from each news story and each detail of what's happening, and recognizing that Am Yisrael is right now on the move, on the move forward towards its ultimate destiny, and we must view ourselves as part of that awesome and eternal Am.

My children have a deep-seated connection to the nation and to the land that imbues them with instincts of communal responsibility and clarity of purpose. My question is, then, how does one define “religious vitality” and a “complete observant experience”? Hashem is obviously the only one with the heavenly scorecard, but I humbly suggest that we widen our perspective of what is acceptable and even an encouraged form of *avodas Hashem*.

Rabbi Goldberg: The mitzvah and aspiration to live in Eretz Yisrael is real and powerful. For thousands of years

Jews prayed for it, dreamed of it, and longed for the opportunity to return. In our generation, the gates are open in ways our ancestors could hardly imagine. It is therefore natural and appropriate that many feel called to build their lives there. That aspiration should be celebrated, encouraged, and honored.

And yet, Torah history also teaches us that vibrant Torah life has existed outside the Land for long stretches of Jewish history. The great yeshivas of Bavel shaped the Talmud itself. Communities in Spain, Poland, Lithuania, and beyond produced towering scholars and flourishing centers of Torah learning. The presence of great Torah life in the Diaspora does not negate the centrality of Eretz Yisrael; rather, it reflects the remarkable resilience of the Jewish people to build holiness wherever we are planted.

Reconciling these realities demands humility. We should affirm the ideal of living in Israel while recognizing that individuals and families must make decisions based on their circumstances, their spiritual growth, and their ability to contribute meaningfully. For some, Israel is where their Torah will flourish

most. For others, their unique role in strengthening Diaspora communities is itself an act of sacred service. The key is that wherever we live, our hearts remain oriented toward Israel and our lives committed to strengthening the Jewish future.

Rabbi Liss: Political commentator Nadav Eyal drew a fascinating contrast between minority and majority cultures on the Call Me Back podcast.

In Chutz La'aretz we have a minority outlook, and that enables us to look inwards, to strengthening those around us, and to build vibrant communities. Of course, through our tefillos, tzedakah and aspirations, Israel is always at the front of our minds—and never more palpably than the last two years, where we have seen the growing phenomenon of (as Brett Stevens puts it) “October 8th Jews.”

Twenty-five years from now, if Mashiach has not yet come, will our communities still sustain the critical mass needed to thrive—or are we witnessing the start of an inevitable demographic shift toward Israel?

Rabbi Rothwachs: Intellectual honesty requires acknowledging visible trajectories when they are already underway. We are likely moving toward a more geographically concentrated Jewish future, even if the timeline and shape of that process remain uncertain. Birthrate differences, migration patterns

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and the gravitational pull of Israel as the center of Jewish public life are already reshaping global Jewish demographics. The question is not whether Diaspora communities will continue to exist, but what scale and form they will take, and whether they will remain broad-based communal ecosystems or become smaller, more ideologically concentrated communities.

Recent events, including October 7 and the subsequent rise in visible global antisemitism did not create these questions, but they did strip away a level of historical comfort that many of us had quietly come to rely on. For several decades, many Jews experienced an unprecedented period of security, integration and institutional stability. I will admit to real concern, and even some level of dismay, that roughly two and a half years after October 7, we have not seen sustained, serious communal attention to the long-term civilizational implications of what we experienced. The immediate response in the aftermath was intense and appropriate. But what is far more consequential is what happens once the urgency fades—and here, I worry that we have allowed ourselves to drift back toward assuming stability rather than honestly exploring whether stability can actually be assumed. My concern is not that communities are indifferent. It is that we may be choosing psychological comfort over historical clarity.

The goal should not be to predict decline or to panic. But it should absolutely be to refuse complacency. The measure of success will not be whether Diaspora communities remain exactly as large as they are today, but whether they remain spiritually strong, institutionally honest and deeply connected to the evolving center of Jewish life, even if that requires

We must recognize that at some point, be it soon or not so soon, Hashem’s promise of a full *kibutz galuyos*, which is an “inevitable demographic consolidation,” will happen.

rethinking assumptions that felt unquestionable only a generation ago.

We do our children a disservice if we raise them to assume that the social and political conditions of one generation will necessarily define the next, or if we allow them to believe that the relative stability many of us experienced represents the default setting of Jewish history.

The long-term success of Jewish continuity will depend less on geography and more on whether the next generation experiences themselves as participants in Jewish history rather than as residents of a particular Jewish moment. Raising children who are rooted in identity, resilient in the face of uncertainty, and capable of building Jewish life under changing historical conditions is not optional. It is one of the central educational and communal responsibilities of our time.

Rabbi Rosner: Along with supporting Jews in the Diaspora with whatever support they need, I think it is imperative to recognize the current events for what they are, and see the writing on the wall. The miraculous events surrounding the State of Israel over the past few years, as well as the *kibutz galuyos* over the past almost 200 years, coupled with less than hospitable surroundings in many of our Diaspora exiles (remember, that’s what they are; See Maharil Diskin *Mishpatim* and Rav Schacters’s application to *galus*) forces us to face the reality that Jewish life and Jewish history is fluid and pushing us

towards our national destiny. We don’t know how long, we don’t know how the process will continue. But we must remember what we say so often in our prayers.

ושא נס לקבץ גלויותנו וקבצנו יחד מארבע כנפות הארץ.

Hashem, please bring us back to our land. This is our national aspiration and dream, and as the Kuzari cautions, we should not be among those who only speak like *tziftzuf hazarzir*, a chirping bird who has no internal sense of the content of his sounds. We are a stiff-necked nation, and wherever we are, we strive to thrive, but we also must recognize that at some point, be it soon or not so soon, Hashem’s promise of a full *kibutz galuyos*, which is an “inevitable demographic consolidation,” will happen.

Rabbi Goldberg: Predicting the Jewish future has always been a risky endeavor. Time and again in our history, trends that seemed inevitable shifted in unexpected ways. What we do know is that the Jewish people are living through an extraordinary moment: the flourishing of a sovereign Jewish state alongside vibrant Diaspora communities. How that balance evolves over the next twenty-five years is difficult to know.

It is certainly our hope and prayer that the center of gravity of Jewish life will continue to move increasingly toward Israel. But it does not necessarily mean the disappearance of meaningful Diaspora communities. Even if Israel

becomes the primary demographic center, there may still be important and thriving Jewish communities around the world contributing to Torah scholarship and global Jewish influence.

Rabbi Liss: With regret, I am not yet able to predict the future! But as community leaders, we try to look at trends and likely scenarios and remain nimble in our planning. In that spirit, my team has been tasked with looking at what kind of Rabbinate the UK will need in 10 years' time—how the community's needs are changing and how the Rabbinate should evolve to meet them. That in itself is a hard enough question.

Rabbi Penner: This question weighs on me. Often the most motivated and idealistic people, including rabbis and teachers, are the ones most drawn to Aliyah. And those with greater means are often more able to make the move. When leadership and resources leave first, communities feel the strain.

We may be entering a period of imbalance, where leadership relocates more quickly than the broader population. If too many educators and rabbanim depart without a plan to replace them, sustaining strong communities in North America will become increasingly difficult. This is not a reason to discourage Aliyah, but it does mean we must intentionally cultivate the next generation of leaders here as well.

In practical terms, this means building leadership pipelines—identifying young people early, encouraging careers in the rabbanut, chinuch and communal service, mentoring them and providing the financial and professional support that makes those paths viable. At the same time, we must recognize that this may be a transitional phase in Jewish history. Thoughtful planning can help

ensure that our communities remain strong even as the center of gravity continues to move toward Israel.

How can the Diaspora sustain strong religious practice, communal cohesion and Torah scholarship as many of its most learned families and educators move to Israel?

Rabbi Rosner: Perhaps we should be asking ourselves why so many learned families and passionate educators are making the move. Maybe it's something we ourselves should consider—or be more encouraging when a child decides to stay in Israel after their gap year program.

Yes, many of the strongest and brightest are moving. But Hakadosh Baruch Hu never leaves a herd without shepherds, and there will always be leaders who choose to remain and lead our Diaspora communities.

I often speak with educators and communal leaders considering Aliyah. Probably to the chagrin of some of my children, I do not tell everyone that must come. I have colleagues who felt they needed to make Aliyah no matter what, regardless of their profession in Israel. Others believed that if they couldn't

serve the Jewish community in the same way there, then they should stay. I support both approaches—this is a very personal decision, and both have validity.

What we can say is that those who do make the move will find many learned and accomplished leaders already there, preparing the way for those who follow—something akin to a Goshen model, when Yehuda was sent ahead to establish schools and shuls for those that would follow.

Chazal discuss two areas of our avodah: *bein adam LaMakom*, between man and God, and *bein adam lachaveiro*, between man and man. The Gra and others added a third: *bein adam le'atzmo*, the perfection of our own religious personality.

Perhaps today we are witnessing a fourth category, one that was not relevant for nearly 2,000 years: *bein adam la'amo*—between a person and the Jewish nation. Acts such as *bikur cholim* or organizing *chesed* are beautiful expressions of *bein adam la'chaveiro*.

But when one defends the Jewish people in their homeland, or chooses to move to Israel, the impact extends beyond the individual. These actions carry national significance and fall within the broader framework of *bein*



adam la'amo.

May we continue to witness the hand of Hashem, recognizing the unfolding miracles that accompany our daily lives, and together merit to experience the final stage of *geula shleima b'meheira beyameinu*.

Rabbi Goldberg: It is true that many rabbonim, educators, scholars, and passionate families are choosing to build their lives in Israel. But the Diaspora continues to host talented Torah personalities, professionals and lay. We must prioritize Torah scholarship, support educators, and cultivate the next generation of teachers and leaders who will care about Israel and plan to one day live there full-time but until then feel a sense of mission, purpose and responsibility to inspire the Jewish people wherever they are found.

Rabbi Liss: We are blessed that many of our greatest rabbis, rebbetzins educators and community leaders have remained in the UK and we will continue to nurture that pipeline.

At the same time, we can tap into the incredible resources that Israel provides. In recent years, we have welcomed shluchim from Israel to the UK to teach and serve as Rabbinic couples for three to five years, bringing a richness that can serve as a model moving forward.

Additionally, advances in connectivity, such as podcasts or online shiurim, allow us to strengthen a truly global Jewish community and access resources both in Israel and in the wider Diaspora in ways not possible before.

Another challenge that I see in the UK and hear about from colleagues in Israel and in the United States: We face a rising global difficulty in convincing our best and brightest to pursue careers in rabbanus /chinuch /kiruv. How do we make these roles both attractive

and financially viable? Arguably, this question poses an even greater threat to the chinuch of our next generation—regardless of where they live.

Rabbi Penner: The nature of Torah leadership has changed. There was a time when the local rabbi was the primary conduit to Torah scholarship. Today, anyone can access outstanding shiurim and teachers from anywhere in the world. The highest levels of scholarship may increasingly come from Israel, and that is not necessarily a loss for Diaspora communities.

The local rabbi, rebbetzin and teacher play a different, but no less important role. They are present in people's lives, serving as mentors, role models and guides. That personal connection cannot be replaced by online learning. That is why the RCA invests so heavily in rabbinic families. They are irreplaceable and, without them, few congregants are able to grow.

Rabbi Rothwachs: Rather than viewing this primarily as loss, we should increasingly think in terms of global Jewish leadership ecosystems. In a world of constant travel, digital learning and institutional partnerships, Torah leadership is no longer confined to a single geography. Educators, scholars and communal leaders can influence multiple communities simultaneously, and Diaspora and Israeli institutions can function in ongoing intellectual and educational partnership rather than in isolation.

It is worth stepping back to ask what we are really witnessing as growing numbers of rabbis, mechanchim and Jewish communal leaders choose to build their lives in Israel. It is tempting to frame this as movement away from Diaspora communities. But it may be more accurate to understand it as

movement toward another arena of service to the Jewish people. For many, serving Klal Yisrael in Israel is not a withdrawal from responsibility but an expression of it—a statement about where they believe Jewish history, Jewish responsibility and Jewish opportunity are increasingly centered.

Diaspora communities, however, will need to become more intentional about leadership development. Communities that assume leadership continuity will struggle. Those that expect leadership circulation, invest in cultivating local leadership, and maintain strong relationships with Israeli centers of Torah learning will be far more resilient.

The long-term model is likely not separation but integration: shared faculty, shared institutional initiatives, and leadership pipelines that assume movement between Israel and the Diaspora over the course of a career. In that model, leadership movement is not abandonment. It is participation in a broader, shared project of building Jewish life across multiple centers of Jewish reality.

Is there an authentic Torah vision for a flourishing long-term Diaspora, or are our institutions ultimately waystations in the Jewish people's return to our homeland?

Rabbi Goldberg: Torah history suggests that both ideas contain truth. On the one hand, the ultimate trajectory of Jewish history points toward redemption and a fully restored Jewish life in Eretz Yisrael. Our prayers, our holidays, and our collective memory all orient us toward that destiny.

On the other hand, the Torah also

recognizes the sanctity of Jewish life wherever Jews live. Throughout centuries of exile, our sages built communities of extraordinary holiness, scholarship, and compassion across the globe. Those communities were not merely temporary holding patterns; they were places where Torah flourished and Jewish life reached remarkable heights.

Rabbi Liss: I would like to return to the point I started with.

While we have Jews in the Diaspora we must continue to build excellent structures to support and nurture them, to help them grow along their Jewish journeys, and to instill a love for Torah, Hashem and Eretz Yisrael.

Allow me to conclude with a beautiful thought from Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, zt'l.

In May 2001, he participated in a public dialogue with Amos Oz and was asked what can be done to encourage Aliyah.

As part of his response, Rabbi Sacks noted that the famous Jews' College was for many years housed in a magnificent building in the centre of London.

When he was appointed the Head of the College in 1983, it was in serious debt, and so he told the community to sell the building and build a smaller one further out in Hendon, in the centre of the Jewish community, not the centre of town; this time not a splendid building, but a temporary residence—a *mishkan*.

They replied: Is it dignified for the English community not to have a college in a big, magnificent building?

He answered powerfully: Now, when we have the State of Israel, any building Jews build abroad is a temporary residence, a succah. It is forbidden to build structures that proclaim: This is

our house forever. I try to signal to our community that Israel is our place, our homeland—but I do not agree at all with the idea of negating the Diaspora.

May we soon see the day when we all return to Eretz Yisrael. In the meantime, as Rabbi Wein tasked us, we should all endeavour to give all Jews a sense of perspective: Where do I fit into the story of the Jewish people?

Rabbi Penner: Ideally, we hope for a day when the Jewish people are gathered in our homeland and that Diaspora institutions are no longer necessary. That is the vision embedded in our tefillot, in our longing for *kibbutz galuyot*, and in our history. If we merit it, we should one day look back at the Diaspora as an important but temporary chapter.

For now, however, we live in the present. We have real communities with real needs. Our task is to build them responsibly and with dignity, even as we keep our eyes on the larger destination of Jewish return to Israel. With God's help, we should merit to see a time when those strong communities become bridges that lead our people home.

Rabbi Rothwachs: The Torah clearly recognizes the reality of Jewish life in exile and provides frameworks for building deep, meaningful religious communities outside the Land of Israel. At the same time, classical Jewish thought consistently treats exile as historically real but not historically final. The tension is not between building strong communities and believing in Jewish return. The tension is between strength and permanence.

Chazal themselves hint to this historical

movement. The Gemara in *Megillah* 29a, teaches that in the future, even the *batei kneset* and *batei midrash* of the Diaspora will ultimately be carried to Eretz Yisrael:

עתידין בתי כנסיות ובתי מדרשות שבבבל
שיקבעו בארץ ישראל.

In the future, the synagogues and study halls of Babylonia will be established in the Land of Israel.

This is not only a geographic statement. It reflects a deeper idea that the Torah life built in exile is not lost. It is gathered, elevated and ultimately re-centered in the Land of Israel. In many ways, over the course of our lifetimes, we are witnessing forms of this unfolding—*kibbutz galuyot* not only of individuals and families, but of communities, institutions and centers of Torah life. More and more, we are watching pieces of the Jewish world reposition themselves around the center of Jewish national and spiritual life.

A mature Torah perspective allows us to build institutions of real depth, Torah learning, *chesed* and *kedusha* in the Diaspora while maintaining historical humility. Jewish communities outside Israel can flourish spiritually and institutionally, but they should not be imagined as replacing the central role of Israel in Jewish historical destiny. There is an opportunity for this generation not only to observe these processes, but to see ourselves as participants in them—as part of a redemptive story that is still unfolding in real time. The challenge for this generation is to build Diaspora communities that are strong enough to sustain Jewish life with dignity and depth, and honest enough to recognize that Jewish history continues to move.

