



provides a unique window into the Israeli people, culture, and pulse. We are excited to present this new section, “*Ruach Yisrael*,” the spirit of Israel, in which we bring some of their writings to an English-speaking audience.

RUACH YISRAEL

Joy Through Hardship

Yedidya Meir

“I spent Simchat Torah in Yerushalayim’s Hadassah Hospital,” Devori Borstein wrote to me, “visiting a family member who was being treated there. In the hospital’s shul, about 100 people gathered to *daven*. I don’t think there is any shul like this in the world, with Jews of all stripes: Ashkenazim and Sephardim, National Religious and Satmar, Litvaks and Masoratiim, and Belzer, Gur and Chabad *chassidim*. Nobody’s first choice was to be in the hospital for Yom Tov, except for Rabbi Yitzchak and Sima Peretz, a couple who have volunteered to provide meals for the sick and their visitors at the hospital for 25 years. Some people were there for happy reasons such as a birth, and others were there for more challenging reasons. There were

sick children, men with artificial *payot* attached to their *kippot*, and individuals in wheelchairs connected to IVs in shul.

“As Yom Tov began, Rabbi Peretz got up to speak. ‘Anyone who is here now surely thinks that Hashem doesn’t want them to be happy this Simchat Torah. However, the joy of Simchat Torah is not dependent on our situation or location. If anything, the joy of celebrating with the Torah can be a tremendous *zechut* and can help one experience salvation in supernatural ways.’

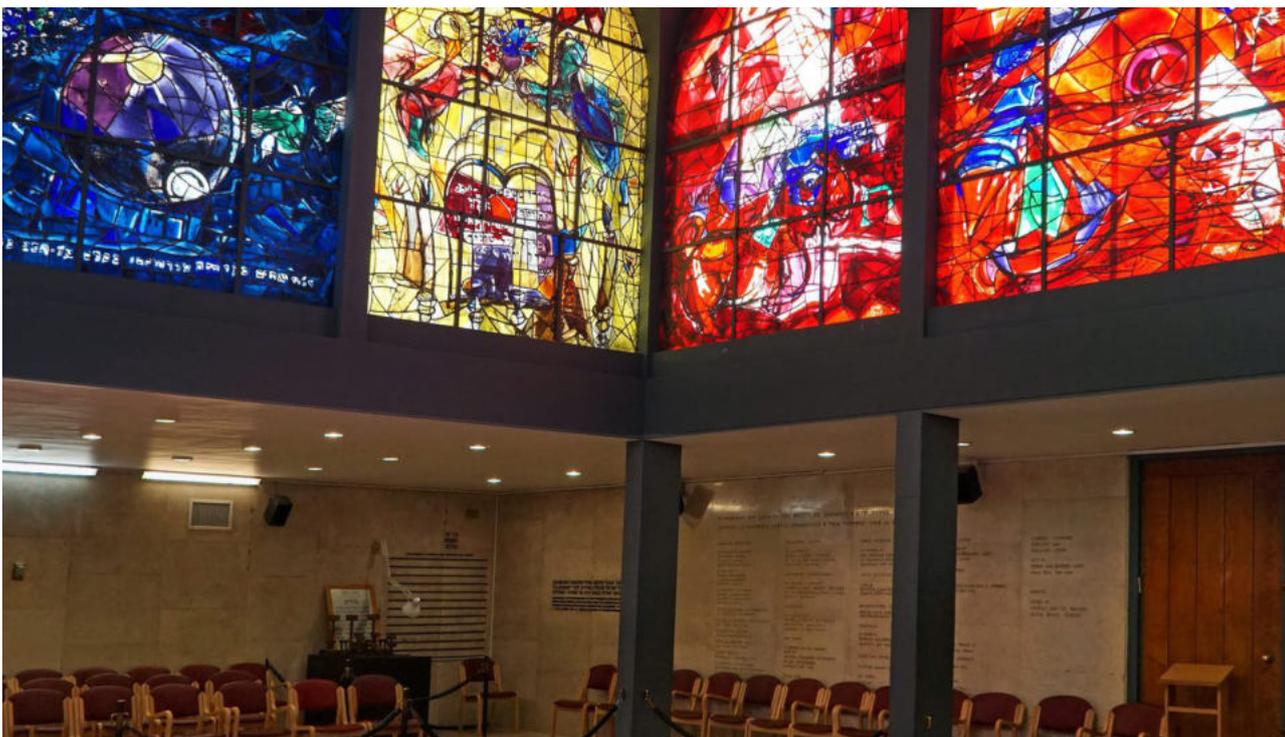
“There is no way to describe how incredible the *hakafot* were. The Gemara writes that the *Shechina* is found above the head of a sick person (Shabbat 12b), and one had a palpable

feeling of the *Shechina* being in that shul. People with tremendous physical and mental pain danced with the Torah with unbelievable passion – some with smiles and some with tears. There wasn’t a heart that remained unmoved from such an incredible display of *emunah*.”

May we be able to experience such joy on Yom Tov, in less challenging circumstances.

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Yedidya Meir was born in the Old City of Jerusalem. His media career began at a young age, and he served in the IDF for the army’s *Bamachane* magazine. He writes a weekly column for *BaSheva* and hosts a radio show on *Kol Chai*.



The Abbell Synagogue at the Hadassah University Medical Center. Twelve unique windows for it were created by Jewish painter Mark Chagall.