



# Torch-lighting Ceremony 2020

By Dr. Ronit Ziv-Kreger, Momentum's Director  
of Education and Leadership Development.

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Every human being needs to understand on the deepest level  
That within them is a lit candle,  
And no two people's candles are alike,  
And there is no person who doesn't have a candle.

Every human being needs to know and understand  
That they must work to discover  
How to share their candlelight with others,  
And to **ignite it into a mighty torch**  
That illuminates the entire world.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935), first Ashkenazic chief rabbi of pre-state Israel

## Questions

- In what ways do you allow yourself to be nourished by your own, inner light?
  - In what ways do you radiate your light into the world?
  - Who has helped ignite your light?
- In what ways do you show your children how their light and actions illuminate your world?
  - With whom do you envision uniting to ignite your light into “a mighty torch that illuminates the entire world”? What steps can you take at this unusual time toward your vision?

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Each year, noteworthy individuals are chosen to light one of twelve torches on *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, Israel Independence Day. They represent both the twelve tribes of Israel and twelve categories of achievement chosen that year as illuminating the Jewish nation, and indeed, the world over. As each individual prepares to light their torch, they state their name and declare, “*Letiferet Medinat Yisrael* – To the glory of the State of Israel.”

The 72nd Israel Independence Day Torch-Lighting ceremony will focus on bringing together and unifying the varied voices in Israeli society.

It is a tremendous honor that Lori Palatnik, Momentum’s founding director, has been selected as this year’s torch-lighter representing the category of Jews living outside of Israel. Lori’s participation is a recognition of the light kindled in and emanating from the tens of thousands of Momentum participants, of the massively diverse partner organizations, and of the hundreds of Community Leaders across the full, global Jewish community. Her selection is a recognition of our power to join and ignite into “a mighty torch that illuminates the entire world.”



### Lori Palatnik

Lori is the Founding Director of Momentum and a world-renowned Jewish educator, speaker, writer, and media personality. Together with a diverse group of women, she co-founded Momentum in 2009 (originally named The Jewish Women’s Renaissance Project) to empower women to change the world through Jewish values that transform ourselves, our families, and our communities. To date, over 20,000 parents from 30 countries have taken part in the signature Momentum Year-Long Experience – which includes an eight-day trip through Israel – to connect with Jewish values and the Jewish homeland, and to inspire taking action and fostering unity without uniformity.



### Idan Raichel

Idan Raichel (b. 1977), a popular Israeli singer-songwriter, has been a global torchbearer for the vast Israeli cultural mosaic for many years. His Idan Raichel Project fuses electronics, traditional Hebrew texts, and Arab and Ethiopian music. Idan’s hit song, “*Shevet Achim Va’achayot*” (“A Tribe of Brothers and Sisters”), encapsulates his lifework and goal to be a musical bridge between all parts of the nation, across the range of its sounds and voices.



### **Eli Ben-Shem**

Eli Ben-Shem is the chairman of Yad Lebanim. Eli lost his son in the 1997 Israeli helicopter disaster. He has made it his life's project to commemorate Israel's fallen soldiers and to accompany their bereaved families. Eli has made a lasting, positive change with regard to the way bereaved families, who deal with their loss and yearnings on a daily basis, are taken care of.



### **Professor Galia Rahav**

Professor Galia Rahav, head of the Infectious Diseases department at Sheba Medical Center in Ramat Gan, is a renowned international expert in her field. She recently headed a clinical trial on the coronavirus, and is part of the effort to find a cure for the disease. Born in Jerusalem, Professor Rahav is the daughter of a Holocaust survivor who served as physician to a group of partisans during World War II.



### **Col. Hisham Ibrahim**

One of the most senior combat officers from the Druze community and commander of the Armored Corps Training School, Col. Hisham personifies, through his personal story as well as command positions throughout the years, the fusion of different groups and sectors serving in the IDF. His roles as military officer and committed Israeli citizen, as well as his involvement in many sectors of Israeli society, personify the alliance and deep connection between the Druze community and the State of Israel.



### **Adi Altschuler**

Adi Altschuler is the founder of *Kanfei Krembo*, the first Israeli youth movement comprising young people both with and without special needs. Members come from all sectors of Israeli society and participate in activities in a spirit of fun and mutual respect. She is also the founder of the Zikaron Basalon ("Memories in the Living Room") venture, an alternative gathering on Holocaust Memorial Day, and is the founder and CEO of the Inclo Association, which is leading the drive to build inclusive schools in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. Adi's goal is to unite all parts of Israeli society.



### **Uri Cohen**

Uri Cohen is one of the founders and head of Masa Israeli. This groundbreaking educational organization promotes Jewish identity with the goal of deepening young adults' connection to and involvement with the Jewish people, the Land of Israel, and the State of Israel. Masa Israeli's flagship program is a six-day journey throughout the country. Its unique Israeli pedagogical method employed during the trip includes challenging activities that translate values into volunteerism and a meaningful lifestyle, alongside a pluralistic approach to the diversity of Israeli society's opinions and identities.



### **Chani Lifshitz**

Chabad emissary Chani Lifshitz, together with her husband, founded the Chabad House in Kathmandu twenty years ago. From the first, it has been a warm home for tens of thousands of Israelis and Jews from all over the world as well as a beacon of kindness, a gathering place for all parts of Israeli society, and an oasis of well-being and rescue for all those in need. Chani symbolizes the concern for others, warm hospitality, and love of the Jewish people that characterize the holy work of Chabad Houses around the world.



## Yael Viluzhny-Azoulay and Ahmed Blaune

**Yael Viluzhny-Azoulay** is the nurse in charge of infectious diseases prevention at Barzilai Hospital in Ashkelon.

**Ahmed Blaune** is a nurse at Poriya Hospital in Tiberias.

Yael heads the nursing staff that works around the clock to successfully meet the challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic. She works tirelessly, seven days a week, to prevent the spread of the virus and to ensure that Corona patients' isolation is maintained. She, along with Ahmed and medical teams across the country, operate with dedication, professionalism, and humanity. They work together to save lives while endangering their own.

Yael and Ahmed represent the integration and unification of the medical staff in hospitals across the country. They come from all sectors, and work together to save lives and promote the health of Israeli society as a whole, both during emergencies and when everything is status quo.



## Yasmin Mazau and Reina Abitbul

**Yasmin and Reina** will together light a torch representing the giving spirit of the thousands of Magen David Adom (MDA) volunteers – younger and more senior – from all parts of the nation.

**Yasmin Mazau**, a 21-year-old Christian Arab, is a volunteer paramedic at MDA who volunteers at Corona testing stations. An Outstanding Volunteer and the Young Generation Representative for MDA Volunteers in Nazareth, Yasmin is also working to increase Holocaust awareness in her sector in order to foster feelings of mutual engagement among Christians, Muslims, and Jews in Israel.

**Reina Abitbul**, 92, has been volunteering with heart and soul for twenty years in various departments at Shaare Zedek Hospital in Jerusalem. She feels that doing good for others is good for the soul.



## Israel Almasi

Israel Almasi is the CEO of Yedidim – Free Emergency Road Assistance. Yedidim, a non-profit organization, is staffed by 25,000 volunteers throughout the country who give road and highway assistance such as tire changing and rescuing infants from locked cars. During the coronavirus pandemic, Yedidim has stepped up to provide services to elders and individuals in quarantine.



## Tzipi Shavit

Born in 1947, Tzipi Shavit – actress, comedian, singer, and television host – is a children's entertainer beloved by generations of Israelis. She has been part of the Israeli cultural scene for over fifty years. Shavit is known for her radiant and bubbly personality, and she uses her myriad talents to build bridges to and between multi generations.

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## Questions

- What common themes and Jewish values run through the torch-lighters' stories?
  - Who inspires you to share Jewish values with others and help them magnify their own, inner light?
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## illuminating the Shift from Sorrow to Joy

*Yom Hazikaron*, Israel's Memorial Day for its fallen soldiers and victims of terrorism, is marked each year on the day before Israel Independence Day. This intentional juxtaposition is meant to emphasize and symbolize the connection between the fallen, their devotion and sacrifice, and the establishment and existence of the State of Israel. Bereaved families light memorial candles and say memorial prayers – and they are joined by the entire population of Israel which, when the siren sounds, comes to a complete standstill, commemorating and grieving for lives cut off before their time.

The torch-lighting ceremony at Mount Herzl, Jerusalem, is both the closing event of Memorial Day and the opening ceremony of Independence Day, in which the Israeli flag is slowly returned from half-mast to full mast and the sadness of Memorial Day segues into joyous Independence Day celebrations.

This transition ritual builds on the depth of Jewish tradition, experience, and understanding of the interlinking of and shifting from sadness and mourning to celebration and joy. During the High Holidays, we shift from the fasting and soul-searching of Yom Kippur to the joy of Sukkot. On Purim, we transition from the Fast of Esther and recognition of the dangers of antisemitism to the joyous holiday rituals of generosity, merriment, and festive meals. The Passover *Haggadah* includes both the physical and the spiritual shift from the pain of bondage to the ecstasy of freedom.

The Jewish nation has experienced darkness and devastation, but we have learned to join together in tears and mourning, and in doing so, to transmute tragedy into the prospect of bringing light into the world.



## Momentum Trip Leader Adrienne Gold teaches:

On the *hanukkiyah* (Hanukkah menorah), there are eight equally placed spots for the candles, plus one slightly elevated spot for the ninth: the *shamash*. The *shamash* is the “helper candle” that lights the others. During Hanukkah, we add one candle every single day. That is the Jewish way: to continuously INCREASE the light!

The *shamash* can be compared to a mother. Her job in raising her children is to ignite the sparks of their souls. She must hold her flame to the wick of each individual candle until it can glow on its own. She cannot hover over or remain entwined with her wick indefinitely. In fact, if she does, the candle will often be singed by the excessive flame!

So it is as we raise our children. We are the light that ignites their precious souls, but we must ensure that our objective is to get those candles to burn independent of us. We light the flame, then we must go back into our slightly elevated but separate space as a parent. We wait and watch with anticipation and pride, and with the knowledge that should one of the candles be accidentally extinguished, we can go to it and re-ignite it.

In our Torah, it was Aaron, Moses’ brother, who was tasked to “raise the light” of the Menorah in the Holy Temple. He would do it every single day with the same alacrity that he had the first time he lit it. He saw that “raising the light” was a holy endeavor, and he never tired of his role as torchbearer.

It’s the same for us. As parents, we often repeat the same tasks day in and day out, and this can lead to burnout if we don’t approach it like Aaron did the Menorah! Instead of feeling burned out, we can remember that we are carrying the torch for our family and for the generations to come from them, that we are nation-builders, and that by sharing our light we are elevated! Remember: “The candle loses nothing of itself in lighting another.” On the contrary; a light given and shared builds in brilliance and luminosity.

May we all approach the precious (while often repetitive) task of raising our children “according to their way” with pride and with passion. For we are the mighty torch that builds eternity!

A disciple of the Lubavitcher Rebbe once asked him, “Rebbe, what is our people’s task in this world?” The Rebbe replied, “A Jew is a lamplighter on the streets of the world. In the olden days, there was a person in every town who would light the gas streetlights with a flame he carried at the end of a long pole. A lamplighter knows that the fire is not his own, and he goes around lighting all the lamps on his route.”

The disciple then asked, “How does one become a lamplighter?” The Rebbe replied, “One must begin with oneself, cleansing oneself, becoming more refined; and then one sees the other as a source of light, waiting to be ignited. When, Heaven forbid, one is crude, one sees only crudeness; but when one is noble, one sees nobility.”

### Questions

- How might you utilize this unusual time to continue refining yourself and practicing being a lamplighter?
- For whom are you a lamplighter, and in what ways?
- Who is a lamplighter for you, and in what ways?
- As a parent, what advice can you give yourself for drawing forth the light of your child’s soul without hovering in ways that might singe their candle?
- What motivates and strengthens you to be a torch for your family and community at this time?
- What one small act are you inspired to do this week? Might you dedicate this act with lighting a candle, maybe on Friday night, for the glory of your family or your community, or “*letiferet Medinat Yisrael* – for the glory of the State of Israel,” the words that Lori Palatnik will be saying, together with all the torch-lighters on Independence Day?

Check the Momentum Facebook page  
for information on how to watch the  
Torch-Lighting Ceremony



Working in partnership with:



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