

THE JERUSALEM CIVILIAN COMMAND CENTER

Exploring the chaos and the energy of the Jerusalem “Chamal”



One of the most-used words of this challenging period of time in Israel is the word “chamal” (חמ"ל in Hebrew). “Chamal” is an acronym for “cheder milchamah” or “war room”. It refers to a command center, or “situation room” in which people are mobilized for the war effort. Apart from the military command centers that are operating around the clock, there is also an incredible proliferation of civilian command centers, staffed entirely by volunteers to meet the needs of the Home Front. The “chamal” in Jerusalem is one of these. It was opened just a few hours after the attack began on October 7th, and has taken on a critical and central role in providing for the ongoing and evolving needs of civilians and soldiers alike. Now, a few weeks later, the “chamal” is operating around the clock, run by hundreds of volunteers every day.



Source: <https://danielgordis.substack.com/p/the-jerusalem-civilian-command-center>



THE JERUSALEM CIVILIAN “CHAMAL”

Check out some information about the Jerusalem “Chamal” here: →



- ◆ At the top of the page is an interview with one of the volunteers. Before listening to it, scroll down the page, and watch the short introductory video about the ‘chamal’.
- ◆ After watching the video:
 - Briefly describe what you are seeing.
 - List all the questions that you have; big and small, logistical and conceptual.



CHAOS VERSUS SYSTEMS

Now, dive a little deeper into some of the issues.

Watch a few moments of the interview (at the top of the page) with Seri Frumkin, one of the volunteers in the Chamal. We recommend watching from 00:37-02:47.

Seri speaks about the tension that exists in the Chamal between the energy of mass mobilization that can respond very quickly to evolving requests, and the need to find systems that will manage the chaos, so that the maximum number of people can be helped.

- ◆ How do we harness the power and energy of the chaotic nature of this mass volunteering?
- ◆ What is gained and lost when things become more systematized and organized?
- ◆ What other issues or questions do you hear?

INTERNALIZATION: HARNESS THE ENERGY

- ◆ Have you ever experienced the tension between the energy of chaos on one hand, and the need to create systems, on the other?
- ◆ Have you ever been part of a large volunteer effort of any kind? (crowdsourcing, large service project, fundraising etc.,) What role did you play and what did you learn?

QUESTIONS WITHOUT ANSWERS

As you probably already saw from the questions you listed earlier, this kind of civilian effort prompts a lot of questions, including the issue of who is (or should be) responsible for these kinds of services? Who takes leadership in these moments? Where does (or should) the money come from? And many more.

Many of these questions don't have easy answers; in these situations of extreme need, things are often left unanswered, and there is a lot of confusion. We recommend that you continue to follow the evolving situation in Israel, and hold your questions and your curiosity as time goes on.

CONCLUSION

Share what you find most powerful about the efforts of the Chamal in Jerusalem (and others like it). What do you think should be our most important lesson from what you have seen?





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