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Dear Friends,

I have been struggling to find the words to express two seemingly opposite things since the election. I share a fear with my liberal tribe about an extremism that has gained increased legitimacy in our politics. Simultaneously, I carry with me that profound Shaharit experience of realizing, again and again, that the decency that sits at the heart of our politics of relationships is not owned by the liberal tribe. So I turned to Dr. Yaffa Giesser, who runs Shaharit's program for the religious Zionist community. She is a true partner who lives in a different tribe, the tribe that for many is at the heart of this seeming lurch to the far-right.

As I shared with Yaffa, the optics of the incoming government scare me. More than any other image – more than the plans to restrict the power of the courts, more than the attacks on the LGBT+ community and others – I am repulsed that the soon-to-be Minister for Public Security proudly displayed a picture of Baruch Goldstein, who murdered 29 Moslems while praying in the Cave of Machpela mosque in Hebron, on the wall of his living room.

This is what I heard from her:

1. Words matter. Although various members of the incoming government have tried to temper the rhetoric, the experience of many Israelis since the election, including many who voted

for this government, is that of being threatened. Some feel that their values are under attack. Others, especially Israeli Arabs, feel that their own personal safety is being challenged. No one should feel threatened, and elected officials should never contribute to such an atmosphere.

2. It remains to be seen what the new government will actually do. Bezalel Smotrich, head of the Religious Zionist party, who as Transportation Minister in a previous Netanyahu government ran his ministry professionally, taking care of all needs. We shall see what this iteration brings. While the liberal camp lost the election, that does not mean that liberal values will be abandoned en masse.
3. And it is a fundamental political mistake to assume that the worst versions of this government are seamless representations of their voter's values. Many in the liberal camp have expressed disbelief that any decent person could have voted for them. But politics is tribal. And when tribal identity is seen as threatened, people retreat to their own camps.

Yaffa and I have different perspectives on our political reality, but we share a deep commitment to a politics of decency that puts relationships before ideological purity. We each see things that the other doesn't; and miss things that the other doesn't miss. Together we form a fuller picture. Our future needs to be built on engagement, not conversion. That is the only way to build a center that can hold. Fighting culture wars will only exacerbate the widening divide. It has been said the center is the stabilizing core of a democracy. When it doesn't hold, we spin apart.

Shaharit's blessing is to have read the map early on, and today to be partnered with an extraordinary group of leaders from each and every tribe who are committed to constructing a center that can hold. Some can be found in the liberal camp, and some can be found in every tribe across Israeli society, if one is willing to engage. There is real darkness out there, always. But it is a categorical mistake to have the darkness turn us blind to how much light there is. Just last week our partner Roei Gabay, 37 years old, was elected mayor of the town of Yavne, a town that

voted overwhelmingly for parties in the emerging national coalition. He built a local coalition that crossed the ideological barriers among all those committed to a future that works for all.

A.D. Gordon, the great Zionist thinker, once said: There will never be a victory of the light over the darkness until we learn this simple truth – instead of battling against the darkness, we need to spread the light. Thank you for joining us in spreading the light and building a center across the tribal borders of Israeli society.

And from all of us at Shaharit, Happy Festival of Lights!

With Respect and Gratitude,  
Eilon

## Shaharit in 2022

### January

Fifty academics and activists gathered to discuss the **tension** between liberal and conservative views on the role of the family as part of the Shaharit-Van Leer forum on new political thought.



Shaharit moved to a **new** office! We can now be found at 13 Carlebach. This upgrade gave us the space to better accommodate our staff and facilitate meetings and events.

### February



As part of our Tikshoret  
program senior Israeli

## March

program, senior Israeli journalists from across the political and cultural spectrum of Israeli society traveled to **Morocco**. Through meetings with government officials, media, and members of civil society, they compared how Morocco and Israel have grappled with questions of liberalism and conservatism, western versus eastern influence, and Jewish-Arab relations.



## April

The graduates of our 120 program, dedicated to political dialogue across Israel's different identities, met with Director General of the Ministry of Justice **Eran Davidi** to discuss deep diversity in government administration.



The Religious Zionist program traveled to **New York** in order to expand their horizons and



expand their horizons and understanding of Judaism outside of Israel. They met with congregations from across the religious spectrum and returned with a new perspective on American Jewry.



May

Our very own Nazier Magally **published** his book "The Responsibility of the Minority." He not only holds the Jewish majority accountable for its treatment of minorities, but also calls for the Arab minority to take responsibility for the future of the State.



June

As part of a two-day seminar, our Out-of-the-Box Peace initiative traveled to **Gush Etzion** to meet with Palestinian and Jewish settlers working with Shorashim—an NGO in our ecosystem.

July

Our community organizers along with their partners on the ground worked with women in Rahat to create an **all-female market**, by women for women. For many, it was the first time they had ever earned an income themselves.

In the Krayot, our team worked to renovate and rehabilitate a

## August

previously abandoned **community center**. This center now serves as a meeting place for both older and younger Ethiopian generation—strengthening the communal connections between the two.

## September

Malki Rotner, our Haredi program director, launched a series of **podcasts** delving into Haredi life and thought. In each podcast, she sits in conversation with another member of the Haredi community. They have discussed their community's attitude towards nationalism and the State of Israel as well as the concept of authority in Haredi communities.



לכונתה

## October

As part of a whirlwind trip to the United States, Shaharit's head Eilon Schwartz presented to the Seattle Jewish community, at an event sponsored by the Samis foundation. He explained the importance of **common good** politics in the lead-up to the Israeli elections.





## November

Roei Gabay, a Shaharit partner, was elected **mayor** of Yavne. We are confident that he will bring many of Shaharit's visions to reality and promote a society shaped around the common good.

## December

Our third Arab Leadership program cohort was recruited from an unprecedented number of candidates. Their opening seminar explored how thier Arab, Palestinian, and Israeli **identities** offer a new model for leadership.



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