

PEOPLE WHO INSPIRE: A LIGHT UNTO THE NATIONS



"A PERSON WHO INSPIRES" | "אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר רוּחַ בוֹ"

Israel's annual Yom Ha'atzmaut—Independence Day—celebrations are launched with a ceremony that highlights individuals who continue to build up the State of Israel and inspire others to do so.

"The Israeli Spirit" was the theme for the celebration of Israel's 71st anniversary. Each year, a diverse group of people representing a variety of fields are chosen to light one of the 12 torches (representing the 12 Tribes of Israel). Each torch lighter introduces themselves and closes with the words "U'le'tiferet Medinat Yisrael"—וְלִתְפָאֶרֶת מְדִינַת יִשְׂרָאֵל—"To the glory of the State of Israel."

"The individuals selected have achieved incredible accomplishments... things that encompass the Israeli spirit which inspires us to work to change our society for the better." (Israeli Minister of Culture and Sport Miri Regev)

Among those honored as torch lighters for Israel's 71st anniversary: the co-founder of Spacell and the lead philanthropist who provided funding to drive the effort.

For more information on Miri Regev and Spacell, look to the Israel Resource Cards.



2019 Torch Lighters with Minister of Culture and Sport Miri Regev. Photo credit: Yoav Dudkevich

MIDRASH

“And God answered Moses, ‘Single out Joshua son of Nun, a person who inspires and lay your hand upon him.’”
(Numbers 27:18)

When the time has come to appoint a new leader to take over from Moses, God commands Moses to appoint Joshua, for he is a man in whom there’s “spirit.” The Midrash interprets this quality of being a person in whom there is spirit in several ways; suggesting that Moses pleaded God to appoint a leader who will know how to interact with each individual according to their ways of being/thinking and seeing the world as well as knowing how to address the things that challenge them. Then God asks Moses to “lay your hand upon him,” which is the ritual of transmitting the leadership to Joshua. The Midrash explains this act metaphorically, saying that Moses should transmit the leadership like lighting one candle with another candle; just like the candle that is used for lighting doesn’t lose its light (spirit), so would the light within Moses be enough for both and more. (Source: Midrash)

Questions:

- > Why was it important that the leader for the people of Israel be “a person who inspires?”
- > Who is someone that inspires you? Why?

WHO HAS BEEN CHOSEN THIS YEAR AND WHY?

Questions:

- > What themes and values do you see in each of the torch lighters that encompass “The Israeli Spirit?” How might each person’s story inspire others?
- > What common threads can you find across the torch lighters?
- > One torch is reserved for someone representing the Jewish world outside of Israel. Who would you nominate to light this torch and why?

2019 TORCH LIGHTERS



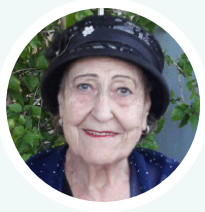
Morris Kahn

The philanthropist who sponsored Israel’s first private lunar initiative. The spacecraft, aptly named Beresheet (“In the beginning,” and also the first word in the Torah) marked the smallest spacecraft by weight, and the longest journey from the Earth to the Moon.



Kfir Damari

Co-founder of SpaceIL, whose ingenuity and perseverance made Israel the seventh country to get to the Moon and the fourth country to reach the surface.



Marie Nahmias

The 92-year-old from Afula is a Holocaust survivor, mother of eight children, and foster mother to 52 children with special needs.



Avi Neshet

A director of 20 films, including the award-winning "Dizengoff 99" and "Turn Left at the End of the World." His 17-year old son, Ari, was killed in a hit-and-run accident at the end of 2018.



Lt. Col. Shai Siman Tov

Injured by the collapse of a tunnel beam during Operation Protective Edge in 2014, he returned to command his soldiers following rehabilitation, despite being wheelchair-bound.



Yehudah Poliker

A son of Holocaust survivors, Poliker is an Israeli singer known for songs delving into the identity of the children of Holocaust survivors. He lit the torch to honor children of Holocaust survivors, as well as all Israeli musicians.



Iris Yifrach, Bat-Galim Shaar, and Racheli Fraenkel

The mothers of three Israeli teenagers who were kidnapped and murdered in 2014 lit a torch. This is the first time three people are lighting together. Naftali Fraenkel, 16, Gil-ad Shaer, 16, and Eyal Yifrach, 19, were kidnapped by terrorists on the night of June 12, 2014, and their bodies were found 18 days later. The kidnapping was later seen as a turning point in Operation Protective Edge (the Israel-Gaza conflict in the Summer of 2014). The three mothers have dedicated themselves to creating unity among the Jewish People.



Gil Shlomo

A 17-year-old outstanding high school student from Sderot who has lived under the constant threat of rockets from the Gaza Strip. She devotes her time to fighting for social justice and to the Israeli Scouts, *Tzofim*, who are celebrating 100 years.



Moran Samuel

A paralympic sports competitor who continued to play basketball following a long rehabilitation from becoming disabled at 24. She later changed sport and won various competitions in rowing, culminating in a silver medal at the 2016 Paralympics in Rio. She is also a children's physiotherapist and the founder of Transparent Boundaries, which aims to change young people's perceptions of those with disabilities.



Menashe Zalka

A footballer (captain of Hapoel Hadera) and reservist paratrooper. He is also a role model and activist for the Ethiopian community.



Dr. Hodaya Oliel

The 27-year-old completed her medical studies despite the challenges of living with cerebral palsy.



Dr. Hila Hadas

The CEO of Enosh, a non-profit organization that helps rehabilitate mental health victims. She works to remove the stigma of mental health issues as well as creating new services for those who use them.



Dr. Salman Zarka

The Druze doctor is the director of the Ziv Medical Center in Tzfat, and has treated over 1000 injured Syrians. His team has given life-saving care to citizens of an enemy country. He is a world-renowned expert in public and military medicine, and lectures in universities.



Jeff Finkelstein

The head of the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh who has been working to heal the Jewish community after the Tree of Life synagogue shooting. He is also reaching beyond the Jewish community, raising funds for New Zealand mosque massacre victims.