

# Back to the Sources: Reconnecting, Learning and Finding Hope Post October 7

## Session 1: "In the Land of Israel": Exploring the Significance of the Land of Israel and Our Relationship to It, Focusing on Israel's Declaration of Independence, Paragraphs 1-3

### Guiding Questions:

1. How would you describe your relationship with the Land of Israel? In what ways has your relationship with Israel changed over time, or especially over the past year? In what ways has it remained the same?
2. How do you feel today about the future of Israel? What gives you concern? What gives you hope?

בארץ-ישראל קם העם היהודי, בה עוצבה דמותו הרוחנית, הדתית והמדינית, בה חי חיי קוממיות ממלכתית, בה יצר נכסי תרבות לאומיים וכלל-אנושיים והוריש לעולם כולו את ספר הספרים הנצחי.

לאחר שהוגלה העם מארצו בכוח הזרוע שמר לה אמונים בכל ארצות פזוריו, ולא חדל מתפילה ומתקוה לשוב לארצו ולחדש בתוכה את חירותו המדינית.

מתוך קשר היסטורי ומסורתי זה חתרו היהודים בכל דור לשוב ולהאחז במולדתם העתיקה; ובדורות האחרונים שבו לארצם בהמונים, וחלוצים, מעפילים ומגינים הפריחו נשמות, החיו שפתם העברית, בנו כפרים וערים, והקימו ישוב גדל והולך השליט על משקו ותרבותו, שוחר שלום ומגן על עצמו, מביא ברכת הקידמה לכל תושבי הארץ ונושא נפשו לעצמאות ממלכתית.

ERETZ-ISRAEL (Hebrew) - the Land of Israel, Palestine] was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.

After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their Dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom.

Impelled by this historic and traditional attachment, Jews strove in every successive generation to re-establish themselves in their ancient homeland. In recent decades they returned in their masses. Pioneers, ma'pilim (Hebrew) - immigrants coming to Eretz-Israel in defiance of restrictive legislation] and defenders, they made deserts bloom, revived the Hebrew language, built villages and towns, and created a thriving community controlling its own economy and culture, loving peace but knowing how to defend itself, bringing the blessings of progress to all the country's inhabitants, and aspiring towards independent nationhood.

**Note:** The opening paragraphs of Israel's Declaration of Independence focus on the justification for the establishment of a Jewish State in the Land of Israel. Paragraphs 4-10 focus on general justification for why the Jewish people have the right to a state, while paragraphs 1-3 focus on the justification of establishing such a state specifically in the Land of Israel.

### Questions for Discussion:

1. What words, phrases or ideas from these paragraphs stand out or resonate most with you? Are there any words or phrases that you have questions about or have challenges with?
2. What role has the Land of Israel played in the shaping of your own Jewish identity? What role have other lands played? How would you like to imagine your relationship with Israel in the future?
3. Building on the words of paragraph 2, what do you "hope and pray" for Israel today or for your connection to it?

אומרים ישנה ארץ / ארץ שכורת שמש / איה אותה ארץ / איפה אותה שמש / אומרים ישנה ארץ / עמודיה שבעה / שבעה כוכבי לכת / צצים על כל גבעה / איפה אותה ארץ / כוכבי אותה גבעה / מי ינתנו דרך / יגיד לי הנתיבה

כבר עברנו כמה / מדרות וימים / כבר הלכנו כמה / כוחותינו תמים / כיצד זה תעינו / טרם הונח לנו / אותה ארץ שמש / אותה לא מצאנו / אולי כבר איננה / ודאי ניטל זיוה / דבר בשבילנו / אדוני לא ציוה

ארץ בה יתיקם / אשר כל איש קיוה / נכנס כל הנכנס / פגע בו עקיבא / שלום לך עקיבא / שלום לך רבי / איפה הם הקדושים / איפה המכבי / עונה לו עקיבא / אומר לו הרבי / כל ישראל קדושים / אתה המכבי

**They say there is a land / Words: Shaul Tchernichovsky (Adapted by Naomi Shemer)**

They say: There is a land / a land drenched with sun / Where is that land? / Where is that sun? / They say there is a land / Seven are its pillars / Seven stars shine / Over every hill / Where is that land / Where are those stars / Who will show us the road? / Who will lead the way?

We have traveled / Deserts and seas / We have walked / Our strength is running out / How could we go wrong? / Why can we not rest? / That sunny land / We never found / Maybe it is no more / For sure its glory is gone / For us / God did not Command anything

A land where it shall come to pass / what every man had hoped for / Everyone who enters / has met with Akiva / Peace to you, Akiva! / Peace to you, Rabbi! / Where are the saints? / Where is the Maccabee? / Answers him Akiva / answers him the Rabbi: All of Israel are saints / you are the Maccabee!

### Guiding Questions:

1. Note the different images and feelings in each stanza. What emotions does each stanza evoke for you? Are there particular stanzas, images or feelings that you relate to more right now?
2. What about Israel's situation today makes you feel frustrated or even despaired? What about Israel's situation today makes you feel inspired, motivated, hopeful, or called to action?

**Note:** This poem/song was originally written by Shaul Tchernichovsky (1875-1943) in Berlin in 1923, as he explored mixed feelings about the future of Zionism and his own personal future - specifically, whether or not he would or should immigrate to the Land of Israel. The original version was filled with doubts and pessimism (as seen, for example, in the above 2nd stanza). He later wrote a more optimistic and encouraging version that added what is the 3rd stanza above and removed what is the 2nd stanza above. The above version is a melded version woven by Naomi Shemer.

**במדבר יג**  
כה וַיֵּשְׁבוּ, מִתּוֹר הָאָרֶץ, מִקֵּץ, אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם. כֹּה וַיִּלְכוּ וַיָּבֵאוּ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל-כָּל-עֵדֶת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֶל-מִדְבַּר פָּאֶרָן--קְדֵשָׁה; וַיֹּשִׁיבוּ אֹתָם דִּבָּר וְאֶת-כָּל-הָעֵדָה, וַיֵּרְאוּם אֶת-פְּרִי הָאָרֶץ. כֹּה וַיִּסְפְּרוּ-לוֹ, וַיֹּאמְרוּ, בְּאָזְנוֹ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַחְתָּנוּ; וְגַם זָבַת חֶלֶב דִּבְשָׁה, הִוא--זֹהוּ-פְרִיָּהּ. לֵב וַיִּצְיִאוּ דַבַּת הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר תָּרוּ אֹתָהּ, אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, לֵאמֹר...

### Numbers 13

(25) At the end of forty days they returned from scouting the land. (26) They went straight to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the wilderness of Paran, and they made their report to them and to the whole community, as they showed them the fruit of the land. (27) This is what they told him: "We came to the land you sent us to; it does indeed flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit... (32) The country that we traversed and scouted is one that devours its inhabitants..."

Note: This story, from the Book of Numbers (Bemidbar) in the Torah, takes place after the People of Israel have left Egypt, have spent one year at Mt. Sinai, and have begun their journey toward the Land of Canaan. The People of Israel have been in Egypt for generations and have never seen the Promised Land themselves. In this story, leaders of the people are sent to scout out the land and report back. They return with fruit of the land and bring back a mixed and somewhat contradictory report, saying that it is a land "flowing with milk and honey" but also "a land that devours its inhabitants," highlighting both the beautiful and challenging aspects of existence in the land.

### Questions for Discussion:

1. What does the phrase "land flowing with milk and honey" mean to you? And the phrase "a land that devours its inhabitants"? How can the same land be both?
2. How would you describe your feelings about Israel's future today? What has shaped or informed those feelings? How have those feelings changed over the past year, if at all?
3. What about Israel today makes you pessimistic? What about Israel today makes you optimistic?

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## Session 2: "Freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel" Envisioning justice in an imperfect world. Focusing on Israel's Declaration of Independence, Paragraphs 13

### Guiding Questions:

1. What do "freedom", "justice" and "peace" mean to you?
2. How does the state of the world affect your understanding of freedom, justice and peace? Have your understandings changed since October 7th? How do you feel about the justice and lack thereof that you see in the world today?
3. If you could build a perfect world, what would freedom, justice and peace look like to you? Now, given the world we live in, what can we do to achieve that justice in our own future?

## The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel

THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; **it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel;** it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its citizens irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

מדינת ישראל תהא פתוחה לעליה יהודית ולקבוץ גלויות; תשקוד על פיתוח הארץ לטובת כל תושביה; תהא מושתתה על יסודות החירות, הצדק והשלום לאור חזונו של נביאי ישראל; תקיים שיוון זכויות חברתי ומדיני גמור לכל אזרחיה בלי הבדל דת, גזע ומין; תבטיח חופש דת, מצפון, לשון, חינוך ותרבות; תשמור על המקומות הקדושים של כל הדתות; ותהיה נאמנה לעקרונותיה של מגילת האומות המאוחדות.

**Note:** This paragraph appears shortly after the official declaration of the establishment of the State of Israel (paragraph 11). The bolded sentence here is our main focus. The rest of the paragraph is important as context to understanding the founders' meaning behind freedom, justice and peace.

### Questions:

What do you think about this paragraph? Does anything in particular capture your attention? Why do you think the authors included the words "as envisaged by the prophets of Israel"? What difference does it make in the text? To what degree do you feel the vision and promises in this paragraph have been fulfilled? Do you think the vision or promise needs to be updated or changed today, or does our reality need to be changed? Or both?

## Berl Katznelson, At a Meeting of Youth Aliyah Guides, 1940

Whoever comes to separate the redemption of Israel from a treatise of moral values and the liberation of humanity does not strengthen the cause of redemption. Because if justice, law and freedom will no longer be moral bases, then why Jewish immigration? What is the settlement of the land for? Why save the people and establish a state? No, Zionism would not have risen - and will not stand - in a world that denies justice, law and freedom to all those created in the image of God. It cannot separate itself from the values of humanity. In this matter Zionism will have to judge itself.

## הנרייטה סאלד, תפילה למען הילדים

אלוהים!  
תן לנו את הכח לקבל את ילדינו כמו שהם. אנחנו צריכים את העזרה שהם צריכים לה, ולא זו שאנו רוצים להגיש. תן לנו את התבונה להנך אותם ולעצב דמותם לבד לגזול את עצמאותם, עצמיותם ואישיותם. אנחנו יודעים טוב מהם, ושיש דרכים שונות לעשות אותו דבר, תמיד ולא הדרך שלנו היא הייתה נכונה. תן לנו את האומץ על העקשנות שלנו ובאותו הזמן לשמור תמיד על כבוד האדם. אלוקים עזור לנו לעשות אותם מאושרים.

## A Prayer for the Children by Henrietta Szold

God!  
Give us the strength to accept our children as they are. We need the help that they truly need, And not the one we want to provide. Give us the wisdom to educate them and mold their character without undermining their independence, selfhood and personality. We know better than they, That there are different ways to do the same thing, And our way is not always the right one. Give us the courage for our stubbornness And at the same time to always maintain human dignity. God help us make them happy.

**Background:** Here are quotes about freedom, justice, and peace from different ancient prophets of Israel, as well as from some modern visionaries or "prophets".

## דברים טז, יט-כ

לא-תטה משפט, לא תפיר פנים; ולא-תקח שחד--כי השחד יעור עיני חקמים, ויסלף דברי צדיקים. כ צדק צדק, תרדה--למען תחיה וירשת את-הארץ, אשר-יתהו אלהיך נתן לך.

## ישעיהו ב, ד

ונכתתו תרבותם לאתים ונחיתותיהם למזמרות לא-ישא גוי אלו גוי תרב ואל-ילמדו עוד מלחמה:

## ישעיהו נח, ו-ז

הלוא זה צום אבחרהו פתח חרצבות רשע החר אגדות מוטה ושלח רוצים חפשים וכל-מוטה תנתקו: הלוא פרס לרעב להקוד ועניים מוודים תביא בית כיתר-אף ערים וקסיתו ומבשרך לא תתעלם:

## זכריה ז, ט-י

כה אמר ה' צבאות משפט אמת שפטו וחסד ורחמים עשו איש את-אחיו: ואלמנה ויתום גר ועני אל-תעשקו ורעת איש אחיו אל-תחשבו בלבבכם:

## Deuteronomy 16:19-20

You shall appoint magistrates and officials for your tribes, in all the settlements that the LORD your God is giving you, and they shall govern the people with due justice. You shall not judge unfairly: you shall show no partiality; you shall not take bribes, for bribes blind the eyes of the discerning and upset the plea of the just. Justice, justice shall you pursue, that you may thrive and inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

## Isaiah 2:4

And they shall beat their swords into plowshares And their spears into pruning hooks: Nation shall not take up sword against nation; they shall never again know war.

## Isaiah 58:6-7

No, this is the fast I desire: To unlock fetters of wickedness, And untie the cords of the yoke to let the oppressed go free; To break off every yoke. It is to share your bread with the hungry, and to take the wretched poor into your home; When you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to ignore your own kin.

## Zechariah 7:9-10

Thus said the LORD of Hosts: Execute true justice; deal loyally and compassionately with one another. Do not defraud the widow, the orphan, the stranger, and the poor; and do not plot evil against one another.

**Questions:** What do you think about these texts? Do you think these are the kinds of visions of freedom, justice and peace that the authors' of the declaration were thinking about? Are these the kinds of visions that Israel should be based on? How close is Israel to fulfilling them? What is the benefit and what are the challenges (or dangers) of trying to pursue idealistic visions of freedom, justice and peace in a reality filled with oppression, injustice and war? What is your vision of freedom, justice and peace for the future of Israel? Can we come up with a shared vision?

**ויקרא יט:לד**  
כָּאֲזָרָח מִכֶּם יִהְיֶה לְכֶם הַגֵּר הַגֵּר אֲתֹכֶם וְאָ הַבֵּת לֹ  
כְמוֹד כִּי-גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם.

**תהילים ל"ד**  
מִי־הָאִישׁ הַחֲפִיץ חַיִּים אֲהָב יָמִים לְרֵאוֹת טוֹב:  
נָצַר לְשׁוֹנֵה מִרְעַע וּשְׁפָתָיָהּ מִדְּבַר מִרְמָה: סוּר מִרְעַע  
וְעָשָׂה טוֹב בְּקֶשׁ שְׁלוֹם וְרָדְפָהּ:

**Leviticus 19:34**  
The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the stranger as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

**Psalm 34**  
Who is the person who is eager for life, who desires years of good fortune? Guard your tongue from evil, your lips from deceitful speech. Shun evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it.

**Questions:** What do you think about these texts? How do they relate to what is written in the declaration? To what degree do you feel these texts are relevant today - to Israel or in general? How do you think Israel should act towards its non-Jewish citizens? Towards its neighbors?

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## Session 3: "Peace and good neighborliness" Hoping for peace in the shadow of war. Focusing on Israel's Declaration of Independence, Paragraphs 16-17

- Guiding Questions:**
1. Israel's history, even before its establishment, has been filled with both war and hopes for peace. What does peace mean to you? Do you think peace is possible for Israel?
  2. In what ways have you found hope post October 7th? What do you hope for? What are you hoping for yourself and your community? For Israel?
  3. What does "peace in the shadow of war" look like to you? What does a prolonged peace from now and into the future look like to you? How do you hope Israel will look 20 years from now?

אנו קוראים - גם בתוך התקפת-הדמים הנערכת עלינו זה חדשים - לבני העם הערבי תושבי מדינת ישראל לשמור על שלום וליטול חלקם בבנין המדינה על יסוד אזרחות מלאה ושווה ועל יסוד נציגות מתאימה בכל מוסדותיה, הזמניים והקבועים.

אנו מושיטים יד שלום ושכנות טובה לכל המדינות השכנות ועמיהן, וקוראים להם לשיתוף פעולה ועזרה הדדית עם העם העברי העצמאי בארצו. מדינת ישראל מוכנה לתרום חלקה במאמץ משותף לקידמת המזרח התיכון כולו.

**WE APPEAL - in the very midst of the onslaught launched against us now for months - to the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve peace and participate in the upbuilding of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions.**

**WE EXTEND our hand to all neighbouring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighbourliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land. The State of Israel is prepared to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East.**

**Background:** The 16th paragraph appeals to the non-Jewish, Arab residents of the newly founded State of Israel, while the 17th paragraph appeals to the neighboring Arab countries and their peoples. At the time this declaration was made, an unofficial war had already been going on for months between the Jewish residents of Eretz Israel (supported by global Jewish communities and others) and the Arab residents (supported by neighboring Arab countries and others). Shortly after the declaration was made, the neighboring Arab states officially declared war on the new State of Israel.

**Questions:** What do you think about these paragraphs? Does anything here catch your attention or surprise you? What do you think were the authors' intentions with these paragraphs? To what degree have these appeals come to fruition - or not - since 1948? Note how even in the midst of war the declaration's authors included two paragraphs calling for peace. In Israel's current reality, do you think it is possible to still envision or call for peace?

### כאן / מילים ולחן: עוזי חיטמן

כאן ביתי פה אני נולדתי / במישור אשר על שפת הים / כאן החברים איתם גדלתי / ואין לי שום מקום אחר בעולם.

כאן ביתי פה אני שיחקתי / בשפלה אשר על גב ההר / כאן מן הבאר שתיתי מים / ושתלתי דשא במדבר.

כאן נולדתי כאן נולדו לי ילדיי / כאן בניתי את ביתי בשתי ידיי / כאן גם אתה איתי וכאן כל אלף ידידיי / ואחרי שנים אלפיים סוף לנדודיי.

כאן את כל שיריי אני ניגנתי / והלכתי במסע לילי / כאן בנעוריי אני הגנתי / על חלקת האלוהים שלי.  
כאן נולדתי...

כאן את שולחני אני ערכתי / פת של לחם פרה רענן / דלת לשכנים אני פתחתי / ומי שבא נאמר לו "אהלן".

### Kan (Here) / Music & Lyrics: Uzi Hitman

This is my home, this is where I was born / on the plain by the sea / Here are the friends I grew up with / And I have nowhere else in the world.

This is my home, this is where I played / In the lowland on the back of the mountain / Here I drank water from the well / And I planted grass in the desert.

I was born here, my children were born here / Here I built my house with my own two hands / Here you are with me and here are all my thousand friends / And after two thousand years my wanderings are over.

I played all my songs here / And I went on a night journey / Here in my youth I defended / My plot of earth.

I was born here...

Here I set my table / A loaf of bread, a refreshing flower / I opened the door to the neighbors / And to whoever comes we will say: "Ahalan - Welcome".

**Background:** Uzi Hitman was born in Giv'at Shmuel, Israel in 1952 to Holocaust survivors. He was raised in a traditional household and his father was a cantor. This song was Israel's official submission to the Eurovision song contest in 1991, in which it placed 3rd. Note that the last word of the song is "ahalan" which means "welcome" in Arabic, and has been incorporated into modern Hebrew slang.

**Questions:** What feelings does this song evoke for you? What message(s) is it trying to convey - to Israelis? To the world? How does this relate to the Judaic texts and the declaration? Note how this song talks about both belonging in the land and defending the land, as well as hoping for peace. Is it possible to do both at the same time, including today?

**Statement by Jacob Blaustein (President of the American Jewish Committee) to Prime Minister David Ben Gurion on the Relationship Between American Jews and the State of Israel, Jerusalem, August 23, 1950.**

“Important to your future, as you recognize, is the United States of America and American Jewry. Israel, of course, is also important to them...the vast majority of American Jewry recognizes the necessity and desirability of helping to make it a strong, viable, self-supporting state. The American Jewish Committee has been active, as have other Jewish organizations in the United States, in rendering, within the framework of their American citizenship, every possible support to Israel; and I am sure that this support will continue and that we shall do all we can to increase further our share in the great historic task of helping Israel to solve its problems and develop as a free, independent and flourishing democracy. ... We must, in a true spirit of friendliness, sound a note of caution to Israel and its leaders. Now that the birth pains are over, and even though Israel is undergoing growing pains...Israel also has a responsibility... in terms of not affecting adversely the sensibilities of Jews who are citizens of other states by what it says or does... In this connection, you are realists and want facts and I would be less than frank if I did not point out to you that American Jews vigorously repudiate any suggestion or implication that they are in exile. American Jews — young and old alike, Zionists and non-Zionists alike — are profoundly attached to America...To American Jews, America is home.”

**Background:** This quote comes from a speech given during an official luncheon held between Prime Minister David Ben Gurion (representing the Israeli government), and Jacob Blaustein (representing the American Jewish community), at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem in 1950. Ben Gurion spoke first and then Blaustein. Both speeches were in response to fears of forced immigration to Israel and accusations of American Jews' ultimate loyalty being to that of Israel rather than the U.S. These speeches served as a declaration and quasi-agreement to the relationship of “diaspora Jews,” specifically the American Jewry, and the new State of Israel.

**Questions:** How does Jacob Blaustein describe the relationship of American Jewry to the State of Israel? How does this compare to paragraph 18 of the Declaration of the State of Israel you read above? Do you agree or disagree with the relationship he outlines and why? Is this the same relationship today and should it be? What should it be moving towards the future? Do you feel that you are in exile or at home in the place where you live today?

## Back to the Sources: Reconnecting, Learning and Finding Hope Post October 7

**Session 4: “The Jewish people throughout the Diaspora” Global Jews and the State of Israel: yesterday, today and tomorrow. Focusing on Israel’s Declaration of Independence, Paragraph 18**

### Guiding Questions:

1. What does it mean to you to be a ‘Global’ Jew i.e. living outside of Israel? How do you think Israeli Jews feel about you? Do you see yourself as the same or different from other Jews living around the world?
2. What is your relationship with Israel as a Global Jew? Do you have a role in this relationship, what is it? Do you feel that Israelis and Israel have a role in your relationship?
3. Do you think the relationship between Israel and Global Jewry has always been the same? Is it different post-October 7th? How would you like to see that relationship change and grow in the future?

אנו קוראים אל העם היהודי בכל התפוצות להתלכד סביב הישוב בעליה ובבנין ולעמוד לימינו במערכה הגדולה על הגשמת שאיפת הדורות לגאולת ישראל.

**WE APPEAL to the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora to rally round the Jews of Eretz-Israel in the tasks of immigration and upbuilding and to stand by them in the great struggle for the realization of the age-old dream - the redemption of Israel.**

**Background:** The 18th paragraph of Israel's Declaration of Independence appeals to the world Jewry in light of the establishment of the State of Israel. Take note that they use the term “diaspora” to refer to Jews living outside of the Land of Israel, a cultural and Talmudic term. This paragraph effectively acts as a call to action to the world Jewry to take upon themselves their role in the new State of Israel.

### Guiding Questions:

1. This paragraph reads as a call to action, who are they calling to action? What are they asking them to do? Are they asking you to immigrate to Israel? Are they asking you to support Israel financially? Are they asking you to support Israel in other ways?
2. How does this call to action make you feel? Is this a request or an expectation? Which one should it be? Is it a fair request/expectation or are they asking too much? Why or why not?
3. Do you think this paragraph is still relevant today, especially post October 7? In what ways do you think global Jews can or should support Jews in Israel? In what ways do you think Israeli Jews can or should support Jews outside of Israel?

**Statement by Prime Minister David Ben Gurion to Jacob Blaustein, Jerusalem, August 23, 1950.**

“The Jews of the United States, as a community and as individuals, have only one political attachment and that is to the United States of America. They owe no political allegiance to Israel... We, the people of Israel, have no desire and no intention to interfere in any way with the internal affairs of Jewish communities abroad... Our success or failure depends in a large measure on our cooperation with, and on the strength of, the great Jewish community of the United States... We should like to see American Jews come and take part in our effort. We need their technical knowledge, their unrivalled experience, their spirit of enterprise, their bold vision, their ‘know-how’... The tasks which face us in this country are eminently such as would appeal to the American genius for technical development and social progress. But the decision as to whether they wish to come — permanently or temporarily — rests with the free discretion of each American Jew himself.”

**Background:** This quote comes from the same luncheon quoted above. This is the official statement that Ben Gurion gave, on behalf of the Government of Israel, prior to Blaustein's remarks.

**Questions:** How does Ben Gurion describe the Government of Israel's understanding of American Jewry and their relationship to Israel? How does this compare to Blaustein's comments? How to both compare to paragraph 18 of the Declaration of the State of Israel? Now knowing both sides, how does this all make you feel? How do you see the role of Global Jews post-Oct. 7th and for the future? How do you see the role of Israel in the life of global Jewish communities?



**תפילת לשלום ישראל**  
**מילים: יצחק הלוי הרצוג / בן ציון מאיר /**  
**חי עוזיאל / ש.י. עגנון**

אָבינו שְׁבַשְׁמִים, צוּר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְגוֹאֲלוֹ, בְּרַךְ אֶת  
 מְדִינַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, רֵאשִׁית צְמִיחַת גְּאֻלְתָּנוּ. הִגֵּן  
 עָלֶיךָ בְּאַבְרַת חֶסֶד, וּפְרַשׁ עָלֶיךָ סֶכֶת שְׁלוֹמָךְ,  
 וְשַׁלַּח אֹרֶךְ וְאַמְתָּךְ לְרֵאשִׁיָּהּ, שְׂרִיָּה וְיִדְעִיָּה,  
 וּמִקְנָם בְּעֶצֶה טוֹבָה מְלַפְנֶיךָ. חֲזַק אֶת יְדֵי מְגַבֵּי  
 אֶרֶץ קְדִשְׁנוּ, וְהִנְחִילֵם אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְשׁוּעָה וְעִסְתָּרַת  
 בְּצַחוֹן תְּעַסְרָם, וְנִתַּת שְׁלוֹם בְּאַרְץ וְשִׁמְחַת עוֹלָם  
 לְיוֹשְׁבֵיהָ. אָמֵן סְלָה.

**Prayer for Peace in Israel**  
**Words: Yitzchak Halevi Herzog**  
**/ Ben-Tzion Meir / Chai Uziel /**  
**S.Y. Agnon**

“Our Father in heaven, Rock and Redeemer of Israel, bless the State of Israel, the dawn of our deliverance. Shield it beneath the wings of Your love; spread over it Your canopy of peace; send Your light and Your truth to its leaders, officers, and counselors, and direct them with Your good counsel. Strengthen the defenders of our Holy Land; grant them, our God, salvation and crown them with victory. Establish peace in the land, and everlasting joy for its inhabitants. Amen.”

**Background:** The prayer for the State of Israel was introduced in 1948 by the Sephardic and Ashkenazic Chief Rabbis of the newly established State of Israel. It has been adopted - and adapted in various forms - in many Jewish communities throughout Israel and the world.

- Questions for Discussion:**
- 1 . How does this prayer make you feel? What emotions, if any, does it evoke? How does it compare to the final paragraph of the declaration and the national anthem? What does it tell you about Israel and Israeli society? Why?
  - 2 . Note the variety of prayers. Why did they write it this way? Would you have phrased it differently knowing how specifically the declaration and anthem were written?
  - 3 . What prayers do you have for the future of Israel?

**Back to the Sources:**  
**Reconnecting, Learning and**  
**Finding Hope Post October 7**

**Session 5: “Placing our trust in the Rock of Israel”** Various sources of faith, strength, and unity in diversity. Focusing on Israel’s Declaration of Independence, Paragraph 19

- Guiding Questions:**
1. What are your primary sources of faith and strength? In what ways have your faith or assumptions or confidence been challenged in the last year?
  2. What do you see as the primary sources of strength and resilience of the State of Israel? Of the Jewish People?
  3. What do you see as the greatest challenges to Jewish and Israeli unity today? What do you see as the greatest signs of success and hope?

**במתוך בטחון בצור ישראל הננו חותמים בחתימת ידינו לעדות על הכרזה זו, במושב מועצת המדינה הזמנית, על אדמת המולדת, בעיר תל-אביב, היום הזה, ערב שבת, ה' אייר תש"ח, 14 במאי 1948**

**Placing our trust in the "Rock of Israel", we affix our signatures to this proclamation at this session of the Provisional council of state, on the soil of the homeland, in the city of Tel-aviv, on this Sabbath eve, the 5th day of iyar, 5708 (14th may, 1948).**

**Background:** The final paragraph of Israel’s Declaration of Independence introduces the signatures of the 37 members of the People’s Council who signed the declaration and committed themselves to it. Note that the word “God” does not appear anywhere in the declaration, but this final paragraph refers to “The Rock of Israel”, which for religious Jews is traditionally used to refer to God, but at the same time, the phrase can be interpreted in other ways.

- Guiding Questions:**
1. Why do you think this Declaration does not mention God more explicitly? Do you agree with the decision to leave it out?
  2. What does the phrase “Rock of Israel” mean to you? Can you think of other ways that it can be interpreted?
  3. Note that the declaration was signed by 37 individuals - religious and secular, right-wing and left-wing - who had many disagreements. Is there anything that you think all (or most) Israelis and Jews can or should agree on today?

**התקווה**  
 כל עוד בְּלִבְךָ פְּנִימָה  
 נִפְּשׂ יְהוּדֵי הוֹמָיָה,  
 וּלְפִאֲתֵי מִזְרַח קְדִימָה,  
 עֵין לְצִיּוֹן צוֹפִיָּה;

עוד לא אָבְדָה תְּקוּמָתָנוּ,  
 הַתְּקוּהָ בֵּת שְׁנוֹת אֲלֵפִים,  
 לְהִיּוֹת עִם חֶפְשִׁי בְּאַרְצָנוּ,  
 אֶרֶץ צִיּוֹן וִירוּשָׁלַיִם.  
 לְהִיּוֹת עִם חֶפְשִׁי בְּאַרְצָנוּ,  
 אֶרֶץ צִיּוֹן וִירוּשָׁלַיִם.

**Hatikva**  
 As long as the heart within the Jewish soul yearns forward toward the East, an eye looks to Zion,

our hope is not yet lost. Our hope is two thousand years old: To be a free people in our land, the land of Zion and Jerusalem.



**Background:** This is the official national anthem to the State of Israel. Much like the declaration, it does not mention G-d. Hatikva was originally written in 1878, officially adopted as the anthem of the Zionist Movement by the Eighteenth Zionist Congress in 1933, unofficially proclaimed the National Anthem in 1948, but only officially became the National Anthem of Israel in 2004.

- Questions for Discussion:**
- 1 . How does this song make you feel? Introspective or extrospective? Hopeful or hopeless? Why? Does this song impact you in any way? How?
  - 2 . Does the lack of mentioning G-d impact you in any way? Why or why not? Why do you think they made this choice? Does that affect the way you see the declaration of the State of Israel or of Israel itself? In what way?
  - 3 . How do you think this anthem and its history have impacted or shaped Israel, Israelis, Jews in general, etc.? Should this song be changed moving forward? Why or why not? What is your hope for the future of Israel?