



Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir are an Israeli power couple and among the country's most popular media personalities, respected across the religious-secular spectrum. Their journalism on television, radio, and in print

## RUACH YISRAEL

# A Gradual Redemption

Sivan Rahav Meir



The *sukkah* you see in this photo may be temporary, but the story behind it symbolizes Jewish eternity. This is the story, as told to me by Yehoshua Goldring:

“Our Savta, Tzipporah Kendel, was born on Chol Hamoed Sukkot in a small village in Transylvania to a family of Vishnitz Chasidim. This week on Chol Hamoed Sukkot, in the Old City of Yerushalayim, she celebrated her 100th birthday, surrounded by her grandchildren.

“During the Holocaust, Savta was sent with all of her family to Auschwitz. In the selection, she and her older sister were chosen to live as slave laborers. She never saw the rest of her family again. She was good at needlework,

and those skills saved her life during the war. After the Holocaust, Savta made Aliyah aboard the ship named ‘Hatikvah.’ The British authorities caught her, and she was sent back to Europe. My father was born in Italy in a DP camp, where he spent the first year and a half of his life. In the end, the British released families with children, and Savta arrived in Israel precisely on the 29th of November 1947, the day on which the UN voted that the British Mandate would end and a Jewish state would be formed.

“My grandfather, Savta’s husband, worked picking produce on farms, but he was killed in a car crash only three months after they arrived in Israel. Savta found herself alone; A Holocaust survivor, a young widow, and the mother of a small child. She heard that someone she had known before the war had moved to Israel, and they got married and had another three children together.

“All her life, Savta worked as a seamstress, and later on, she took care of elderly people. She dedicated her life to her family. I remember as a child bringing our socks with holes so she could fix them because, for Savta, every small detail and job was of great significance. She always told us that you never need to throw anything away – everything can be used, recycled, or fixed.

“Before I went to Poland, I spoke with her. She never left the country after arriving in Israel decades ago, but she wanted me to go there.

“Savta has merited to marry off all her grandchildren and has several great-grandchildren and even one great-great-grandchild!”

The family didn’t plan it, but in the picture taken of the “birthday girl” in the *sukkah* in Yerushalayim, just behind her is a hand embroidered decoration with the section from the Talmud Yerushalmi that describes the gradual, slow redemption of *Am Yisrael*:

מַעֲשֵׂה: רַבִּי חִיָּא רַבָּה וְרַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בְּן חֶלְפָתָה הָיוּ מְהַלְכִין בְּהָדָא בְּקַעַת אַרְבַּל בְּקִרְיָצְתָה, וְרָאוּ אֵילַת הַשְּׁחַר שְׁבַקַע אֹרְחָה. אָמַר רַבִּי חִיָּא רַבָּה לְרַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בְּן חֶלְפָתָה: בְּרִיבִי, כָּה הִיא גְּאֻלְתּוֹן שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל: בְּתַחֲלָה, קַמְאָה, קַמְאָה. כָּל מָה שְׁהִיא הוֹלְכָת, הִיא רַבָּה וְהוֹלְכָת. (תלמוד ירושלמי, ברכות א:א)

“Once, Rabbi Chiya the Great and Rabbi Shimon Ben Chalafta were walking in the Arbel Valley in the early morning, and they saw the first light of dawn breaking through the darkness. Rabbi Chiya said to Rabbi Shimon, “This is how the redemption of Israel will take place. It will begin slowly, slowly, and gradually grow and strengthen all the time.” (Talmud Yerushalmi, Berachot 1:1)

The story of Savta Tzipporah brings this teaching to life!

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**Sivan Rahav Meir** is a media personality and lecturer. She lives in Jerusalem with her husband, Yedidya, and their five children, and serves as World Mizrahi’s Scholar-in-Residence. She is a primetime anchor on *Channel 2 News*, has a column in Israel’s largest newspaper, *Yediot Acharonot*, and has a weekly radio show on *Galei Tzahal* (Army Radio). Sivan was included by *Forbes* magazine in their list of the 50 most influential women in Israel, and listed by the *Jerusalem Post* as one of the 50 most influential Jews in the world.



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