

On Friday, shortly before his unit was sent into the northern Gaza Strip, Sgt. Maj. (res.) Yossi Hershkovitz made a video for the students at ORT Pelech High School for boys in Jerusalem, where he was the principal.

"Today in Israel there is no right wing, no left wing, no Haredim. Just Jews," he said in the video, wearing his green fatigues. He offered words from Torah, and quoted the late chief rabbi of Great Britain, Jonathan Sacks, about holding onto one's faith during times of crisis and the Jewish people's power to bring light to the world.

"Yossi's approach to teaching was rooted in compassion and caring for each student as an individual," wrote Rabbi Binyamin Krauss, principal of SAR Academy in the Bronx, the Modern Orthodox day school where Hershkovitz and his wife Hadas taught from 2012-2016. "He was a man of strong ideals and Torah principles, living out his beliefs both in and out of the classroom."

Hershkovitz, 44, was among [five reservists killed in Gaza](#) on Friday (Nov.10) by a blast from a booby-trapped tunnel shaft next to a mosque in the Beit Hanoun area. The troops were outside the Hamas-dug tunnel when the blast occurred.

As an educator, Hershkovitz was beloved on three continents. At SAR, he taught Hebrew and led the school's annual Memorial Day service for fallen Israeli soldiers. He was also known to pick up his violin and play at school events. His innovations included Me'orav Yerushalmi — an interdisciplinary learning program blending religious and secular studies, now replicated in numerous schools.

"His sacrifice for his beloved Israel reflects the same dedication and commitment he showed his students every day," Kraus wrote in a note to parents, appealing for support for Hershkovitz's widow and five children.

In the summers of 2014-2015, he also worked as an educator and "Rosh Tzofiyut" (head of scouting) at Camp Moshava I.O., a Modern Orthodox summer camp in Honesdale, Pennsylvania.

Meanwhile, as principal of ORT Pelech, he forged connections with Mount Scopus Memorial College in Melbourne, Australia, which sends students on a nine-week exchange program to ORT Pelech each year.

"Yossi was a beloved administrator, a first-rate educator, a man of the people, full of love and giving, who saw in front of him the path to doing good and creating a brighter and better world," the CEO of the ORT network, Tzvika Peleg, told the Times of Israel.

Hershkovitz lived in Gva'ot, a community in the Etzion settlement bloc in the West Bank. He also worked for three years as a security guard in the Prime Minister's Office.



After his funeral on Monday, a motorcade brought his family to the Pelech school in Jerusalem's Katamon neighborhood, where colleagues, students and their parents lined the road.¹

Bereishis 28:10

וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּאֵר שֶׁבַע וַיֵּלֶךְ חֲרָנָה

Rashi

וַיֵּצֵא. לֹא הָיָה צָרִיךְ לִכְתֹּב אֶלָּא וַיֵּלֶךְ יַעֲקֹב חֲרָנָה, וְלָמָּה הַזְכִּיר יֵצִיאָתוֹ? אֶלָּא מֵגִיד שֶׁיֵּצִיאַת צַדִּיק מִן הַמְּקוֹם עוֹשֶׂה רָשָׁם, שֶׁבְּזִמְנוֹ שֶׁהַצַּדִּיק בְּעִיר, הוּא הַתּוֹרָה הוּא זִינָה הוּא הַדְּרָה; יֵצֵא מִשָּׁם, פְּנֵה הַתּוֹרָה פְּנֵה זִינָה פְּנֵה הַדְּרָה. וְכֵן וַתֵּצֵא מִן הַמְּקוֹם הָאֲמֹר בְּנַעֲמֵי וְרוֹת (רוֹת א')

¹ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/students-fellow-educators-on-3-continents-say-goodbye-to-reservist-killed-in-gaza/>

Rus 1:7

וּתְצֵא מִן־הַמְּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר הָיְתָה־שָׁמָּה וּשְׁתִּי כְלוּתֶיהָ עִמָּה וּתְלַכְנָה בְּדֶרֶךְ לָשׁוּב אֶל־אֶרֶץ יִהוּדָה

Rashi

וּתְצֵא מִן הַמְּקוֹם. לְמָה נֶאֱמַר? הָרִי כָּבֵד נֶאֱמַר: "וּתְשֹׁב מִשְׁדֵּי מוֹאָב", וּמֵהֵיכָן תָּשׁוּב אִם לֹא תְצֵא מִן הַמְּקוֹם שֶׁהָיְתָה שָׁם? אֶלָּא מִגִּיד שְׂיָצִיאת צְדִיק מִן הַמְּקוֹם נִכְרַת וְעוֹשֶׂה רָשָׁם. פְּנֵה זִיּוּה, פְּנֵה הַדְרָה, פְּנֵה שְׂבָחָה שֶׁל עִיר. וְכוּ "וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּאֵר שֶׁבַע"

Transcript of Yossi Hershkovitz's HYD video²

אני רוצה לבקש בקשה, זו תקופה לא קלה, ואני מבקש בבקשה מכל אחד פה, דבר ראשון והכי חשוב לי לא להגיד לשון הרע על ישראל, שום דבר, אל תגידו מילה רעה, לא לחזור על מה שהיה לפני, כלום, אין שמאלני אין ימני אין חרדי, אין כלום. יש יהודים. החמאסניקים הנאצים לא הפרידו, לא עניין אותם במה בחרת, ומה אתה חושב, זה חשבון הנפש שכל הזמן צריך לשים לנו בראש. לא להגיד לשון הרע. בתקופת אחאב ישראל ניצחו בזכות שלא אמרו לשון הרע אחד על השני. להתגבר בזה

פה כשמישו אפילו מצית איזו שהיא שיחה בעניין, לא נותנים לו, כולם משתיקים אותו, אנחנו לא מדברים על זה. כמה אנחנו טובים. אנחנו בחרנו בטוב. תרבו בטוב, תתנו צדקה. תתפללו. התפילות שלנו לא הולכות ולא חוזרות לארץ. הקב"ה לא ישיב אותן ריקם. הן מתווספות למעיינות הדמעות של כל האנשים המסכנים שנרצחו. יש כל כך הרבה זכויות עכשיו בעם ישראל. כל כך הרבה גיבורים שנפלו ומסרו את נפשם. תהיו חזקים ובע"ה אנחנו נתראה בקרוב אחרי ניצחון מאוד מאוד גדול וישועה מאוד מאוד גדולה. אוהב מאוד את כולם. את כולכם. מתגעגע. שבת שלום. שבת שלום

Sergeant Binyamin Meir Airly, a 21-year-old soldier from Beit Shemesh who served in the 101st Battalion, the Paratroopers Brigade, was laid to rest this afternoon (Sunday, Nov. 19) after he [fell in battle](#) against the Hamas terrorist organization in the northern Gaza Strip.

*Binyamin's father, Robert, eulogized him: "Binyamin personified modesty. He wouldn't have liked all the attention; he didn't want his name mentioned. He was loved and respected by everyone who met him. A leader. His smile – shines up the room. **He hated smartphones - gave it up for a Nokia**. He came for Shabbat from the army and preferred to spend time on the farm, eat, sleep, and back to the farm.*

*He was a 'gibor' (hero). He always wanted to be on the front. Wouldn't have it any other way. On Sukkot, he wouldn't spray mosquito repellent because he said that he has to get used to the bites because he might not always have repellent. **He was a gibor in other ways as well. "overcomes his evil inclination" – he never spoke lashon hara.***

² My thanks to Rabbi Dov Kidron of J'lem for transcribing the video for me.

The father continued: "He had amazing 'kibud av va'em' (honoring parents). He hated taking money from us, and we had to force him to take money. He hated 'gashmiyut' – materialism. He was a boy who loved Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel). He was a leader in the army amongst his friends

All his cousins loved being with him. When he started a new school, my friend said that he was an amazing kid, even if I didn't see it. He is now in an amazing place; he is looking down on us now, and he's happy. He is learning with Hashem. Even though it's a calamity for us, he's happy. **I ask everyone here to take on a hesed or a mitzvah in his 'zchut,' in his merit. Not just for him but for Klal Yisrael. He fulfilled his job in this world, and it's our job to continue his job."**

He added: "We left the house, and hundreds of people were waving flags. As an Englishman, I hated hugs - until yesterday. But now I'm getting hugs from so many people, and it feels great. The change is happening. **In our family, we never said a bad word about Klal Yisrael – or about different types of Jews, and we hope that after this war, we can carry on this tradition in Klal Yisrael that it is only 'achdut' (unity). This is the only way we can bring Mashiach and defeat our enemies.** I have the most amazing wife, resilient and strong. I know we will become stronger as a family ... following in his footsteps.

Thank G-d I belong to a country and a community of people who have brought morality into the world, science, and education into this world. And **I'm glad if Binyamin had to go, he went in service of this amazing nation.** This kid was unbelievable. Every home should have a Binyamin, and if you don't have one, then either speak to my wife how to make a Binyamin because it's all up to her," he concluded.

Binyamin's sister lamented: "What an honor it is to be your big sister – but you were always stronger. Every time I closed my eyes, I saw your smile, that made me feel safe. I will make sure that your nieces and nephews will know what a hero you are. I will remind Dad that he raised such an amazing man."

His Uncle, Ari Averbuch, eulogized: "Binyamin wasn't part of this world – he was on a different level. Of all the days he had to die – Shabbat Kodesh."

His mother stated: "I'm going to miss your "Hey Ma" when you walk in the door. You would be mortified to see how many people are here today. The one thing I'm looking forward to in shiva – is hearing Binyamin stories, the ones I never heard. We had tough times, but he grew to be the greatest gem there is. I'm going to miss your great smile and your hug when you come home. I kept some beer to drink together when you came home. He was passionate about Kibosh Ha'aretz (conquering the land) and Kedushat Ha'aretz (the holiness of the land) – I imagined you getting married, living on a farm, eating the vegetables that you picked, and raising 10+

children – who wouldn't know a word of English. We were very close – he told me most things that I probably didn't want to know.”³



והיא שעמדה לאבותינו ולנו
שלא אחד, בלבד, עמד עלינו לכלותנו
אלא שבכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו לכלותנו
והקדוש ברוך הוא מצילנו מידם

Eim ha'Banim S'meicha - HaRav Yissachar Shlomo Teichtal HYD

(1885-Jan.1945)

³ <https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/380572>