YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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**[They Shall Yet Live:](https://www.etzion.org.il/en/they-shall-yet-live-eulogy-our-beloved-student-zachary-baumel-hy%E2%80%9Dd)**

**[A Eulogy for our Beloved Student, Zachary Baumel](https://www.etzion.org.il/en/they-shall-yet-live-eulogy-our-beloved-student-zachary-baumel-hy%E2%80%9Dd) *[Hy”d](https://www.etzion.org.il/en/they-shall-yet-live-eulogy-our-beloved-student-zachary-baumel-hy%E2%80%9Dd)***

**Harav Yaakov Medan**

[Note: In June 1982, Zachary (Zecharya) Baumel, a fourth-year student at Yeshivat Har Etzion, left the *beit midrash* to join his IDF unit in Operation Peace for Galilee. He was declared missing in action after the battle of Sultan Yacoub, his fate unknown. The Baumel family and the IDF never gave up their efforts to find him, and last month, nearly thirty-seven year after his capture, his body was brought to rest in Israel. Zachary was given a full military funeral on Mt. Herzl, thousands came to pay their last respects, and he was eulogized, among others, by both the president and the prime minister. What follows is the eulogy delivered at the funeral by Rav Medan, rosh yeshiva of Yeshivat Har Etzion.]

The hand of the Lord was upon me, and the Lord carried me out in a wind, and set me down in the midst of the valley, and it was full of bones… Then He said to me: “Prophesy over these bones, and say to them: ‘O you dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath (*ruach*) to enter into you, and you shall live.’” (*Yechezkel* 37:1-5)

After thirty-seven long years, God has allowed us to bring the remains of our beloved Zecharya from some unknown place to be buried here, in the Holy City of Jerusalem, in this cemetery of the righteous. The breath of God rests on the bones of our dear Zecharya no less so than on the dry bones about which the prophet Yechezkel prophesied.

In a heroic military operation that has been remembered for generations – as perhaps this operation will be remembered – the people of Yavesh Gil'ad repaid King Shaul for the kind behavior that he had displayed toward them. In the aftermath of the battle on the Gilboa, the Philistines hung Shaul's corpse in disgrace from the wall of Bet She'an. Then it is stated:

And when the inhabitants of Yavesh Gil'ad heard concerning him that which the Philistines had done to Shaul, all the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Shaul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Bet She'an… And they took their bones, and buried them under the tamarisk-tree in Yavesh, and fasted seven days. (I *Shemuel* 31:11-13)

King Shaul rightfully earned the heroic effort that the people of Yavesh Gil'ad made on his behalf. Several years earlier, Shaul had led his army to save the distant and isolated Yavesh Gil'ad from the hands of Nachash the Amonite.

One Sunday close to thirty-seven years ago, our beloved Zecharya Baumel and his friends closed their Gemaras in the middle of *seder* in our *beit midrash* in Yeshivat Har Etzion, rose from their seats, packed their knapsacks, and got onto the buses that were waiting for them. Like King Shaul, they headed north to protect the outlying residents who suffered daily at the hands of the terrorists in Lebanon. Like Trumpeldor and his colleagues who put aside what they had been doing in order to assist at Tel Chai almost a hundred years ago, our beloved Zecharya and his friends went up north with brave hearts and with full knowledge of the personal price that they were liable to pay for carrying out a similar mission to protect Kiryat Shemona, Tel Chai and the surrounding area.

We have not seen him since. He left us his constant smile, and the boundless affability that exuded from him. He left us his great humility and his acceptance of each and every person, the help that he was ready to extend to an unknown person who had just arrived from abroad or from anywhere else. He left us his Torah, the memory, the longing, the hope that he would still return.

Our beloved Zecharya belonged to Ira's tank battalion, the battalion that paid the heaviest price in the most difficult battle of the war. At the time, the IDF assembled a large artillery group that created a powerful and massive artillery corridor, which, according to the testimonies of those who were there, brought to mind the splitting of the Red Sea, a clear path surrounded by two storms. It created a path between its shells, a path by way of which the battalion was saved, and was able to rejoin our forces. Our dear Zecharya was among those who did not return from that terrible ambush, but now he has returned. Here he is once again with us.

How grateful we are to God and to those who put their lives in danger and worked so hard and boundlessly. No other nation on earth would have made such an effort. How proud we are of our security forces. We are all united in our prayers that Zecharya’s comrades Avi Feldman and Yehuda Katz, as well as Hadar Goldin and Oron Shaul and all other missing soldiers will be found one day soon.

As the prophet says, the breath of God rests on these bones and they shall yet live.

(Translated by David Strauss)