



**I**srael is a country built on immigration. In the early years of the State, Holocaust survivors came by the thousands, helping to build its infrastructure and contributing enormously to the fledgling country. The following years saw entire Jewish communities transplanted to Israel from countries where Jews long suffered from virulent anti-Semitism and terrible oppression. Most dramatically, Operation Magic Carpet and Operation Ezra and Nehemiah brought Jews over from Yemen and Iraq, respectively. Decades later, in the euphoric aftermath of the Six-Day War, thousands more made Israel their home, and in the 1990s, more than one million Jews from the former Soviet Union infused Israeli society with new talent and energy.

What is most apparent, however, is that over the years, *olim* have typically been motivated by anti-Semitism, economic distress or oppression. Indeed, it is not surprising that for most of the State's existence, North American *aliyah* was, sadly enough, barely a trickle. Moreover, of the North Americans who made *aliyah*, roughly 50 percent ended up not staying.

And yet, dramatic changes are taking place: the past seven years alone have witnessed the *aliyah* of nearly 18,000 North American Jews. Indeed, many now believe that North America is the next *aliyah* frontier and that a North American "*aliyah* revolution" is

on the horizon. How did this amazing turnaround come to be?

In 2001, Rabbi Yehoshua Fass, then a little-known rabbi of a Florida congregation, had an ambitious plan: to help thousands of North American Jews trade in their lives of comfort in the Diaspora to pursue their dormant dreams of *aliyah*. Amazingly, the plan worked. Large-scale emigration from the West is no longer a fantasy. By offering cash grants and an array of supportive services, Nefesh B'Nefesh promotes, in Rabbi Fass's words, "*aliyah* of choice" rather than an escape from distress and persecution. Today, one cannot speak of North American *aliyah* without speaking of Nefesh B'Nefesh; they are practically synonymous.

To me, however, the story of Nefesh B'Nefesh is not only that of the 18,000 North Americans who have returned home or the thousands more who will do so in the coming years. It is a story about the determination of one individual, the power of pursuing one's goals and convictions, despite the odds. Six years ago, who would have thought that Rabbi Fass would be bringing dozens of planeloads of *olim* to Israel? Perhaps no one but Rabbi Fass himself. His contagious enthusiasm, his tenacity and his unwillingness to submit to failure has helped create "the *aliyah* revolution" you will read about in the pages ahead.

In this issue, we also review two important books on the contemporary rabbinate that we hope will give you a deeper appreciation for a complex and often challenging profession. Indeed,

reviewer Rabbi Avraham J. Shmidman, rabbi of the Lower Merion Synagogue in Lower Merion, Pennsylvania, lists the seemingly endless qualifications one must possess to be an effective rabbi: "a gifted and innovative orator, erudite in all areas of halachah, a dynamic teacher, a skilled provider of pastoral guidance, an enthusiastic youth director, an efficient administrator, a visionary community activist, a successful fundraiser and a creative outreach director." Just in case readers feel this list does not suffice, Rabbi Solomon and Shoshana Rybak, in their book review, assert that because rabbis must contend with addiction, domestic abuse and other sensitive issues, "they need more than empathy and understanding...they require considerable [psychological] training." In a lighter vein, Rebbetzin Estelle Feldman, wife of well-known rabbi and author Rabbi Emanuel Feldman, gives us insight into the often undefined and underappreciated role of the *rebbetzin*.

Also in an informative if somewhat controversial article, Dr. Edward Reichman seeks to answer a critical question for Orthodox parents: "To vaccinate or not to vaccinate?" With many Orthodox parents choosing not to vaccinate their children, this important article traces the history of vaccination and the halachic response to it.

Finally, I invite readers to read the usual array of stimulating articles on Israel, health, *kashrut* and other relevant, timely issues. As always, feel free to e-mail me with your comments at [ja@ou.org](mailto:ja@ou.org) ■

# What do these rabbis have in common?



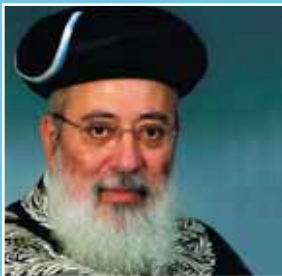
Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli z"l  
Former Dayan, Chief Rabbinate of Israel



Rabbi Dovid Shloosh  
Chief Rabbi of Netanya



Rabbi Avraham Shapira z"l  
Former Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel



Rabbi Shlomo Amar  
Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel



Rabbi Ovadya Yosef  
Former Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel



Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu  
Former Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel

**They all agree that brain-stem death is halachic death even though the heart is still beating – and support organ donation!**

## **Rabbi Zalman Nechemia Goldberg**

***“In my opinion, even a Torah observant Jew can sign an organ donor card on the condition that [the donation of organs] be done under the guidance of a competent halachic authority, and preferably the name of the rabbi should be specified.”***

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**Register for your organ donor card from the Halachic Organ Donor Society either on-line at [www.hods.org](http://www.hods.org) or by calling 212-213-5087**



The HOD Society has saved over 100 lives by facilitating organ transplants that otherwise would not have happened. Please support the HOD Society by sending a tax-deductible charitable contribution to the HOD Society, 49 West 45th Street, 10th Fl., NY, NY 10036.

**Articles and videos on the topic of organ donation and halacha may be accessed at [WWW.HODS.ORG](http://WWW.HODS.ORG)**

**Medical Emergency Phone Number: 877-700-HODS**