

## Body believed to be Jewish Canadian finally recovered in collapsed Haiti hotel

After a month of continuous recovery work to locate the body of a missing Canadian Jewish businessman believed buried under the rubble of the Montana Hotel.



Alexandre Shmuel Bitton

Volunteers from ZAKA—the Israeli organization that collects victims' bodies for proper burial—recovered a body with the passport of the missing man. For the last month, rotating teams from ZAKA, worked at the site of the Montana Hotel together with an American recovery delegation sent to the site to retrieve the bodies of 17 Americans known to have been in the hotel at the time of its collapse.

While many bodies have been recovered at the hotel, it was not until March 4 that the body of Alexandre Shmuel Bitton, 36, was discovered. The body was transferred to the United Nations facility near the Port-au-Prince airport for positive identification.

Bitton, an information technology consultant from Montreal, was making his first trip to Haiti and had just checked into the hotel when the earthquake hit on Jan. 12. "Our mission is to make the utmost efforts – even if it is at the other end of the world – to ensure a full Jewish burial," said ZAKA Chairman Yehuda Meshi-Zahav.

## CHILE

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13 schools the organization is partnered within the country.

"Communication is very difficult: there are aftershocks daily, telephone links have yet to be fully restored and traveling there is all but impossible while the area is under military control with, in some places, an 18-hour curfew. I haven't been able to speak to anyone at the schools yet."

ORT America has opened an emergency appeal to help victims of the Chilean earthquake at [www.ortamerica.org](http://www.ortamerica.org).

Both Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews live in Chile, primarily in Santiago, and according to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), the community supports a JCC, two Jewish day schools and synagogues.

The Masorti website states that most Jews in Chile identify with its movement. It operates six congregations in Chile — four in Santiago, one in Vina del Mar, and the one in Concepcion.

Masorti has started a relief fund, which will be sent directly to the rabbis and congregations in Chile for assistance both to the Jewish and general communities. To make a donation, go to [www.masorti-world.org](http://www.masorti-world.org).

The JDC, which receives funds from the Jewish Federations of North America, also has opened a mailbox to collect money for the relief effort, and says it will work with the Chilean community to

direct the assistance. Go to [www.jdc.org/donation](http://www.jdc.org/donation).

"We are waiting," a JDC spokesman said. "In terms of Santiago, there was minimal structural damage to institutions. It is a very strong, self-sufficient community."

The American Jewish World Service, which has played a prominent role in the relief effort in Haiti, is not planning on setting up operations in Chile. AJWS is directing its supporters to [www.alertnet.org](http://www.alertnet.org) and to MercyCorps.

Unlike in Haiti, one of the world's poorest countries — the AJWS had been working there with a dozen development organizations on the ground prior to the quake — AJWS was not involved in any work in Chile, which is wealthier and much better developed.

The world also seems to have been a bit slower to react in Chile, as the South American nation has the public infrastructure to carry out much of its own rescue effort.

Israel is in contact with its ambassador in Chile, *Ynet* reported, and the government sent its condolences in a statement. Israel was among the first countries to help in Haiti.

There were no Israelis among the dead in Chile, according to the Israeli government.

"Israel stands by the Chilean government and people and wishes to send its condolences to the victims' families and offer its support to the residents at this trying time," the Israeli statement read, according to *Ynet*.

## Ask the Expert

EDITOR'S NOTE: Courtesy of MyJewishLearning.com, the Jewish Press is offering the Ask the Expert column for readers' enjoyment and the "I didn't know that" value. In the weeks to come, the column will delve into various aspects of Yiddishkeit. In the words of the famed SNL skit: Discuss among yourselves.

### Gluten-free matzot

QUESTION: I'm gluten intolerant, but I know it's a mitzvah to eat matzah on Passover. Are there any gluten-free matzot for people who can't digest gluten?

—Linda

ANSWER: Gluten is the common name for proteins found in all forms of wheat, rye, barley and triticale. These days lots of people are discovering that their bodies have trouble digesting gluten, or that they have Celiac Disease, which means that any glutinous food they eat causes damage to their small intestine.

In many ways, Passover is a wonderful week for those who observe gluten-free diets. Many foods that normally contain wheat are made with recipes that leave out the flour, thus making them gluten free. There are kosher for Passover bakeries that function without flour completely, and many people with Celiac Disease have been known to stock up on Passover pastries to freeze and eat during the rest of the year.

However, on Passover, specifically at the seders, there is a mitzvah to eat matzah, and matzah is made of flour and water, which means it is chock full of gluten. So what's a gluten-intolerant person to do?

Enter the gluten-free oat matzot! Oats are one of the five grains that can be used to make matzah, but they are generally not glutinous. (I say that they're generally not glutinous because oats often are contaminated with tiny bits of gluten, and so some people with Celiac Disease refrain from eating oats just as a precaution.)

As far as I know, only one company is producing oat matzot,

and it's based in Manchester, England. The matzot, in addition to being kosher for Passover and gluten free, are also *shmura* ("guarded" against contamination with leaven), and quite pricey (think upwards of \$25 a box, available at many kosher stores). But one box of matzah can easily last a person who doesn't like matzah (i.e., anyone with two wits about her) for the entire holiday, so many consider it a worthwhile investment.

In the interest of full disclosure, I should tell you that my sources claim oat matzah is just as taste-



less and cardboardy as regular matzah. On the upside, though, oats are good for lowering your cholesterol, and how many people can say they were lowering their cholesterol over Passover?

(For more information about Judaism and Jewish life, visit [MyJewishLearning.com](http://MyJewishLearning.com))

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