**Yosef (Yossi) Shlomo Dagan has been** the head of the [Shomron Regional Council](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%95%D7%A2%D7%A6%D7%94_%D7%90%D7%96%D7%95%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%AA_%D7%A9%D7%95%D7%9E%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%9F) since August, [2015](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/2015).

**Background**

Yossi Dagan grew up in the Israeli towns of [Bnei Brak](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%91%D7%A0%D7%99_%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%A7) and Pardes Katz. When he was in the tenth grade, he moved with his parents and siblings to [Shavei Shomron](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%A9%D7%91%D7%99_%D7%A9%D7%95%D7%9E%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%9F). Dagan was a counselor in the [*Bnei Akiva*](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%91%D7%A0%D7%99_%D7%A2%D7%A7%D7%99%D7%91%D7%90) youth movement, and later joined the youth division of the [*Moledet*](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%95%D7%9C%D7%93%D7%AA_%28%D7%9E%D7%A4%D7%9C%D7%92%D7%94%29) party, of which he eventually became the leader. In this function, he enjoyed a close personal relationship with the party’s leader, [Rehavam Ze'evi](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%A8%D7%97%D7%91%D7%A2%D7%9D_%D7%96%D7%90%D7%91%D7%99). Dagan is a graduate of the first class of the [Darkei Noam Yeshiva](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%99%D7%A9%D7%99%D7%91%D7%AA_%D7%93%D7%A8%D7%9B%D7%99_%D7%A0%D7%95%D7%A2%D7%9D), and then continued his studies at the [Shavei Shomron Yeshiva](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%99%D7%A9%D7%99%D7%91%D7%AA_%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%9B%D7%AA_%D7%94%D7%AA%D7%95%D7%A8%D7%94_%28%D7%A9%D7%91%D7%99_%D7%A9%D7%95%D7%9E%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%9F%29) and [Yeshivat Nir](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%99%D7%A9%D7%99%D7%91%D7%AA_%D7%A0%D7%99%D7%A8_%D7%A7%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%99%D7%AA_%D7%90%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%A2) in Kiryat Arba. He served as an officer in the Israel Defense Forces, where he holds the rank of captain in the reserve forces. He has a bachelor’s degree in law from the [Ono Academic College](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%94%D7%A7%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%94_%D7%94%D7%90%D7%A7%D7%93%D7%9E%D7%99%D7%AA_%D7%90%D7%95%D7%A0%D7%95) and a master’s degree in law from Bar-Ilan University, and is an accredited [mediator](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%92%D7%A9%D7%A8).

**Sa-Nur and the Disengagement Period**

Following his military service, Dagan established a nucleus of religious families that joined the Sa-Nur settlement, that was subsequently destroyed in the course of Israel’s 2005 Disengagement Plan. Sa-Nur had originally been established as an artist’s village, and most of its residents were artists who had made Aliyah to Israel from the former Soviet Union. During the Second Intifada, which broke out in 2000 and continued through 2005, the settlement grew weaker, losing some of its residents. In response, Dagan, together with his friend Ariel Perel, Dagan organized and led a group of religious families to come to live in the settlement, thereby bolstering the number of residents for many years to come and helping to reinvigorate Sa-Nur. Some of Dagan’s and Perel’s time in Sa-Nur was marked by extremely difficult security conditions, including persistent attacks by gunmen and attempted terrorist attacks. Despite these hardships, they succeeded in breathing new life into the settlement, and dozens of new families came to live there. As a result of this influx, a kindergarten, a day care center, and a new grocery store were built, and the art gallery was reopened. Tens of thousands of people came to visit the settlement, as Sa-Nur became a stepping stone for visiting the entire Northern Shomron region.

At the same time, Dagan and a group of friends, among them Shuli Har Melech (may God avenge his blood), were active in attempting to bolster the religious community that had joined the settlement of Homesh. Together, they established an agricultural yeshiva to further reinforce the community. After speaking with Dagan on a telephone call, Shuli Har Melech and his wife were murdered as they were driving home from Har Melech’s parents’ house to their home in Homesh.

Dagan became one of the leaders of the struggle against Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s Disengagement Program first proposed in 2003, that focused on ending the Israeli presence in the Gush Katif settlements as well as in four settlements in the Northern Shomron region. Because of the controversial nature of the disengagement plan, the Likud conducted a party referendum on it among Likud voters in 2004. Dagan served as deputy director of the rebel faction in the party that opposed the disengagement, and played an instrumental role in this faction’s sweeping victory in the referendum. When Sharon decided to implement the disengagement plan despite the results of the referendum, Dagan led the struggle against the uprooting of settlements in the Northern Shomron region, continuing his resistance until the final evacuation, during which he barricaded himself on the roof of an ancient fortress, together with his fellow residents in Sa-Nur, and figures such as Rabbi Dov Lior, Member of Knesset Professor Aryeh Eldad, the former Member of Knesset Elyakim Haetzni, Member of Knesset Yehiel Hazan, and various religious leaders. The settlers who barricaded themselves in Sa-Nur and neighboring Homesh were the last to be evacuated in the disengagement.

**“Homesh First” and the Struggle to Return to the Settlements**

After the 2006 Lebanon War, Dagan and a group of settlers who had served in reserve units during the war, and had been evacuated from the Northern Shomron region, created the “Homesh First” organization. This organization sought to reestablish settlements that had been uprooted from the Northern Shomron region, as the area remained under full Israeli control (Area C).

“Homesh First” was composed of a core group of over 40 families from Homesh and Sa-Nur, supported by 11 right-wing extra-parliamentary groups. The organization staged mass protest marches to Homesh, disobeying the law prohibiting returning to evicted settlements. During the Chanukah holiday in 2006, some 1,000 people took part in such a march. In Passover, 2007, more than 5,000 people participated, and succeeded in inhabiting the remains of the settlement for three days, until they were forcibly removed. On Independence Day of the same year, 15,000 people marched to Homesh, with Dagan and Nobel Laureate Professor Yisrael (Robert) Aumann at the head of the protest. In the summer, thousands came to Homesh to mark two years since its evacuation. Since then, a yeshiva has been founded among the remains of the settlement, and many public events take place there, and are attended by thousands, including the former Speaker of the Knesset, Yuli (Yoel) Edelstein, government ministers, and dozens of Knesset members.

As head of the Shomron Regional Council, Dagan continues to lead the call to return to the evacuated settlements, promoting the subject in mass rallies, parliamentary work, and articles. Among other things, he has published an article concerning a tree he planted in Sa-Nur before the evauation, which he continues to tend to as a sign of hope for the reestablishment of all of the evicted Northern Shomron settlements.

In 2008 Dagan was one of the founders of the [Shomron Regional Council](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%95%D7%A2%D7%93_%D7%9E%D7%AA%D7%99%D7%99%D7%A9%D7%91%D7%99_%D7%94%D7%A9%D7%95%D7%9E%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%9F). Dagan has been a member of the [Likud Central Committee](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%A8%D7%9B%D7%96_%D7%94%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%9B%D7%95%D7%93) since 2012.

**The Shomron Regional Council**

In 2007, Dagan was elected as a member of the General Assembly of the Shomron Regional Council, representing Shavei Shomron. In 2008, he was appointed as the advisor to the Head of the Council at that time, Gershon Mesika, and served as the Director of the Council’s Strategic Department.

Dagan, who coined the phrase “the settlement movement’s greatest enemy is ignorance,” established the Shomron strategic information service that targeted both the Israeli and the foreign public. As part of this activity, he established VIP tours to the Shomron, bringing more than 1,500 Israeli public opinion-makers to the region, among them important journalists, such as Avri Gilad, Menachem Ben, and Guy Zohar. Following his participation in the tour, Avri Gilad announced on his radio program on the station *Galei Tzahal* that he had undergone a “paradigm shift” concerning the settlements. The same experience led Menachem Ben to look into relocating to the Nofim settlement in the Shomron. Following his tour, journalist Guy Zohar stated that there was no possibility of creating a Palestinian state. These statements were echoed by many other public figures who participated in the tours. The project was considered groundbreaking, and has been credited with effecting a shift in Israeli public opinion concerning the settlement movement in Judea and Samaria. Dagan also founded the Shomron tourist initiative “Nice To Meet You” (*Shomron, Na’im Lehakir*), which has facilitated visits to the region of more than half a million sightseers, and the *Mishkefet* organization that has brought tens of thousands of hikers to the area.

In the 2012 municipal elections, Dagan was elected Deputy Head of the Regional Council, and was given responsibility for education, [community centers](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%9E%D7%AA%D7%A0%22%D7%A1), residents’ services, and public relations.

**Head of the Shomron Regional Council**

After Gershon Mesika resigned his post as Head of the Regional Council following a corruption scandal in the *Yisrael Beiteinu* political party, Dagan was appointed his successor. In special elections held in 2015, Dagan was officially elected to the position, defeating his rival, Sraya Demski from the settlement of Elon Moreh, by a large margin of 63.1%. In the 2018 elections, Mesika withdrew from the race following a mediation conducted between him and Dagan by Rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu. Dagan ran against Paul Golovanevsky, and was elected for a second term in office by an overwhelming majority of 81.19% (13,148 ballots).

**Activities in the Likud**

Together with his friends Yoni HaYisraeli and Yaakov Weinberg, Dagan established a lobby of Likud voters, “My Likud – A Pro-Settlement Lobby in the Likud,” that attracted thousands of Likud voters, and is today the second largest group inside the party. Dagan is considered a key figure on the Israeli right, and has played crucial roles in political campaigns, including serving as a mediator between Prime Minister Netanyahu and Avigdor Lieberman in 2016. His efforts resulted in Lieberman joining the government, thereby blocking the entrance of the Labor Part, then led by Isaac Herzog and Tzipi Livni.

Despite protesting against Netanyahu on various occasions, Dagan is considered to have influence with Netanyahu, who attended three large events in the Shomron over a period of two years: the ceremony marking 50 years since the liberation of the Shomron; an event marking the 40th anniversary of the Shomron Regional Council; and the ceremony for the inauguration of the Nabi Ilyas bypass.

**Milestones**

Dagan has stood at the head of a number of large-scale, public, political struggles. Following the murder of the Rabbi Eitam Henkin and his wife, Na'ama Henkin, during Sukkot, 2015, Dagan set up a protest tent near the prime minister’s residence in Jerusalem, demanding the approval of building plans for the settlements adjacent to the site of the murder, and the restoration of personal security for the residents of the Shomron. The tent was established immediately after the couple’s funeral, and Dagan lived there for 12 days, during which he received unprecedented support for such a demonstration, and was visited by almost all of the government’s ministers. After 12 days, Prime Minister Netanyahu and Dagan came to an agreement, and 15 building plans were approved, enabling the expansion of settlements such as Itamar, Rehelim, Yakir, Alei Zahav, El Matan, Sansana, and Tomer. The construction of the Nabi Ilyas bypass was also agreed upon, at the cost of NIS 56 million; this road was inaugurated by Prime Minister Netayahu and Dagan in \_\_\_\_, 2018.

Dagan took part in a second protest encampment outside the prime minister’s residence in 2017, demanding the immediate approval of budgets for the building of bypasses in Judea and Samaria, as well as an increased security presence in settlements and along access roads. This protest tent was established jointly by Dagan, Avi Naim, the Head of Beit Ariyeh Municipal Council, and Malachi Levinger, the mayor of Kiryat Arba. Family members of those who had lost their lives in terror attacks also took part in the establishment of this tent, among them Hadas Mizrachi, the widow of Lieutenant Colonel Baruch Mizrachi, who was murdered on Passover Eve, 2014, en route to celebrate the holiday with his family in Kiryat Arba.

After inhabiting the tent for three weeks, during which massive protests were undertaken, as well as a week-long hunger strike, Dagan and Netanyahu agreed upon an NIS 800 million building package. As a result, the paving of strategic roads could begin, including the Huwara, Al Aroub, and Al-Lubban bypasses, and the Qalandiya underpass. An additional budget of NIS 90 million was approved for roadway lighting in Judea and Samaria.

In 2016, Dagan acted as the mediator between Prime Minister Netanyahu and the residents of Amona in a crisis that developed around the evacuation of the settlement, and played a key role in the establishment of the new settlement Amihai. In 2018, in the immediate wake of the murder of Rabbi Raziel Shevach, Dagan, together with Shevach’s widow, Yael Shevach, led the struggle to grant official recognition to the outpost at Havat Gilad, a demand to which the government eventually acceded. In 2017, Dagan succeeded in thwarting the cabinet’s decision to double the size of Qalqilya, a city in the Palestinian Authority near Kfar Saba. Dagan exposed the plan, which had been kept secret from the ministers and the public, on Channel 12 news, causing a political uproar, after which it was shelved.

**Foreign Relations and Information Services**

Reflecting his worldview, according to which “the settlement movement’s greatest enemy is ignorance,” Dagan established foreign relations and information services for the Shomron Region, as well as lobbies and friendship groups for the region in various parliaments and communities around the world.

As part of this effort, Dagan established an official lobby for Judea and Samaria in the European Parliament, and was party to the formation of a trade lobby for Jewish-Arab trade in Judea and Samaria. These lobbies organize meetings, tours, and conferences, as well as public events, at which figures such as the 14-year-old terror victim, Ayala Shapira, who was gravely injured in a December 2014 Molotov cocktail attack, have participated. At Dagan’s initiative, Shapira was sent to address the European Parliament, and Sheikh Tamimi from Ramallah addressed an anti-BDS advocacy conference in Madrid. The Madrid conference was subject to violent protests by dozens of BDS activists, who tried to attack both Dagan and Sheikh Tamimi. Following the incident, Dagan and the members of his group were assigned security for the duration of their visit in Spain.

As part of his public relations activities, Dagan has appeared twice before conferences in the European Parliament, and a number of times before the Congress in Washington, D.C. He is considered to have strong contacts in the White House and strong connections with the Republican Party, particularly among Evangelist leaders. These contacts became a strategic asset when Donald Trump was elected President of the United States. Udi Segal, the political commentator at Israel’s Channel 12 News, called Trump’s new strategy the “Dagan Doctrine.”

Dagan took part in Trump’s 2016 electoral campaign, and was active in promoting him among Israeli-Americans and Christian Evangelists, with whom he is well connected. After Trump’s election, Dagan was invited as an official guest to the President’s inauguration ceremony, the first Head of a Regional Council in Israel to receive such an honor.

Dagan has met with official representatives of the American administration a number of times. During 2019 and 2020, he used his political power in Israel and the United States to garner support for the Sovereignty Plan for the region. Dagan even flew to Washington during President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu’s announcement of the “Deal of the Century,” and pressed for the enactment of sovereignty in all the settlements in Judea and Samaria, and for a joint statement that a Palestinian State would never be established in the region. During his stay in Washington, Dagan met with Netanyahu twice at Blair House, as well as with ranking officials in the American administration.

During his time as Head of the Shomron Regional Council, for the first time in the history of the settlement movement in Judea and Samaria, twin city alliances between local settlements and foreign municipal areas were signed, including agreements for financial cooperation. Cities and regions that signed such agreements include Hampstead (Five Towns) in New York, the state of Texas, the Valtellina region in Italy, and Hévíz in Hungary.

**The Aliyah from France**

One of Dagan’s strategic goals for the Shomron was to serve in the absorption of new immigrants. As part of an immigration absorption project, some 80 families from France found a home in settlements in the region. The initiative was hailed a flagship project, and had a 100% success rate: none of the families returned to France, and all were successfully absorbed.

**Culture**

As part of the effort to normalize the Shomron, Dagan organized mass cultural events in which the country’s most famous singers performed. During his time as the Head of the Shomron Regional Council, the cultural boycott of the settlements was effectively lifted and Israel’s most renowned artists began traveling to the region to perform. One of the events established as part of this policy was the Klezmer Festival in Revava, which draws leading artists from Israel and around the world, and is attended by tens of thousands of visitors. In recent years, artists such as Omer Adam, Static & Ben El, Yehoram Gaon, Shlomi Shabat, Ishay Ribo, Eviatar Banai, Kobi Aflalo, Avraham Fried, Yaakov Shwekey, Hanan Ben Ari, and Achinoam Nini have performed in the Shomron.

**The Shomron Cinema Foundation**

Together with the Shomron Regional Council’s spokeswoman, Dagan established the first Cinema Foundation in Judea and Samaria. The cinematic work began with the filming of Yuval Hamebulbal’s feature film in the Shomron, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, the first children’s film to be filmed in the region.

**Accomplishments and Prizes**

During Dagan’s time in office as the Head of the Shomron Regional Council, the region has led the country’s growth charts, with 8% growth and investments of some NIS 600 million in transportation. In 2018, Dagan received the Jerusalem Prize for Settlement.

The *Matzav Haruach* newspaper chose Dagan as its Person of the Year in the settlements – **cannot find a link**. In 2016, Dagan was noted in *The Liberal’s* list of influential people.

**Personal Life**

Dagan is married to Oriah and is a father of four. He lives in [Shavei Shomron](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%A9%D7%91%D7%99_%D7%A9%D7%95%D7%9E%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%9F), where he moved after the evacuation of [Sa-Nur](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%A9%D7%90-%D7%A0%D7%95%D7%A8), as part of the [Disengagement Plan](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%AA%D7%95%D7%9B%D7%A0%D7%99%D7%AA_%D7%94%D7%94%D7%AA%D7%A0%D7%AA%D7%A7%D7%95%D7%AA). On the 9th of October, 2015, while demonstrating at the encampment in front of the [Prime Minister’s House](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%91%D7%99%D7%AA_%D7%90%D7%92%D7%99%D7%95%D7%9F) in Jerusalem, the car Dagan’s wife and children were driving in was attacked by [rocks](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%99%D7%99%D7%93%D7%95%D7%99_%D7%90%D7%91%D7%A0%D7%99%D7%9D), and they sustained light injuries.[[7]](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%99%D7%95%D7%A1%D7%99_%D7%93%D7%92%D7%9F#cite_note-7)