

New Israeli President Faces Daunting Task

In 1816, a group of students of the Vilna Gaon, Rabbi Elijah ben Shlomo Zalman Kremer, led by Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Shklov, moved to Jerusalem and revived the Ashkenazi community there. In 1840, the community invited Rabbi Moshe Rivlin to serve as its rabbi.

This group of immigrants played a key role in establishing an important Jewish center in Jerusalem's Old City, as well as in founding Jewish neighborhoods outside the Old City's walls. The Vilna Gaon's students made the eternal city their home and put our hold on it as Israel's capital for generations to come.

It is very symbolic that, two centuries later, a descendant of this group of immigrants was elected as the independent State of Israel's 10th president and will live in the presidential residence in a complete and united Jerusalem. A Rivlin family member becoming president represents the fulfillment of an age-old dream.

The election of Reuven Rivlin as president marked the end of a shameful and painful chapter in Israel's politics. Never before in Israeli history had there been such an embarrassing and ugly presidential campaign. Now that a president has been elected, the events of the past two weeks should be thrown into the recycling bin of history and forgotten. There is no doubt that the best candidate won. The people of Israel now stand behind Rivlin, viewing him as the country's No. 1 citizen.

Rivlin faces a daunting task. He must restore honor to the institution of the presidency, which took grave blows recently. Rivlin will have to lead Israeli society, which has

innumerable divisions, wisely and prudently. Jews and Arabs, the religious and the secular, leftists and rightists, all of these groups are supposed to look up to the president as a representative of what we all share, the right to live in peace, security and equality in a Jewish and democratic nation. The president must manifest all of the wonderful things that are happening in Israel. The country has many great accomplishments, and it is the president's job to highlight this.

Rivlin's political views have been known since the time he joined the Herut movement. He never hid his fairness and faithfulness. In Rivlin's new role, he will have to avoid turning the president's residence into a venue for independent policy management, unlike his predecessor.

Today, Israeli society is undergoing a vital process of reshaping itself. It is thus important that the president be a completely clean individual who can restore the status and relevancy of the presidency. The president must be able to hold a mirror up to Israeli society and watch as it morally elevates itself.

The unity of the nation is the president's responsibility. There is no doubt that Rivlin will be able to meet this obligation. He knows how to talk to all people eye-to-eye, respect everyone regardless of their opinions and exude the Beitar spirit of togetherness. Spirit is a trait of a leader.

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