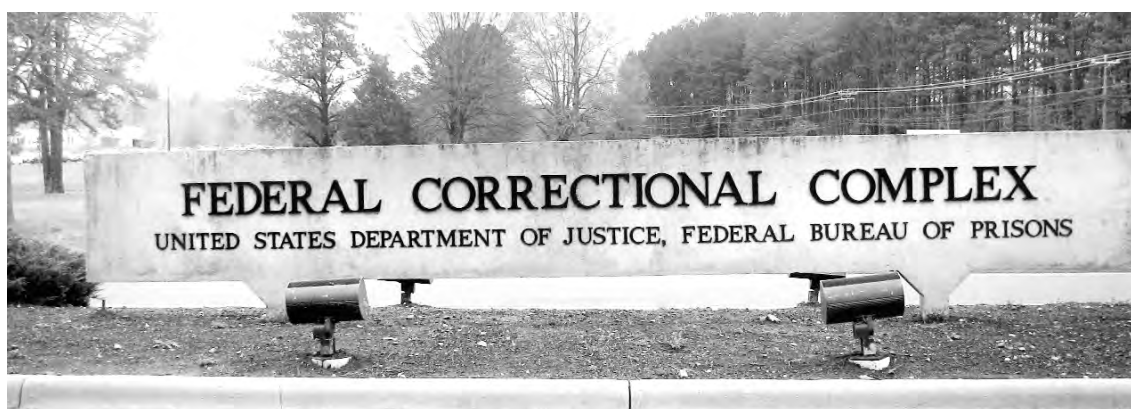


## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

“L'shanah haba'ah bi'Yerushalayim. — Jonathan Pollard



## 25 YEARS AND STILL COUNTING

Freedom Through Another's Eyes:  
Sweeping Pollard Under the Rug

BY RUTH LICHTENSTEIN

When Judge Reade announced that she was sentencing Sholom Rubashkin to “25-plus years” in prison, American Jews turned pale and began to tremble... and sprang into (more) action. Good Yidden would not let a fellow Yid simply rot in prison for decades!

It's beautiful, isn't it? The save-Rubashkin *achdus* shown now by Yidden the world over is gratifying — and appropriate.

But what about another Yid who has ALREADY been rotting in prison for “25-plus years” — what about him?

Another Yid has ALREADY served Rubashkin's sentence and has to start all over again, because if the U.S. government has its way, *Jonathan Pollard will die in prison, chas v'shalom.*

Can we look ourselves in the eye if we forget him just because too much time has passed and we have a short attention span? Can we face ourselves, can we face G-d, if we don't come to Pollard's aid?

Rubashkin worked for the survival of *shechitah* and *kashrus* — and is paying a high price. Pollard worked for the survival and safety of Eretz Yisrael — and is *giving up his entire life.*

It's quite obvious — and yet, when you mention the name Jonathan Pollard, you invite a host of opinions. Some are expressed with extreme conviction; others with a shrug, indicating an unwillingness to commit — but everyone has something to say about The Pollard Affair. Many declare that yes, he violated the law, and it is only right that he pay his debt to society, but it's been 25 years — more than anyone else in the history of the United States guilty of a similar crime — and enough is enough.

On the other side are those who feel that the true story has never been told, and that if it were known, all would agree that Pollard deserves to rot in jail until he breathes his last.

And then there are those, mostly young people who weren't even born when this sad chapter in our history began, who, when hearing the name Pollard, say, “Oh, sure. I've heard that name! Is he still alive? Is he still in prison? I thought all of that was over 50 years ago.”

Well, Jonathan Pollard is still alive, he is still in prison, and after all these years he still manages to elicit strong reactions.

Actually, Pollard is the ugly stain on the otherwise polished mirror reflecting the image of American Jewry. His sad saga is what ruins the beautiful reflection that American Jewry would like outsiders to see. And as much as there are those who wish that stain would somehow simply be eliminated, it will not disappear on its own.

The most popular expression connected with the Pollard affair on both sides of the ocean is, “You don't know what we know.” Every side of the debate claims that it possesses — in their minds? in their imaginations? — the very secrets that prove Pollard deserves either freedom or continued captivity.

*Actually, Pollard is the ugly stain on the otherwise polished mirror reflecting the image of American Jewry.*

“You don't know what we know” is a statement hard to accept after 25 years. If we don't know, tell us.

“You don't know what we know” enabled people in the Israeli government to cover up their handling of this case, to bury their mistakes.

“You don't know what we know” enabled irresponsible people, such as Rafi Eitan, the Israeli spymaster who recruited Jonathan Pollard to spy against the United States and ultimately turned against him, to use all kinds of clichés, shallow, empty words, to obstruct justice and shield the guilty.

Rafi Eitan has much to repent for, as does the government of Israel. Israeli officials have absolutely no excuse for their abandonment of Pollard. They know what they must do to bring him to freedom, yet they have never done it for their own selfish reasons. It is easier for them to point a finger at the American Jewish community. Thus, Pollard has fallen between the cracks.

Finally, “You don't know what we know” has enabled American Jews to continue sleeping peacefully, year in, year out, because after all, what can they do if they

don't know?

In America, since it continues to be a volatile topic that no one wants to deal with, people continue to sweep it under the rug. But *davka* now, as we prove our *achdus* and labor tirelessly for Sholom Rubashkin's freedom, keeping the issue of Jonathan Pollard under the rug can no longer be an option.

Two years ago when I visited Pollard in federal prison, it occurred to me that it is only when sitting with someone who has been imprisoned for 25 years that one can understand the full meaning of the concept of freedom. Only then can one appreciate the ability to make choices that most of us take for granted: to dress as we wish, to take a walk when the fancy strikes us, to select our own food and drinks, to choose a book that interests us, to

decide when to go to sleep and when to get up, when to be active and when to remain idle, to make a decision and then implement it, to buy a can of soda or not, to enter... and to exit. All of these are freedoms that you and I take for granted and enjoy.

Two hours of conversation passed. The guard approached and told us that our time was up.

As I was about to leave, Pollard wished me, “*L'shanah haba'ah bi'Yerushalayim.*”

“Maybe still this year?” I suggested. Pollard's answering smile was grim.

The sky of North Carolina was very blue. The grounds surrounding the federal prison were green and beautifully tended, the parking lot a beehive of arriving and departing cars. My cellular telephone sprang instantly back to life. But behind the gates that had been firmly closed and locked remained a Jew who has been cut off from the world for 25 years, and with him remain many questions that nobody is ready to answer.

Can we look ourselves in the mirror, and hold our heads high? What are we going to do, *l'maaseh*, to help Jonathan Pollard get out of prison?