

## From My Desk 2025-03 A day Worth Looking Into

It's probably safe to say that many Jews would identify the number 18 as a "lucky" number, since its most common representation in Hebrew letters is chet and yud. (Chet stands for 8 and yud stands for 10). Placed together, those letters spell the word, chai, which means, life. Jewish tradition considers the entire month of Adar (this year coinciding perfectly with March) to be a very auspicious month. So, let's consider the 18th day of this auspicious month as a day worth looking into.

We find 2 fascinating incidents occurring on this day, both rather recent in Jewish history.

First, just as Purim (celebrated on the 14th of Adar) represents the day remembered for the death of the villain Haman, and the subsequent redemption of our people from his plans for our genocide 2,400 years ago, a similar redemption took place on the 18th of Adar (March 5th, that year), 1953. The ruthless Soviet dictator, Josef Stalin, died that day, just as the "Doctors' Plot" trial was set to begin. Stalin had accused many leading Russian physicians of attempting to poison the country's political and military leaders. With an expected "victory" in court, Stalin would have banished them to Siberia, where they would have died from the extreme conditions. Most of these physicians were Jews. Miraculously, immediately upon Stalin's death, the kangaroo court proceedings were canceled, and the physicians saved. The Soviet leaders later admitted that Stalin had fabricated the charges.

The second incident took place a few years earlier, in the sunny state of Georgia (United States). David Emmanuel, upon the resignation of James Jackson, was sworn in as Governor, on the 18th of Adar, 1801. He became the first Jewish governor of an American state. In December, 1812, the Georgia Senate created Emmanuel County, named in his honor.

These news tidbits are a welcome respite from the ongoing strains that have saddened us for these last 16 months. The news, peppered almost daily with reports of IDF soldiers wounded or killed, or of other tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people since Simchat Torah of 5783 (2023), has had its deleterious effects. Recently, Michael Oren, distinguished Israeli ambassador to the United States, characterized Israelis as exhausted and traumatized by the Gaza war. We, Jews, in America, suffer from the same mental fatigue, though by no means as severe as our Israeli family. Our main hope is to keep in mind that the Jewish people will emerge victorious, but, by no means unscarred, from this trial. As I write this column, Hamas barbarians have said they will release no more hostages, since, they claim, Israel has broken the ceasefire in

multiple ways (a complete Stalinistic-style fabrication). The month of Adar reminds us that many enemies have tried to humiliate us, threaten us, and annihilate us. They failed. And, our people achieved greatness despite overwhelming odds.

Let us hope and pray that this Adar, we will see the victory of the Israel Defence Forces, the defeat of Jihadism, and the rise of worldwide Jewry to unprecedented levels of success. And, who knows, maybe we can add more wonderful stories to the 18th of Adar this year, and for many more to come.

Happy Purim from my home to yours.

Rabbi Seth Sternstein