# Class # 1 – Breaking bad: An Anti-Zionist leader goes Zionist

Senior Fellowship Leadership Program

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5vHhhLRriRo>

1. Who is Yehuda Meshi Zahav - Founder of ZAKA.
2. What is Zaka? Explain the breadth of the Organization

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJnXX_d7QBU>

1. Who are the Neturai Karta? When did the group begin and why?
2. What are their core beliefs?
3. How do they dress and why?
4. Where do they live and why?
5. What kind of general education do they have?
6. What professions are they limited to and why?
7. Who WAS Yehuda Meshi Zahav before ZAKA? Crown Prince of Neturei Karta

<https://www.israel21c.org/a-schedule-fixed-by-the-angel-of-death/>

Though Meshi-Zahav’s life story could easily be mistaken for a screenplay, he is as real as the flesh and blood he encounters at the scenes of accidents, crimes and terrorist attacks. Brought up in the insular Jerusalem neighborhood of Mea Shearim, he was ingrained to distrust “the other” and to disdain Zionism as evil.

**Arrested 34 times for anti-Zionist agitation**

“The haredi community is set up with ‘walls’ to protect us from outside influences,” Meshi-Zahav says, speaking in Hebrew translated by his foreign media spokeswoman, Lydia Weitzman, and ZAKA development director David Rose. “I never knew there were Jews who act and behave differently and that they are also good people.”

The 11th generation Jerusalemite was taught that there was a correct and incorrect way to do things, “and if we did something the incorrect way, we were called Zionists.”

This same man, who proudly lit the torch ushering in the State of Israel’s Independence Day celebrations in 2003, was arrested 34 times at anti-Zionist demonstrations as a youth. At some point, the young Meshi-Zahav developed an affinity for the police who apprehended him time and again. “I began to see them as regular people who wanted to go home to their families after a day’s work,” he relates. “I started to see that a lot of things could be settled more easily by just sitting and talking to one another.”

With this revelation as a backdrop, on July 6, 1989 Meshi-Zahav heard the explosion and subsequent screams emanating from a bus driven into a ravine by a terrorist. He and some friends rushed to the scene, determined to help tend the wounded and collect scattered body parts and blood for burial. Though his mother had set a volunteering example with her regular visits to terminally ill patients, Meshi-Zahav knew neither first aid nor forensics. But he knew Jewish laws regarding human remains, and he discovered that no organization in Israel was authorized to do this gruesome but sacred work.

**Free access to Palestinian hospitals**

His life took on a new purpose: “Even though we Israelis have different opinions about how the state should be, the time had come to live together.” Over the next six years, he lay the groundwork for ZAKA (a Hebrew acronym for Disaster Victims Identification). The only group of its kind worldwide, it is recognized by the United Nations as an international volunteer humanitarian organization. Donations make up most of its funding; about 10 percent of the budget comes from the government. During the Arab uprising or intifada from 2000 to 2006, Meshi-Zahav and about 600 volunteers rarely slept, constantly on alert for the next call. Working knee-deep in blood, Meshi-Zahav was fortified by his faith. “At the time, I thought we were dealing with kavod hamet – honoring the dead. By the end, I realized that we were actually honoring the living, because a family whose loved one cannot receive a full Jewish burial has no rest.”

<https://www.theyeshivaworld.com/news/israel-news/1506537/you-were-wrong-a-letter-from-yehuda-meshi-zahav-to-his-uncle-rav-amram-blau-founder-of-neturei-karta.html>

10. What was Meshi Zahav’s picture of “Zionists” before his epiphany?

11. What caused Meshi Zahav’s epiphany?

**Rambam, Laws of Teshuva Ch. 3:4**

Even though the sounding of the shofar on Rosh HaShanah is a decree, it contains an allusion. It is as if [the shofar's call] is saying:

Wake up you sleepy ones from your sleep and you who slumber, arise. Inspect your deeds, repent, remember your Creator. Those who forget the truth in the vanities [distractions] of time and throughout the entire year, devote their energies to vanity and emptiness which will not benefit or save: Look to your souls. Improve your ways and your deeds and let every one of you abandon his evil path and thoughts.

12. In what way was Meshi Zahav’s picture of “Zionists” a figment of his imagination? In what way is a person locked into imagination rightfully described as being “asleep”?

13. In what way is Meshi Zahav’s imagination image of Zionists a sin? In what way did the sin of mind lead to other sins? Did he think he was sinning?

14. What happened to Meshi Zahav’s imaginary picture of Zionists when he recognized his sin? What event caused him to change his mind? How did this change of picture change his behavior?

 15. In what way is every member of a group or ideology vulnerable to Meshi Zahav’s imaginary war on enemies? Give an example from the current Presidential election?

16. In what way is every cheyt (sin) based upon an imaginary picture like Meshi Zahavs? What happens to the false picture when we recognize our cheyt?

17. In what way does Shofar help us in identifying our fantasy pictures, according to Rambam?

  Explore the change in imaginary picture and change in behavior resulting from these epiphanies:

Case #1 - Epiphany about Kashrut (What mistaken belief do people who do not keep kosher have about this mitzva- think of eating lobster as an example? What do Shomrei Kashrut know about the mitzva?).

Case 2 - Epiphany about Shabbos (What limitations do non Shomrei Shabbat believe this mitzva imposes on them? What is the reality of Shabbos?)

Case #3 - Epiphany about dating Non-Jews (What prejudices do nonobservant Jews believe this mitzva imposes on them. What is the reality of Jewish marriage?)

Case #4 - Epiphany about learning Torah (What irrelevance do non learners believe this Talmud Torah? What is the reality of Talmud Torah?