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Genuine but zany news items
in English, gleaned from
Israel's Hebrew press

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The Chelm Project:

Transforming Israel's Image - One Chuckle at a Time.

Announcing:

**THE WINNERS OF
The 3rd Annual Chelm Awards
for the Year 2011**

Mass protests over the cost of living price and housing prices? Rising anxiety over the direction of the Arab "spring"? The flood of Sudanese and other African infiltrators via Sinai seeking work in Israel? The release of Gilad Shalit? Another Nobel prize for Israel?

Those aren't all the stories that preoccupied Israelis in 2011.

The Chelm Awards – now in its 3rd year - recap the best odd news stories from Chelm-on-the-Med Online every year.



The 2011 **Chelm Award for Chutzpa** was a toss-up between two contenders: The first was the chair of the Yahud religious council who decided to set up a chicken coop in the town's cemetery, then squawked that jarred mourners were overreacting when they squealed to the press about the impropriety of the squatters' location. The chair retorted that his chicken coop, filled with twenty cackling hens, didn't break Jewish Law, but grudgingly agreed to move the birds elsewhere. The second candidate was a gang of [unidentified metal scavengers](#) whose daring reached new heights. The gang caused a power outage at kibbutz Dorot in the western Negev early one evening and took off with *three kilometers* of copper cable from the high-voltage power line leading to the kibbutz while powerless line technicians stumbled around in the dark looking for the cause of the cut.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Avigdor Lieberman walked away with the 2011 Chelm Prize for **Weirdest Behavior by an Israeli Politician**, the upshot of a unique undiplomatic leak: Collared for an impromptu live interview with an early morning current events program on Israel radio, multitasking took an embarrassing turn. Lieberman went about his business as he fielded questions on the fly, but alas, sounding off regarding 'the true face of Hamas' dovetailed with the [▶ unmistakable sound of a flushing toilet](#) broadcasted over the airwaves – turning the flushed minister's off-the-cuff comments into the talk of the town.

The Chelm Award for Innovation belongs, hands down, to 36 year-old Dror Gomel, a [music therapist](#) in civilian life who says he can "play on anything," then set out to prove it: Not about to give up his drumsticks even after being called up for active duty in the reserves, Gomel dumfounded his buddies in an Israeli infantry reserves unit by turning an IDF armored personnel carrier into a gigantic makeshift percussion instrument, composing an improvisation on the spot which the musical combat soldier dubbed the "[No More War Concerto](#)."

This year's Chelm Prize for **Cool Behavior in Adverse Situations** was a no-brainer: It goes to Tel-Aviv chef Adi Abu: After his pricy fish restaurant facing the jetty of the Tel Aviv Port was inundated by an extraordinarily powerful wave during a fierce storm that [left a 4.2 kilogram grouper in its wake](#), the astonished gourmet chef recovered first – grabbing the no-less floored grouper that was fiercely flapping like a fish out of water. The dashing cook deftly multiplied the grouper's plight while making the best of a bad situation: The hapless fish soon found itself swimming in a savory sauce of fresh tomatoes seasoned with fennel, garlic and cilantro in the middle of the demolished restaurant – the ultimate case of pot luck and pluck, seasoned with more than a dash of aplomb.

Who takes the cake for **Quirkiest Municipality in Israel** this year? The award was held by Hadera two years running (once in 2009 thanks to the city's plan to install singing traffic lights, again in 2010 after Hadera decided to build a replica of the Eiffel Tower right in the city centre to help French immigrants acclimate). This year Hadera was pushed out of the running by

the Jerusalem Municipality's demand for a third-party insurance policy for a camel. Because the owners offered rides along the Old City walls, city officials demanded that [Kojak – almost a landmark on the Jerusalem landscape](#) obtain accident insurance like any vehicle, but there was a fatal catch: No one could find an insurance company willing to issue a third-party policy to a Libyan camel who gives French kisses.

Last but not least, Chelm-on-the-Med's **Best Only-in-Israel Story** for 2011 belongs to the Israel Electric Company and kibbutz Nachal Oz: No one – including service reps at the Israel Electric Company knows why Nachal Oz is [repeatedly being sent Hamas' electric bill](#). Nevertheless, the statements for power drawn from the Israeli grid by Gazans - addressed "The Palestinian Authority – Nachal Oz" – continue to arrive by mail. Each is in the vicinity of 7 million NIS (\$750,000), not counting 71 million NIS (\$19.7 million) for previous unpaid bills, say kibbutz accountants. The village - which hugs the Gaza Strip, gets socked coming and going – not only hit with the Palestinians' bills, but also Palestinian rockets. How have the kibbutzniks responded? They laugh at the absurdity of the situation, and with typical Israeli perversely in the face of adversary, plant a new sapling in every crater caused by a mortar or rocket lobbed inside the kibbutz perimeter.



The Chelm Project is a free news network that seeks to balance overly conflict-driven news about Israel – one chuckle at a time. [Chelm-on-the-Med@the-Med Online](#) will celebrate its 3rd birthday in March 2012 – on Purim, of course.