

## FROM THE RABBI

### SHRINKAGE

*And G-d gave the greatest gift that there is to Israel and that gift is Peace. (Mishnah: Uk-tzin)*

Usually when one hears the word shrinkage, according to its “business” definition, it means “the products that are either stolen from a store or items procured by workers in the store” illegally.



I remember in my Yeshiva days when I would see the assistant cooks go home each day with paper bags filled to the hilt with eggs, potatoes, onions, etc. I thought (in my naivety) that this *must* be a part of their compensation. (I found out a little later, that was *not* the case.)

The *Mesillat Yesharim*, authored by the holy Ramchal (Rabbi Moshe Chayim Lutzatto) from Tzefat (Israel) and an ardent follower of Rabbi Yitzchak Luriah (the Ari, z”l) explained in his *magnum opus*, that the most important exercise that we possess is the study **and** observance of the Torah.

What is the Torah? To the Jewish people, Torah is not only laws, judgments, commandments and regulations, rules and statutes; it is an *Etz Chayim*, a *tree of life*.

In our community, we see a *shrinkage* in our Jewish population. Perhaps we have 3,000 Jewish people—and maybe even less.

But we are not judged by numbers. We are judged by the simple fact that we call ourselves and we are dedicated to the idea and the ideal of being a Jew.

The State Congressman from New York, Abraham Bloom, many years ago made a statement that is so true. Many times he would end up on the minority side of an issue put to vote. A few times he was the only state representative to vote for or against a bill or an issue. Colleagues would ask him: “You look like a fool! Why don’t you vote like the majority, *even* if you are not necessarily in agreement?” His answer was: “If G-d is on my side, I *am* in the majority.”

Shrinkage? Perhaps. Less Jews in the community? True. But it does not take away from whom we are and what we as Jews stand for.

We represent G-d, His Torah and the people of Israel.

Governments parlay against us. The U.N. meets out its censures of hatred. The Arab states, their political and religious leadership constantly spin their lives. Western countries, even including our beloved nation, many times call Israel the “roadblock to peace”. All of them seem to forget the daily showering of bombs and missiles on civilian towns in Israel.

We know that *Shalom*—“Peace” is the greatest gift there can be, not only to us but to all the world. And we as Jews want Peace, true Peace.

At the last White House meeting the Prime Minister of Israel was told in no uncertain terms that the only solution is a two-state solution beginning with the return of all lands since the United Nation’s 1947 partition plan be given to the *Palestinians*.

To quote King David at the end of Psalms 120: *Long has my soul dwelt with those who hate peace. I am for peace, but whenever I speak, they are for war.*

We pray that G-d give us Peace.

BaShalom, In Peace!

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