



# אלהי מעוזי Maoz Israel

Founded by Ari & Shira Sorko-Ram

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R E P O R T

## Israel: The State Of Affairs

by Shira Sorko-Ram

The headlines screamed, “President Katsav to be charged with rape.” The nation went into shock. Rumors, leaks and counter charges streaked back and forth across the nation. It began with the accusations of one woman, then another and another. But when Israel’s Attorney General Menahem Mazuz wrote a letter to the president stating that, pending the outcome of a hearing, he planned to indict him on charges of sexual crimes against four women, including one case of rape, faith in Israel’s institutions and politicians hit rock bottom.

The lurid details in the Hebrew press headlines blazed with titles like “Katsav told me, ‘I want to have sex with you.’” The nation was sick to the core. The reporters began

to guess how many years he would spend in jail – the maximum sentence for rape is 16 years.

The president of Israel has no real political power; his position is symbolic. But he is looked upon as the respected and esteemed representative of all that is good and great in the State of Israel. The honor and love that Israelis extended to this living symbol gave moral strength to a nation under siege and accused of being a pariah and the source of all trouble to the Arab world. We were proud of Moshe Katsav because he represented the goodness in human beings – in Israeli human beings. So we thought.

Our citizens read on: The president was being charged with rape and committing an indecent act without the consent of victim “A,” who worked in the Ministry of Tourism from 1998 to 1999 during Katsav’s tenure there. Another woman who worked in the president’s residence from 2003 to 2004 accused him of committing an indecent act without consent and sexual harassment by exploiting his authority in employment.

The third and fourth cases involved two other women with



similar charges. The police recommended charges concerning a fifth woman, but Mazuz accepted only four of the cases. What persuaded the attorney-general to pursue the charges, he said, was the fact that the first two women, without knowing each other, described sexual attacks from Katsav when their backs were turned, along with other similarities. In all, ten women have lodged complaints of crimes allegedly perpetrated by Katsav ranging from sexual harassment to rape.

As the evidence began to pile up, President Katsav's office countered that one of the accusers was a prostitute. "However, the woman permitted the detectives to examine her bank accounts to prove she did not receive money for sexual services and allowed them to interview all the men whom she had dated. She gave the names of all her employers and her previous addresses. The detectives thoroughly checked the information, but could find nothing to undermine her credibility. A police lie detector test confirmed that she had told the truth." (Haaretz, 26 Jan 07) She is now suing the president's aid for slander.

## THE KNESSET REACTS

Within hours of the announcement of intentions to indict, members of the Knesset from left to right - except the Orthodox - called on the president to resign. MK Ran Cohen, whose leftist Meretz Party led the charge against Katsav, demanded, "He must resign immediately, now that he has humiliated the institution of the presidency." (Ibid.)

Editors, correspondents and anchorpersons from almost every sector of mainstream media demanded his resignation. Jerusalem Post editors wrote, "It is truly a dismal day when we learn that the president of our country, the man who is supposed to embody the best in our nation and, it goes without saying, to be an exemplar of good citi-

zenship and of the rule of law, is to be indicted for numerous serious crimes... We hope that Katsav will see that he has an opportunity, by resigning now, to salvage some small measure of respect by his willingness to do what is clearly in the nation's best interest." (24Jan07)

## THE PRESIDENT FIGHTS FOR HIS HONOR

Instead, an astonished nation witnessed a televised tirade where the president lashed out against the police, the attorney general and especially the media, accusing them of banding together to destroy him. He charged that because he was from a Sephardic Jewish background, (Katsav was born in Iran and his parents moved to Israel when he was one-year old) he was being persecuted by the Ashkenazi (European) Jews who generally hold the higher offices in Israel.

In fact, Sephardic Jews often have deep feelings of being treated as second-class citizens. Not having had the educational opportunities that European Jews did who immigrated to Israel, many Sephardic Jews felt that the nation whisked them away to poor villages and oppressed neighborhoods when they immigrated to Israel, leaving them to fend for themselves.

Katsav's feeling of being a victim, of being despised by the "elitist" class of Israelis in the media and in power, erupted with great anger in the president's speech. His enraged performance in the presidential residence, which was also his final performance in that place, portrayed him as the eternal victim - the outsider from the transit camp. All the feelings of deprivation burst forth from him as he broadcast his speech from the president's residence.

Katsav, said a close aid, never imagined that such a serious indictment would be filed against him. Right up to the last moment, he believed that he had



PRESIDENT MOSHE KATSAV  
AND WIFE GILA

convinced the police investigators of his innocence with the evidence he presented to them. Suddenly he realized the entire country had been told that its president is a habitual and dangerous sex offender. (Ibid.)

Instead of resigning, as much of the nation hoped, Katsav said he would take a leave of absence for three months, which meant he could keep his salary and residency.

As could be anticipated, many Israelis from the poorer Sephardic neighborhoods identify with his feelings of persecution and still believe that Katsav is completely innocent - that he has been framed by the Ashkenazi elitist establishment.

### THE MEDIA REACTS IN DISBELIEF

The media has reacted to the tirade with great anger. Said well-known journalist Anshel Pfeffer, "Katsav tried to put the police, the State Attorney's Office, the members of the Knesset, civil rights campaigners and, above all, 'the hostile media' in the dock instead of himself...Katsav and his spin doctors prepared the speech with the clear intention of playing to the deep hostility felt by large parts of the public to the media..." (JP,26Jan07)

Jerusalem Post editors responded, "The principal function of the president - beyond representing a paragon of citizenship and legal rectitude - is to unite our divided society; Jews and Arabs, rich and poor, religious and secular, and Ashkenazi and Sephardi.

"Now Katsav has taken a giant wedge and hammered it home into a wound that, if not healed, was healing. Now also, millions of Israelis who believe that our system is rigged against them have encouragement from the highest source. What happened to me could happen to anybody,

Katsav said." (Ibid.)

### KATSAV BELIEVES HE HAS DONE NOTHING WRONG

No doubt Katsav is genuinely convinced that his actions are the norm among politicians and people in high places; he is certain that he is being persecuted simply because of his ethnic background. Just before he decided to run for president, he once told a close friend that he would not run for president "because the nation was not ready to accept a man like me as a candidate."

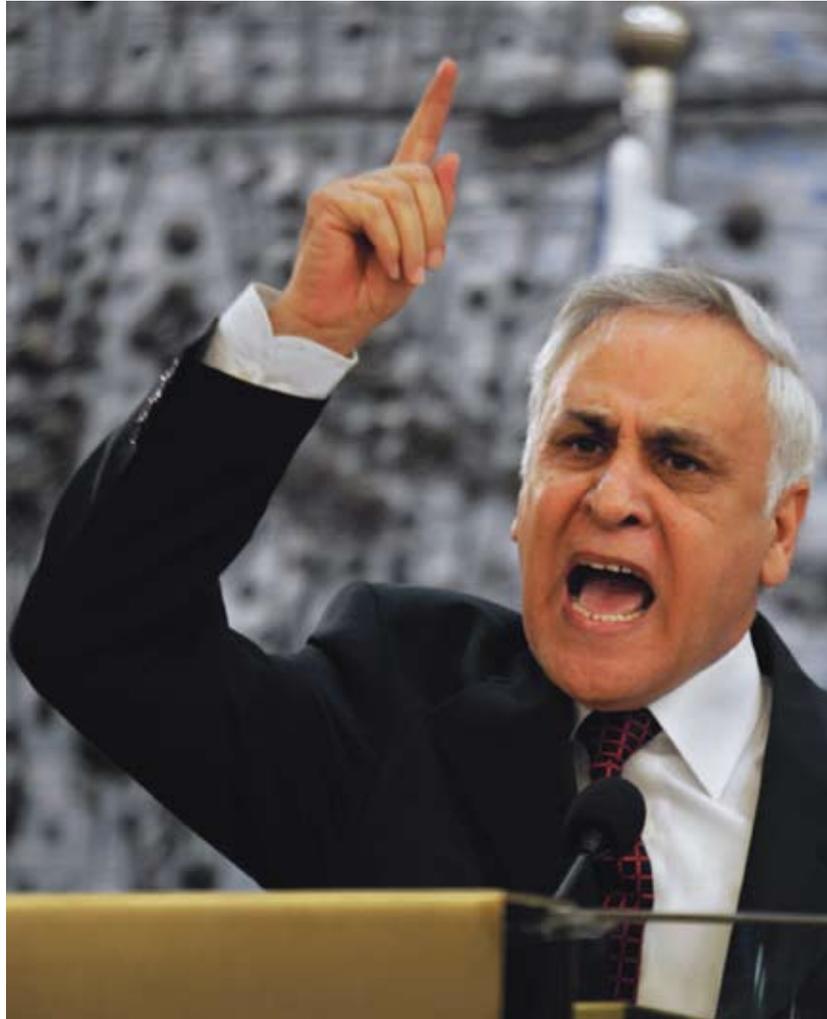
Even six years as president did not succeed in erasing that searing humiliation that he felt after his election. "At every opportunity, he condemned the power groups that, in his estimation, regarded him with disdain and mocked him. In his speech in the beautiful president's residence, he took aim at everyone, one after the other, in front of the nation. Never before has there been a mass attack of this kind in Israel, and a home-grown one to boot." (Haaretz, 26Jan07)

Today, both politicians and the media are admitting that they knew about his sexual dalliances long before

he became president. But because, at that time, none of the women were willing to speak about the harassment publicly, the journalists did not pursue the stories.

### IMPEACHMENT PROCEEDINGS BEGIN

Even as I write, for the first time in the Knesset's history, the Knesset house committee has begun impeachment proceedings of a sitting president. If 19 of the 25 commit-



**"During those moments, the face of the president was as enraged as a wounded animal that has just been trapped by a bloodthirsty hunter."**

*Journalist Daniel Ben Simon* (Haaretz,26Jan07)

tee members of Knesset approve the impeachment, it will go before the Knesset plenum, where 90 of 120 MKs must approve the motion. That number is so high, that there is little chance of it passing, since most likely the Orthodox will be voting against the impeachment proceedings. It is ironic that there is so much alleged unchecked corruption within Orthodox political circles that they, more than other parties, fear precedents that investigate and punish crime and corruption.

The proceedings could take anywhere from five to eight weeks. Katsav's lawyers have described the Knesset hearing as "an outrageous kangaroo court procedure that may infringe on the president's essential rights as president and as a citizen." Since the attorney-general has not actually indicted the president, the lawyers claim the Knesset would be holding a "mock trial." (JP, 14Feb07)

MK Ran Cohen, also a Sephardic Jew born in Iraq, said, "This man must not be permitted to serve in his position another moment. My blood boils in the face of the acts attributed to him. If he does not resign, the Knesset must move to fire him, and if we do not succeed, we must badger him until he resigns. Katsav can clear his besmirched name only in court. In his public appearance last week, the president took the stance that the best defense is a good offense, and slandered the most important foundations of the nation's democracy." (Haaretz, 29Jan07)

Shimon Peres, the most well-known Israeli statesman alive - except for Benjamin Netanyahu - who aspires to be

the next president, has recently revealed that he knew of Katsav's sexual adventures as far back as the year 2000. If that is true, one possible reason that Peres did not make it public, is because he thought that in the year 2000, he himself would be a shoo-in in the election for president. It was a shock to almost everyone that the Sephardic politician, Moshe Katsav, was elected by the Knesset instead of Shimon Peres. Immediately after the election results were known, the MK's from the major parties looked like condemned men standing before the firing squad. Colleagues from the left and right froze, becoming as white as chalk. Katsav never forgot it.

The people of Israel, who sat at home and watched the president attack his enemies - the very government he represented - knew that they were watching the death throes of the symbol of the kingdom. He thrashed and harangued nearly every democratic institution in the country. Shortly after, in a highly unusual move, one of his principal lawyers, Professor David Libai distanced himself from the speech and resigned from the Katsav defense team. Libai, regarded as a moral force in Israel, gave no explanation.

## SCANDALS HERE, THERE, EVERYWHERE

If only the Katsav calamity were a lone tragic scandal in high places. But alas, last month a panel of three Tel Aviv Magistrate's Court judges ruled unanimously and unequivocally that former Justice Minister Haim Ramon (he resigned



FORMER MINISTER OF JUSTICE WAS CONVICTED OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT AGAINST A WOMAN SOLDIER, ONE OF SEVERAL SCANDALS THAT HAVE CAST SHADOWS ON ISRAELI LEADERS

due to accusations against him) was guilty as charged of committing an indecent act by forcibly kissing a 20-year-old soldier without her consent. Maximum jail sentence, yet to be decided, is three years. The girl, having just completed her army service, asked if she could have her picture taken with the Justice Minister. However, after a fellow-soldier took the picture, he left the room and Ramon grabbed the girl, held her tight, brought her face close to his, grabbed her cheeks with one hand, kissed her and inserted his tongue in her mouth - all of this, without the girl's consent.

Anshel Pfeffer notes that there is a "newfound intolerance among the public for corruption and crimes committed by public figures." Investigations have recently been launched against Prime Minister Ehud Olmert concerning his involvement in the sale of a bank. Then there is an earth-shattering investigation for crimes committed by the highest ranking officials in, of all places, the Tax Authority, which dominated the news for days.

And this is not to mention the Winograd Committee, investigating last summer's war in Lebanon. The public, deeply distressed over the poor performance of the military in the war with Hizbullah in Lebanon last summer, demanded an investigation into its execution by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Minister of Defense Amir Peretz and Chief of General Staff Lt.-General Dan Halutz. Halutz has already resigned as a result of pressure both from public outrage and lack of support from his own military staff. He admitted to making mistakes by depending too much on the air force and not calling in reserves at the beginning of the war.

The national outcry is still strong against Olmert and Peretz, both of whom it is said knew nothing about conducting a war. All three of the main players fear for their heads when the findings of the Winograd Committee are released in a few days.

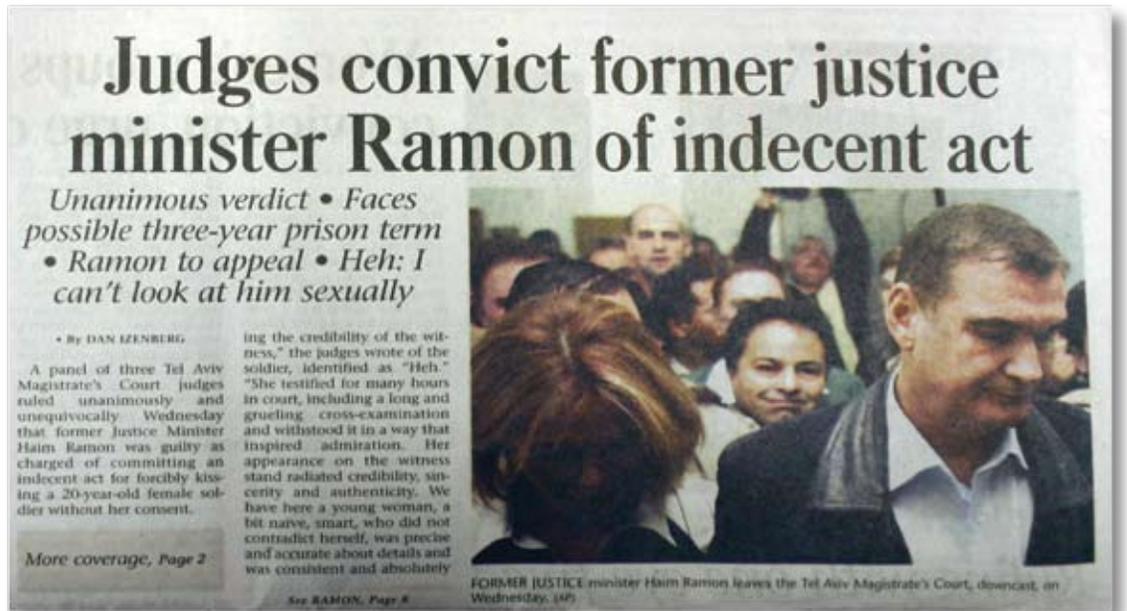
As we go to press, another political earthquake has hit the country. The Zeiler Commission investigating the police's relationships with known criminals, delivered a scathing condemnation of police management and procedures, and recommended the ousting of Israel's police commissioner and other top officials.

Within hours the commissioner resigned and a new one appointed. Believe it or not, the new one has a question-

able history – he was indicted on charges of bribery, fraud, breach of trust and abuse of his position. Though the Supreme Court acquitted him due to reasonable doubts, it nevertheless sharply criticized his conduct.

Noted journalist Amotz Asa-el, "Until now, Israel has been led by three generations. First came the founding fathers, some of whom were visionaries on the scale of David Ben-Gurion and Menachem Begin, all of whom were modest...

"Then came the generals, most of whom were narrow-minded and some of whom were corrupt, but none of whom could



be accused of not having done something for this country.

"Then came the horse thieves." To them, Asa-el said, the Zionist dreamers were romantic idiots who thought that power was a means, and not an end. (JP, 9Feb07)

We, who are believers and understand the prophets' warnings of Israel's future as long as she trusts in the arm of the flesh, can only mourn for the moral turpitude that permeates nearly all spheres of government and places of power. Her leaders have dismayed her and failed her. Israel has not found a savior to protect her from Hamas, from Hizbullah, from Islamic Jihad, from Iran, nor from herself.

It is tragic but it is a reality: Only as our nation falls deeper and deeper into the abyss, will a desperate mankind seek the true and living God. But as that happens, the number of changed and purified Israelis through Yeshua will grow by leaps and bounds. All those true searchers must have a real opportunity to find their Messiah.

And we, the Messianic congregations of Israel, will be the safe places, the dwelling place of His glory and a place of hope for the hopeless – for those who will, at last, come home to their God and their King - the King of the Jews. That is why Congregation Tiferet Yeshua exists and will continue to advance against all obstacles. Because the battle for the souls of Israel is worth it! ■

Maoz makes it possible for Congregation Tiferet Yeshua to rent a hall in downtown Tel Aviv, one of the most expensive real estate areas in the world.

Maoz also supports other congregations in Israel.



Maoz' [istandwithisrael.com](http://istandwithisrael.com)  
distributed over \$500,000  
last year to the poor and  
needy and war victims  
among the Jewish and Arab  
Israeli believers,  
including those persecuted  
for their faith.

Maoz enables new immigrant believers to learn the Hebrew language well enough to make a living wage.

Maoz gives young Israeli believers who are the future of the Messianic community the opportunity to get a college education.

Maoz is partnering with others to underwrite an Israeli agriculture expert who is heading up a project to teach modern agriculture to Christians in Burkina Faso, Africa. This enterprise is blessing Burkinabe Christians who love the God of Israel and the people of Israel.

Maoz has been a pioneer in the Messianic Jewish movement in Israel for 30 years.

Maoz exists  
to be a witness  
of the Good News  
to the people  
of Israel  
in evangelism,  
discipleship  
and raising up  
godly Israeli leaders  
until the day when  
“All Israel shall be saved.”



It is vital that our Congregation (Kehilat) Tiferet Yeshua knows the joys and blessing of investing into the Kingdom of God. We decided to send children in Burkina Faso to school that had no other opportunity to do so. So we took on a special project under the auspicious of Pastor Ram Zango who has founded a number of schools. Our congregation sent an offering that will make it possible for 40 Burkinabe children to attend school for an entire year. They quickly posted some pictures back for our congregation to see. They didn't quite know how to spell the name of our congregation, but we don't expect them to learn Hebrew anyway!



**Want to know how to effectively pray for Israel? Request our weekly prayer letter via e-mail. Please e-mail us at [maozisrael@maozisrael.org](mailto:maozisrael@maozisrael.org)**