



## Rome Honors Shalit

During the five-year captivity of Israeli soldier **Gilad Shalit** in Gaza, the people of Rome were particularly supportive, bestowing upon him honorary citizenship. In 2010, on the fourth anniversary of his capture, the Municipality of Rome turned off the lights of the Coliseum. After Gilad's safe return last October, Rome Mayor **Gianni Alemanno** led a delegation to his home in Mizpe Hila in northern Israel. Accompanied by the leader of Italy's Jewish community, **Ricardo Pacipici**, Alemanno awarded Gilad with a bronze reproduction of the Capitoline Wolf, an ancient sculpture which stands in Rome's City Hall.

"The Wolf is the symbol of Rome," Alemanno told Shalit. "I hereby present it to you as an honorary citizen. Now and forever, Rome will be your home."

Gilad also received pictures and messages written by the children of the Roman Jewish community. Finally, the mayor invited Gilad to spend time in Rome to aid in his recovery—all expenses paid. ■

## Dreidels Break World Record

The Hanukkah season is the traditional time for spinning the *dreidel* or top. So there was no better time for breaking the Guinness Book world record for the number of simultaneously spinning tops, 377, established the previous year (2010) in Hong Kong. The new record of 483 was set in Caesarea, Israel using a table 100 meters (328 feet) long. Families from all over the country participated in the record-breaking event.

The game that is played using the dreidel is a form of gambling. It has been popular since the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Europe, but some claim that it goes back to the time of the original Hanukkah story in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, when Torah study was forbidden by the invading Greek ruler Antiochus. Jews would gather in hidden places such as caves to study and if Greek soldiers approached, they would hide their scrolls and spin tops as if they were gambling.

The dreidel itself, which stems from the later date, had four sides with Latin letters representing words in Yiddish—N=*nisch* (nothing), G=*ganz* (all), H=*halb* (half) and Sh=*shtet* (where the player puts into the pot). The players usually placed sweets in a pile and then each in turn spun the dreidel. The letter that came up represented the required action: N-nothing; G-takes all; H-takes half; and Sh-puts in, usually two pieces.

In later times the Latin letters were replaced with Hebrew ones representing four words: *Ness Gadol Haya Sham*, meaning "a great miracle happened there."

A large selection of dreidels is available at: [www.draydelhouse.com](http://www.draydelhouse.com) ■



## Storehouse of History

In 1949, Israel's first Prime Minister **David Ben-Gurion** threatened to withdraw from the United Nations if Jerusalem was made into an international city. "Israel must not agree to any form of foreign domination over Jewish Jerusalem or with the exclusion of Jerusalem from the state," Ben-Gurion said in a telegram to then Foreign Minister **Moshe Sharett**. "If Israel has to choose between Jerusalem and UN membership, we will choose to resign from the UN."

The telegram was disclosed by **Yakov Lazokiv**, the new head of the Israel State Archives. The national archives include 24 miles (40 km) of shelf space and documents dating back to the late Ottoman Period (1838-1918) and the British Mandate (1918-1948).

Historical documents include the Declaration of Independence, rare stamps and maps, the 1970 "Law of Return," the Egyptian and Jordanian peace treaties, and the court records of



the 1961-62 trial of Adolf Eichmann, the mastermind of the Nazi Final Solution.

Another key document is from June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1967, the first day of the Six Day War, when then Knesset (parliament) minority leader **Menachem Begin** demanded that Prime Minister **Levi Eshkol** launch an assault on Jerusalem's Old City to stop a rain of shells on Israel by Jordanian forces. "Today we have an unparalleled opportunity to use our military might to redeem the Old City," Begin said. And the rest is history. ■

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