



Chomer Chinuchi

Am Yisrael b'Eretz Yisrael al pi Torat Yisrael

K1: Chalutziyut



Aims:

1. **Understand** how Medinat Yisrael has developed.
2. **Learn** how Israel was shaped by a pioneering spirit.
3. **Explore** ways that our Chanichim can engage in this pioneering spirit today.



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עם ישראל בארץ ישראל על פי תורת ישראל

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Introduction

It is possible to claim that the beginnings of the chalutziyut spirit can be found in Ancient Israel and the Torah society. The Jewish people were originally farmers. As embodied with Avraham and Lot and then successive generations of Bnei Yisrael, livestock and agriculture provided the economic foundations for an Israelite society that could also support artisans, priests, kings and scholars. These agricultural origins are woven into the very rituals of the Jewish calendar – with the Chagim to this day celebrating first fruits, final harvests, and the “birthday of trees”.

But this rural status changed as the Jewish people were forced into exile with the destruction of the Beit haMikdash in 70 CE. As Jewish communities adapted to minority status in their various diasporas, different professional inclinations emerged: peddlers, traders, money-lenders, and physicians. Sometimes these changes of occupation were the result of intentional restriction by external authorities. For example, by the Middle Ages, governments throughout Europe prohibited Jews from owning land. By the nineteenth century both the world and the community itself had long since ceased to perceive Jews and farmers as synonymous – indeed the Jewish association with food production was as distant as any ethnic or national group in the world.

“Hunted like wild animals, herded into ghettos, driven into our humble homes or into the four modest walls where we could devote ourselves to religious contemplation, we seemed to the superficial observer to be leading a joyless and unsocial life. We stepped into the public eye and showed signs of activity only in the market place and in business and industrial life. But people did not look among the Jews for a fresh pulsating life drawing strength and joy from the breasts of Nature. The truth was that the Jew had been forcibly driven into this painful condition, and the Jewish spirit and the spirit of Judaism were blamed for what was nothing but the fictitious product of brutal repression.

How utterly different is the spirit of Judaism where it can unfold itself freely! It transports us into the open country, where the brooks trickle and meadows bloom, where the seeds ripen and the trees blossom and the herds pasture, where man exercises his powers in close contact with nature and places his exertions immediately under the protection and blessing of G-d. Nature meant us to be men of the fields and flocks. The Galut has made us into wandering traders. Oh, that we could turn our backs on this occupation which has been artificially imposed on us, that with our children we might flee away to the simplicity of a country life infused with the Divine Jewish spirit! Then would simplicity and peace, temperance and love, humanity and joy, enthusiasm and happiness dwell with us; David's harp would sound again and Ruth would find the ears of corn on the field of Boaz.”

- Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch
(Shevat I, Collected Writings)

By the end of nineteenth century, Jews began to think about a national renaissance in the British Mandate of Palestine through a Zionist movement. The simple impulse was to reclaim the Jewish national birthright as a ‘people in their promised land’. However, farming and chalutziyut was an essential part of this vision. This vision of Zionism required a change in the economic structure of the Jewish people, shifting from

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occupational jobs – lawyers, doctors, money lenders – to agricultural employment. All of this led to what we know as chalutziyut: pioneering not just in the sense of working on the frontiers in tough conditions but literally trying to pioneer and create a new Jewish society.

Key Thinker 1) A.D. Gordon

Aaron David Gordon (mostly known as A.D. Gordon) was an important thinker and figure in the Socialist Zionist movement. However more than he was an influential Zionist philosopher whose writings articulated the impulse I wrote about above, he also personified the approach and actively lived out his ideals. (*Real Dugma Ishit!*) After working as a book-keeper in Russia, he moved to the British Mandate of Palestine in 1902 at age forty-seven and redefined himself as a farmer at the first Zionist kibbutz Degania, on the banks of the Sea of Galilee. He perceived agricultural labour as not only restoring the 'abandoned' land, but also the damaged Jewish spirit. In his 1918 essay, *Our Tasks Ahead*, he wrote:



"We Jews have developed an attitude of looking down on physical labour...but labour is the only force which binds man to the soil...it is the basic energy for the creation of national culture. This is what we do not have, but we are not aware of missing it...In my dream I come to the land. And it is barren and desolate and given over to strangers; destruction darkens its face and foreigners rule in corruption. And the land of my forefathers is distant and foreign to me and I too am distant and foreign to it. And the only link that ties my soul to her, the only reminder that I am her son and she is my mother, is that my soul is as desolate as hers."

Discussion Points

- 📖 What do you think about A.D. Gordon's approach to the value of physical labour? Do you agree with it/do you think it is something missing from our lives today?
- 📖 How might you apply this approach in your life today?
- 📖 The Chalutzim 'jumped off a cliff' in moving to British Mandate Palestine without any sort of agricultural training. How might your chanichim apply a similar mentality to their lives?

Key Thinker 2) Rav A.Y. Kook

Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook also expressed a similar approach (although without most of the socialism) that was rooted in Romantic Nationalism¹. He wrote about how a nation is a living organism that is more than the sum of its people with both a spirit and a body. In his model:

The spirit is expressed through the culture of the nation.

The body is the land.

The two things influence each other. If you don't have one the other is intrinsically flawed.

For Rav Kook space wasn't an instrumental answer to the question of "where are you?" but an answer to the question of "who are you?". A key phrase to remember is "Eretz Yisrael Eineinah Kinyan Chitzoni – the Land is not an external acquisition" (Orot 1:1). Rav Kook saw the relationship between the Land and the People as similar to our own relationship to parts of our bodies. A good way to understand this Romantic approach of Rav Kook is to think



about the difference between the statement of "my shoes belong to me" and "my legs belong to me". The latter is an absurd thing to say, my legs are me! Rav Kook's approach views land in the same way. The land is, fundamentally, us. This also helps to understand Rav Kook's conception of Galut. Exile is the disconnect between spirit and body; 2000 years of nationhood that was only spirit (i.e. not having their land) led to a sickness in Rav Kook's eyes. A return to the land was a healing and reconnection between spirit and body.

Discussion Points:

- 📖 Does this approach to the Land of Israel appeal to you?
- 📖 Do you think that culture and physical land are connected? (Another way to think about this: do you think 'British culture' is intrinsically connected or influenced by the climate and environment of Britain?)
- 📖 Rav Kook's approach talks about a healing of the spirit of Israel. Do you think this has happened? How might we identify this 'healing'?

¹ Romantic Nationalism argued that geography formed the natural economy of a people, and that their customs and society would develop along the lines that their basic environment favoured. It argued that a people and their culture were inherently linked to their land and physical environment.



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What does this all have to do with Bnei Akiva?

Historically: Bnei Akiva in Israel was founded with the aim of offering a competing (Religious Zionist) youth movement to the very popular Socialist Zionist ones. There were also a number of Kibbutzim created in the same model of competition.

Today: there are some fascinating examples of Bnei Akiva and/or Daati Leumi initiatives that are trying to reclaim both a connection to the land and a chalutziyut spirit.

In 1925 a young man named Yechiel Eliyash arrived in Palestine. Brought up in a small Polish community, he was fulfilling a lifelong dream to live in the Holy land. Yechiel worked for Hapoel Hamizrachi and studied at Yeshivat Mercaz Harav in Jerusalem. The town was very different back then: A fledgling community with only basic amenities and under the British Military administration granted by the League of Nations. Jewish pioneers were struggling, engaged in a formidable effort to succeed economically and to build their homeland. However, there was another concern as well: the need to redefine the spiritual-cultural identity of the Jewish nation. At a time of great economic hardship, strong ideological socialist groupings emerged (*see AD Gordon*). The general direction was to create a new Jewish society, to see the development of a 'new Jew'. To do so, these immigrants felt they must abandon the 'old' and 'binding' Jewish tradition, together with its culture and laws.

One of the primary groups involved in this process was the Histadrut Klalit (national labour movement) and many religious young people joined secular social groups. They were drawn to socialist workers' youth groups such as Hano'ar Ha'oved, Hatzofim, Maccabee and Beitar. This social and ideological erosion of religious youth could not be tolerated for any length of time, and presented a severe existential threat to the new religious movement Hapoel Hamizrachi.



In 1928, nineteen-year-old Yechiel Eliyash approached the leadership of Hapoel Hamizrachi to ask for their help founding a youth movement based on the ideal of Torah Va'Avodah with the purpose of strengthening young people's spirit and organising them within a proud social framework. After much debate the youth movement started (*see the Extra Chomer for details about this – it's really cool and speaks to the tension between young people and adult leadership!*)



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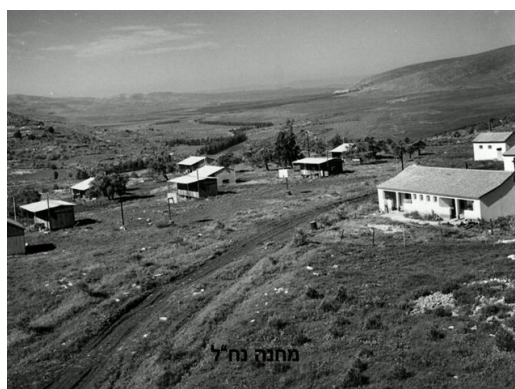
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The first few months were not easy. In 1929, on 24th Adar 5689 (6th March 1929), about thirty chaverim convened to found this new religious youth movement. It was hard for them to get used to working with a madrich and not a teacher and the discipline of school. But they chose for themselves an 'Overseeing Committee' and they went to work. There was still no electricity in Jerusalem, and every evening activity had to start by cleaning and filling an old oil lamp. Once the group took shape, they decided to fix Lag BaOmer as the 'Foundation Day' of the movement.

They started off by arranging a festive Mifkad, and they declared on it the establishment of the movement of Bnei Akiva in Israel. The date was fixed for Lag BaOmer in light of their connection to Rabbi Akiva, in whose name they were called, and whose pupils they wanted to be like. Every year since Bnei Akiva in Israel have celebrated their founding on Lag BaOmer.

Kibbutz Lavi

The kibbutz was founded in 1949 by young religious immigrants from the United Kingdom, from Bnei Akiva UK. Many of the founders were among the 10,000 Jewish children who were taken to the United Kingdom from Germany as part of the 1938-1940 Kindertransport program following Kristallnacht. In its early years the Bachad movement² raised money in the UK for the kibbutz as well as providing agricultural and educational training for Bnei Akiva and Bachad members in the UK on Thaxted Farm, Essex. Lavi was the first kibbutz where children lived with their parents, instead of in communal children's quarters where the children of other kibbutzim were housed and fed. Among the founders of the kibbutz was Yehuda Avner, a British immigrant who became a diplomat and advisor to several Israeli prime ministers. The first couple to be married on the kibbutz, founders Michael and Marion Mittwoch, celebrated the birth of their 100th great-grandchild in January 2015.



² Originally Bachad was a Religious Zionist youth movement in Germany called Brit Chalutzim Daatim - shortened to its initial letters Bachad. Its members prepared themselves for aliya. A group of them came over to England among the refugees who were permitted to enter this country in the years immediately before the war. These were the founding members of BA UK.



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Extra Chomer

David Ben-Gurion: The Socialist Zionist?

Interestingly David Ben-Gurion, who was more commonly associated with Political Zionism or practical Labour Zionism expressed a similar romantic perspective on working the land when he retired from politics in his later life:

This life as a simple citizen and labourer has its benefits not only for the person himself but perhaps also for his country. After all, there is room for only one Prime Minister, but for those who make the desert bloom there is room for hundreds, thousands and even millions. And the destiny of the state is in the hands of the many rather than of a single individual. There are times when an individual feels he should do those things which only can and should be done by the many. David Ben-Gurion, "Why I Retired to the Desert," The New York Times Magazine, March 28, 1954, p. 47.

Bnei Akiva in Israel – The Fight to Get it Started!

In 1928, nineteen-year-old Yechiel Eliyash approached the leadership of Hapoel Hamizrachi to ask for their help founding a youth movement based on the ideal of Torah Va'Avodah with the purpose of strengthening young people's spirit and organising them within a proud social framework. Hapoel Hamizrachi deferred this to an agreement of their 'Committee of Experts on Religious Education'.

Now here is the surprise: the Committee unanimously decided that it was not appropriate to establish a religious youth movement. They gave three main reasons:

1. There would be a conflict between a modern youth movement and religious education.
2. A youth movement would damage the religious education in schools.
3. There would be no appropriate (adult) educational figurehead, who could lead such a movement.

Q: What do you think about these reasons given?

Q: Do they sound foreign or familiar to objections you might hear about youth movements today? On Machane it can be a good time to ask your Chanichim to consider the relationship between adult leaders in their communities and youth leaders in their communities.



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See below for Yechiel's answer to Hapoel Mizrachi:

*After I read the debate of this meeting, I knew that one could not rely on encouragement from these people [the adult leadership], and I decided that it lay on me to establish the movement of Bnei Akiva based on a religious revolt. This movement was to enhance dynamic religiousness, improve Torah and glorify it... **At that time, there was a need to rebel.** The Histadrut ruled mightily. Any Hapoel Mizrachi member who sought work in construction was banished in disgrace. Anti-religious sentiment was rife... **We believed that a youth movement would have to engender faith in its own strength and in our power to create a religious Judaism with great accomplishments. Not individual creative Jews, but organised religious Judaism...** The opponents, including leaders of Hapoel Hamizrachi feared rebellion and contended that a religious movement, intrinsically, cannot be oppositional and must be traditional. Some worried that the conduct of study in school would be impaired; others disparaged young people's ability to stand that the head of a youth movement. Impressive educators, they argued, must hold this position. **However, despite all this opposition, I decided to found the youth movement...***

See more about the current Kibbutz HaDati movement here (website in Ivrit):
<http://www.kdati.org.il/cgi-webaxy/item?index>

K2: Kibbutz Galuyot



Aims:

1. **Understand** the meaning of Kibbutz Galuyot.
2. **Learn** about different Aliyot and olim communities.
3. **Appreciate** how Israel is a home for all Jews.



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What is Kibbutz Galuyot?

'Kibbutz Galuyot' is usually translated as the 'ingathering of exiles,' or in other words, the return of Jews to Eretz Yisrael from the Diaspora. It appears in the form of promises and prophecies in Tanach, and is also a central theme of the Israeli Declaration of Independence.

Kibbutz Galuyot in Tanach

וְהָיָה כִּי־בָאוּ עֲלֶיךָ כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה הַבְּרָכָה וְהַקְּלָלָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ וְהִשְׁבַּתְתָּ אֶל־לְבָבְךָ בְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר הִדְיָחְךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ שָׁמָּה: וְשָׁבַת עֲדָה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְשָׁמַעְתָּ בְּקוֹל כָּל אֲשֶׁר־אֲנֹכִי מְצַוֶּךָ הַיּוֹם וּבָנִיתָ בְּכָל־לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל־נַפְשְׁךָ: וְשָׁב ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת־שְׁבוּתְךָ וְרַחֲמֶךָ וְשָׁב וְקִבְּצָךָ מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר הִפִּיצָךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ שָׁמָּה: אִם־יִהְיֶה נִדְחָךְ בְּקִצְצֵה הַשָּׁמַיִם מִשָּׁם יִקְבְּצֶךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּמִשָּׁם יִקְחֶךָ: וְהִבִּיאָךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־רָשׁוּ אֲבֹתֶיךָ וּרְשַׁתָּהּ וְהִיטְבֶּךָ וְהִרְבֶּךָ מֵאֲבֹתֶיךָ:

"When all these things befall you—the blessing and the curse that I have set before you—and you take them to heart amidst the various nations to which Hashem, your G-d has banished you. And you return to Hashem, your G-d, and you and your children heed His command with all your heart and soul, just as I enjoin upon you this day. Then Hashem, your G-d will restore your fortunes and take you back in love. He will bring you together again from all the peoples where Hashem, your G-d has scattered you. Even if your outcasts are at the ends of the world, from there Hashem, your G-d will gather you, from there He will fetch you. And Hashem, your G-d will bring you to the land that your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will make you more prosperous and more numerous than your fathers."

- Devarim 30:1-5

The idea of Kibbutz Galuyot originates as a promise by G-d to His new nation that wherever they may be around the world, He will bring them back to the land to live as one nation as His people. It is believed to be the first stage of Geula, and this is why many believe that a new Jewish state, teaming with Jewish immigrants, heralds the beginning of the Messianic era. This belief stems from the prophecies regarding the ingathering of exiles in Sifrei Yishayahu, Yirmiyahu and Yechezkel.

וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יוֹסִיף ה' שְׁנֵית יְדוֹ לְקִנּוֹת אֶת־שְׂאֵר עַמּוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׂאָר מֵאֲשׁוּר וּמִמִּצְרַיִם וּמִפְּתָרוֹס וּמִכּוּשׁ וּמִמִּעִילָם וּמִשֹּׁנְעָר וּמִחַמַּת וּמֵאֲזַיִ הֵימָּן: וְנָשָׂא נֹס לְגוֹיִם וְאָסַף נְדָחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּנְפֻצוֹת יְהוּדָה וְקִבֵּץ מֵאֲרָבַע כְּנָפוֹת הָאָרֶץ:

"On that day, Hashem will apply His hand again to redeeming the other part of His people from Assyria—as also from Egypt, Pathros, Nubia, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and the coastlands. He will hold up a signal to the nations And assemble the banished of Israel, And gather the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth."

(Yishayahu 11:11-12)

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וּנְמַצְאֲתִי לָכֶם נְאֻמֵּיהּ וְשִׁבְתִּי אֶתְ[שְׁבוּתְכֶם] (שְׁבִיתְכֶם) וְקִבְצְתִי אֶתְכֶם מִכָּל־הַגּוֹיִם וּמִכָּל־הַמְּקוֹמוֹת אֲשֶׁר הִדְחִיתִי אֶתְכֶם שָׁם נְאֻמֵּיהּ וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי אֶתְכֶם אֶל־הַמְּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־הִגְלִיתִי אֶתְכֶם מִשָּׁם:

I will be at hand for you - declares Hashem - and I will restore your fortunes. And I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places to which I have banished you - declares Hashem - and I will bring you back to the place from which I have exiled you.
(Yirmiyahu 29:14)

בְּרִיחַ נִיחַח אֶרְצָה אֶתְכֶם בְּהוֹצִיאִי אֶתְכֶם מִדְּהַעֲמִים וְקִבְצְתִי אֶתְכֶם מִדְּהָאָרְצוֹת אֲשֶׁר נִפְצַתֶם בָּם וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי בְּכֶם לְעֵינֵי הַגּוֹיִם: וַיְדַעְתֶּם כִּי־אֲנִי ה' בְּהִבְיֵאִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל־אֲדַמַּת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתִּי אֶת־יָדַי לְתַת אֹתָהּ לְאֲבוֹתֵיכֶם:

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Actualising these Nevuot

The oldest, modern wave of Aliyah took place in the 18th and 19th centuries with the immigration of Chassidic and Kabbalistic Rabbis and their disciples, and the messianic dreams of the Vilna Gaon inspired hundreds of his disciples to make Aliyah as well.

The next wave of Aliyah (confusingly called the 'First Aliyah') occurred between 1881 and 1903. An estimated 25,000–35,000 Jews immigrated in this wave came mostly from Eastern Europe and from Yemen. Many of the European Jewish immigrants during the late 19th-early 20th century period gave up after a few months and went back to their country of origin, often suffering from hunger and disease. The success of this wave is debated: some Jews were able to succeed in Eretz Yisrael, and the Old Yishuv was founded, but at the same time, many Jews could not make it work.



The 'Second Aliyah' took place between 1904 and 1914, during which approximately 35,000 Jews immigrated mainly from the Russian empire and Yemen. The Second Aliyah is largely credited with the revival of the Hebrew language and establishing it as the standard language for Jews in Israel. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda contributed to the creation of the first modern Hebrew dictionary. Although he was an immigrant of the First Aliyah, his work mostly bore fruit during the second.

Most of the Second Aliyah's members were young people inspired by socialist ideals. The first kibbutz, Degania (1909), and Ha-Shomer, the first Jewish self-defence organization in Palestine were founded in this period, as was the Ahuzat



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Bayit neighbourhood, established as a suburb of Jaffa, which developed into Tel Aviv, the first modern all-Jewish city.

The 'Third Aliyah' lasted from 1919, after the end of WWI, until 1923. Of the approximately 40,000 Jews of this wave, almost all of them were from Eastern Europe. Most of the newcomers were young chalutzim (pioneers), who built roads and towns and began the draining of marshes in the Jezreel Valley and the Hefer Plain. Although the British Mandate imposed Aliyah quotas, the Yishuv numbered 90,000 by the end of this period.

The 'Fourth Aliyah' was a direct result of the economic crisis and anti-Jewish policies in Poland, along with the introduction of stiff immigration quotas by the United States. Most of the immigrants belonged to the middle class and brought modest sums of capital with which they established small businesses and workshops. Tel Aviv grew. Notwithstanding the Yishuv's economic woes, with an economic crisis in 1926-1928, the Fourth Aliyah did much to strengthen the towns, further industrial development and reinstate Jewish labour in the villages. In all, the Fourth Aliyah brought 82,000 Jews to Palestine, of whom 23,000 left.

The signal event of the 'Fifth Aliyah' was the Nazi accession to power in Germany in 1933. Persecution and the Jews' worsening situation caused aliyah from Germany to increase, and aliyah from Eastern Europe to resume. Many of the immigrants from Germany were professionals; their impact was to be felt in many fields of endeavour. Within a four-year period (1933-1936), 174,000 Jews settled in the country. The towns flourished as new industrial enterprises were founded and construction of the Haifa port and the oil refineries was completed. Throughout the country, "stockade and tower" settlements were established. During this period - in 1929 and again in 1936-39 - violent Arab attacks on the Jewish population took place, called "disturbances" by the British.

By 1940, nearly 250,000 Jews had arrived during the Fifth Aliyah (20,000 of them left later) and the Yishuv's population reached 450,000. From this time on, the practice of "numbering" the waves of immigration was discontinued.



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Aliyah Bet

During World War II, the aliyah (immigration) effort focused on rescuing Jews from Nazi-occupied Europe. Some olim entered the country on visas issued under the White Paper quota but the majority came as illegal immigrants (Ma'apilim). This immigration, called Aliyah Bet, arrived by land and by sea, from Europe and the Middle East, in contravention of the British Mandatory government's orders.



From the end of World War II until the establishment of Israel (1945-1948), illegal immigration was the major method of immigration, because the British virtually terminated the option of legal immigration by setting the quota at a mere 18,000 Jews per year. During the years 1944-1948, the Jews in Eastern Europe sought to leave that continent

by any means. Emissaries from the Yishuv, Jewish partisans and Zionist youth movements cooperated in establishing the Beriha (escape) organization, which helped nearly 200,000 Jews leave Europe. The majority settled in Palestine.

“Illegal” immigration (Ha’apala) was also organized by the Mossad L’aliyah Bet, a branch of the Haganah. The Palyam, a marine branch of the Palmach, was given responsibility for commanding and sailing ships. Sixty-six illegal immigration sailings carrying 70,000 immigrants were organized during these years, but only a few managed to penetrate the British blockade and bring their passengers ashore. In 1947, 4,500 immigrants on the Exodus were sent back to Europe by the mandatory government. The British also stopped vessels carrying immigrants at sea and interned the captured immigrants in camps in Cyprus. Most of these people only arrived in Israel after the establishment of the state.



In total, it is estimated that between 1939 and 1948 approximately 110,000 Jewish immigrants had participated in Aliyah Bet by sailing to the territory of the British Mandate. The number of immigrants during the entire mandate period, legal and illegal alike, was approximately 480,000, close to 90% of them from Europe. The



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population of the Yishuv expanded to 650,000 by the time statehood was proclaimed in 1948.

Operation Magic Carpet

Following the Partition Plan, Arab Muslim rioters, assisted by the local police force, engaged in a pogrom in Aden, Yemen, that killed 82 Jews and destroyed hundreds of Jewish homes. Aden's Jewish community was economically paralyzed, as most of the Jewish stores and businesses were destroyed. The increasingly perilous situation led to the emigration of virtually the entire Yemenite Jewish community between June 1949 and September 1950 in Operation Magic Carpet. During this period, over 50,000 Jews immigrated to Israel. The plan was for the Jews from all over Yemen to make their way to the Aden area. Over the course of the operation, hundreds of migrants died in Hashed Camp.



"I had no idea what I was getting into, absolutely none. It was pretty much seat-of-the-pants flying in those days. Navigation was by dead reckoning and eyesight. Planes were getting shot at. The airport in Tel Aviv was getting bombed all the time. We had to put extra fuel tanks in the planes so we had the range to avoid landing in Arab territory."

- Warren Metzger, pilot of Operation Magic Carpet

Aliyah from the Soviet Union

The 1970s Soviet Union aliyah was the mass immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel after the Soviet Union lifted its ban on Jewish refusenik emigration in 1971. More than 150,000 Soviet Jews immigrated during this period, motivated variously by religious or ideological aspiration, economic opportunity, and a desire to escape anti-Semitic discrimination.

Between 1989 and 2006, about 1.6 million Soviet Jews and their non-Jewish relatives and spouses, as defined by the Law of Return, emigrated from the former Soviet Union. About 979,000, or 61%, migrated to Israel. Another 325,000 migrated to the United States, and 219,000 migrated to Germany.

The majority of the immigrant wave were Ashkenazi Jews; however, a significant proportion were Mizrahi groups such as the Mountain Jews, Georgian Jews, and Bukharan Jews – with each ethnic group bringing its own distinctive culture to



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Israel. The group successfully integrated economically into Israel: in 2012, the average salary of Former Soviet Union immigrants was comparable to that of native-born Israeli Jews.

Aliyah from Ethiopia

The first major wave of aliyah from Ethiopia took place in the mid-1970s. In 1984/5 during Operation Moses some 6,500–8,000 Ethiopian Jews were flown to Israel. In 1991 Operation Solomon was launched to bring home the Beta Israel Jews of Ethiopia. On 24th May 1991, 34 aircraft landed at Addis Ababa and brought 14,325 Jews from Ethiopia to Israel. Since that time, Ethiopian Jews have continued to immigrate to Israel bringing the number of Ethiopian Israelis today to over 100,000. Currently, Operation Rock of Israel is aiming to bring a further 2,000 members of the Falash Mura community from Ethiopia. In the past they have struggled significantly to integrate in society and get jobs, but this situation is certainly improving; there are more Ethiopians in more distinguished positions in business, politics, and the army, and the Beta Israel festival of Sigd was even recognised as an official festival in Israel in 2008.

Pnina Tamanu-Shata: Biography

Pnina Tamanu-Shata was born in 1981 in the village of Wuzaba in Ethiopia, and in 1984, at age three, she immigrated to Israel through Sudan as part of Operation Moses. She was recruited to the IDF in 1999 and served as an operations sergeant in the Home Front Command.

In recognition of her social activism over the past decade - mainly the struggles she has led against discrimination and racism - Tamanu-Shata received the 2016 Unsung Hero Award from the Drum Major Institute. In 2012 Tamanu-Shata ran for the 19th Knesset on behalf of the Yesh Atid party headed by Yair Lapid. At 31 years old, she was elected to the Knesset for the first time, making her the only Israeli woman of Ethiopian origin to be elected to the Israeli parliament. She was even appointed Deputy Speaker of the Knesset during her first term.

Following the March 2020 elections, she was appointed Minister of Aliyah and Integration, also known as Minister of Immigrant Absorption, becoming the first Ethiopian-born minister in the Israeli government.

The Law of Return

In 1950, Israel's Knesset passed a remarkable law, beginning with a few simple words that defined Israel's central purpose: *"Every Jew has the right to immigrate to this country..."*

With the inception of the State of Israel, two thousand years of wandering were officially over. Since then, Jews have been entitled to simply show up and request to be Israeli citizens, assuming they posed no imminent danger to public health, state security, or the Jewish people as a whole. Essentially, all Jews everywhere are Israeli citizens by right. In 1970, Israel took another historic step by granting automatic citizenship not only to Jews, but also to their non-Jewish children, grandchildren, and spouses, and to the non-Jewish spouses of their children and grandchildren. This addition not only ensured that families would not be broken



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apart, but also promised a safe haven in Israel for non-Jews subject to persecution because of their Jewish roots.

Melting-pot vs. fruit salad

Since its birth in 1948, the Israeli State has welcomed over 3,000,000 immigrants from all over the world, Russia, Ethiopia, the UK, the USA, Europe, Yemen... Although around 15,000 Olim enter the country each year, there have been waves of Aliyot which significantly changed the demographics: the Russian Aliyah in the 1990's and the Ethiopian Aliyah in the 1980's. By virtue of the various Aliyot, Israel has been described as a melting pot for all Jews. Jews who once lived in the cold climates of Russia and ate borcht, now live and work side-by-side with Jews born in Ethiopia who lived in mud huts and ate Injera. But do these cultures merge seamlessly in real life? Are they absorbed into one uniform, Israeli culture (melting pot), or do they keep their traditions and stay separate (fruit salad)? What are your experiences of 'Israeli' culture?

Discussion Points

- 🗣️ In Bnei Akiva, we learn about Aliyah from a young age – making the move from our birthplace to the land of Israel – but what happens when we arrive?
- 🗣️ When citizens of countries all around the world descend on one tiny piece of land what is the outcome? Is there an Israeli culture to which they strive to integrate or do new immigrants hold on to the language, foods and dress that they are familiar with?
- 🗣️ Are there prejudices and discriminations amongst these immigrant communities or are they all seen as equals?

K3: From Exile to Redemption: Diaspora and State



Aims:

1. **Empower** our Chanichim through the understanding of the importance that diaspora Jews and specifically British Jews played in Zionist history and the shaping of the state.
2. **Discuss** the relationship between contemporary British Jewry and the State of Israel.
3. **Help** our Chanichim appreciate the miraculous nature of the state of Israel as the fulfilment of a 2000-year dream and the unique role of religious Zionism in the British community, in helping to build strong Zionist identities.



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Introduction

The story of the Jewish people's journey from a long, torturous and exasperating exile to their eventual return to their religious and historic homeland is a miraculous one. Numerous books detail these various historic events that saw a nation at its lowest point in history turn itself around and re-establish their dream of finally coming back. It really is one of the greatest comeback stories in history: from Holocaust to the State of Israel. From two thousand years of life dependent on the good will of host nations to our own autonomous, sovereign state. Machane is the perfect opportunity to educate our Chanichim about the miracle of a country that unfortunately due to the human condition we take for granted, and to remind them of the differences between Jewish life before the state and Jewish life after. However, the state not only changed the way that Jews lived inside Israel, but life changed for Diaspora Jewry as well.

Consider for example, what it would be like living as a Jew In Britain without the existence of the state? would we feel as confident to express our Jewishness?

So that we may empower our Chanichim and help them understand the important role they can have in the shaping of this miraculous state, and how the story of Israel is relevant for them, let us consider how Zionist figures with British backgrounds helped build, shape, and influence the State.

Chaim Weizmann

The first president of Israel, Chaim Weizmann, having been born in Russia, moved to England in 1905, subsequently being elected to the General Zionist Congress, played a huge role in Zionist effort especially in negotiations and relationship with the British. Weizmann's scientific assistance to the Allied forces in World War I brought him into close contact with British leaders, enabling him to play a key role in the issuing of the Balfour Declaration on November 2, 1917, -- in which Britain committed itself to the establishment of a Jewish home in Palestine.



In 1918, Weizmann was appointed head of the Zionist Commission sent to Palestine by the British government to advise on the future development of the country. There, he laid the foundation stone of the Hebrew University. That same year Weizmann met in Aqaba with Emir Feisal, son of Sharif Hussein of Mecca, the leader of the Arab movement, to discuss prospects of reaching an understanding on the establishment of independent Arab and Jewish states.



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Shortly after, Weizmann led the Zionist delegation to the Peace Conference at Versailles, and in 1920 became the president of the World Zionist Organization (WZO). He headed the Jewish Agency which was established in 1929. Chaim Weizmann again served as President of the WZO from 1935-1946. During the years that led up to World War II, he invested much effort in establishing the Jewish Brigade. He also tried, unsuccessfully, to prevent the issuing in 1939 of the White Paper, which in effect halted Jewish immigration to Palestine. During the Zionist Congress held in Geneva in August 1939, Weizmann harshly criticized the British government for its betrayal of the Mandate and the Jewish people.

On August 29, 1939, he wrote to British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain to confirm previous declarations that "the Jews stand by Great Britain and will fight on the side of the democracies...The Jewish Agency has recently had differences in the political field with the Mandatory Power. We would like these differences to give way before the greater and more pressing necessities of the time."

Weizmann and his wife Vera paid a heavy price during the war, when they lost their son, Michael, a pilot in the Royal Air Force, who failed to return from an operational flight over the Bay of Biscay in February 1942. Weizmann's other son Benjamin served as an anti-aircraft gunner in England and suffered a breakdown from which he never fully recovered. After World War II, Weizmann was instrumental in the adoption of the Partition Plan by the United Nations on November 29, 1947, and in the recognition of Israel by the United States.

Discussion Points:

- 📖 To what extent is Chaim Weizmann an example of the important role of the diaspora in Zionist efforts?
- 📖 Does Diaspora Jewry still play an important role for the State of Israel?

Esther Cailingold

Esther Cailingold (1925-1948) was a British born heroine of the Israel War of Independence and the Machal. She was born in Whitechapel, London, on June 28, 1925. She was the oldest child of Moshe Cailingold and Anne Fenechel. Moshe was a founder of Young Mizrachi in Poland, the predecessor to Bnei Akiva, and Esther absorbed Zionism through her home. In 1936, the family moved to Stamford Hill in North London. Esther attended the North London Collegiate School for girls, eventually winning a scholarship to Goldsmiths College, University of London, to study English. She graduated with first-class honours in 1946.

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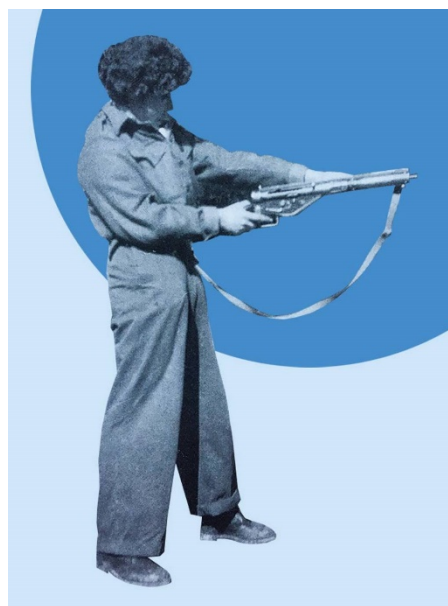
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Esther's Zionism was reinforced by the horrors of the Holocaust and British betrayal of the Palestine Mandate. She had been involved in Zionist youth activities. In 1946, she decided to emigrate to the land of Israel, and applied for a post as an English teacher at the Evelina de Rothschild school in Jerusalem.

Esther arrived in Jerusalem in the turbulent period preceding the Israel War of Independence, on December 1st, 1946. She witnessed the violence and British cruelty toward the Jews, including the interception of Aliya Bet immigration ships such as the and the execution of Irgun activist Dov Gruner, and the drawn drawn-out of the refugee ships such as the Exodus. Her letters to her parents began to show a tougher attitude and an increasingly anti-British sentiment. In autumn 1947 she joined the Haganah. During a tough battle defending the Old city Esther died in May 1948. This is the last letter Esther sent to her parents before her death. There is a memorial for Esther in the old city.



*Dear Mummy and Daddy, and Everybody,
If you get this at all, it will be, I suppose, typical of all my hurried, messy letters. I am writing it to beg of you that whatever may have happened to me, you will make the effort to take it in the spirit that I want and to understand that for myself I have no regrets. We have had a bitter fight: I have tasted of Gehenom [hell ed.] – but it has been worthwhile because I am quite convinced that the end will see a Jewish state and the realization of our longings.*

I shall be only one of many who fell in sacrifice, and I was urged to write this because one in particular was killed today who meant a great deal to me. Because of the sorrow I felt, I want you to take it otherwise – to remember that we were soldiers and had the greatest and noblest cause to fight for. God is with us, I know, in His Holy City, and I am proud and ready to pay the price it may cost us to reprieve it.

Don't think I have taken 'unnecessary risks.' That does not pay when manpower is short. I hope you may have a chance of meeting any of my co-fighters who survive if I do not, and that you will be pleased and not sad of how they talk of



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me. Please, please, do not be sadder than you can help. I have lived my life fully if briefly, and I think this is the best way — 'short and sweet.' Very sweet it has been here in our own land. I hope you shall enjoy from Mimi and Asher the satisfaction you missed in me. Let it be without regrets, and then I too shall be happy. I am thinking of you all, every single one of you in the family, and am full of pleasure at the thought that you will, one day, very soon I hope, come and enjoy the fruits of that for which we are fighting.

Much, much love, be happy and remember me in happiness.

*Shalom and le'hitraot,
Your loving Esther*

Discussion Points:

- 📖 What lessons can we learn from Esther's Zionism and bravery?
- 📖 How do you think Esther dealt with the conflict of being a British Jew and the difficulties that the British mandate posed? Did Esther put her Zionism first? How do you think you would have dealt with the conflicts Esther faced between these two identities?

Yehuda Avner

Lawrence Haffner (later Yehuda Avner) was born in Manchester, England in 1928. He was active in Bnei Akiva and was committed to helping build a Jewish state. In his book, 'The Prime Ministers', he recalls the anti-Semitism he saw and experienced in Britain, including anti-Semitic rioting in the aftermath of the Sergeants affair. Upon high school graduation, he moved to Jerusalem, then part of British Mandatory Palestine in November 1947.



Avner fought in the Siege of Jerusalem during Israel's 1948 War of Independence. In 1949, he was amongst the founders of Kibbutz Lavi, a religious kibbutz founded by British BA. He temporarily moved back to Britain to work for BA as Mazkir. In 1953, he married Mimi Cailingold, a fellow British Jewish immigrant who was the sister of Esther Cailingold. He returned to Israel with his wife in 1954. Avner went on to serve as Speechwriter and Secretary to Israeli Prime Ministers Golda Meir and Levi Eshkol, and as Advisor to Israeli Prime Ministers Yitzhak Rabin,



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Menachem Begin, and Shimon Peres. Avner served in diplomatic positions at the Israeli Consulate in New York, and the Israeli Embassy to the US in Washington, DC, and as Israel's Ambassador to Britain, Ireland and Australia.

There are many more Jews with British connections, who also played a significant role in shaping the State. For example, Abba Eban lived and went to school in London, Rabbi Herzog lived in Leeds for a while, Chaim Herzog was born in Belfast, and even Rav Kook lived in the UK for a time and was Rabbi of the Machzeki Adas Shul in the East end of London. Educating our chanichim about such characters is important in helping them see themselves as having a significant role to play within Zionism.

The Diaspora and the State

Over the years Israel has developed from a country which was formed from the Diaspora to now a country which impacts the Diaspora. This distinction is one that recently has caused great debate amongst Israeli Government officials and Diaspora leadership groups.

The impact that Israel has on the Diaspora is one that cannot be ignored. On the one hand, Israel is often used as an excuse for antisemitism, as can be seen by an increase in antisemitic attacks and rhetoric every time the security situation in Israel worsens. At the same time, the very existence of the State acts as a source of pride and security for Diaspora Jews the world over. This brings up a big question as to the relationship between the Diaspora and the State.

DISCUSSION POINTS - Does the State owe a duty to the Diaspora or do the Diaspora owe a duty to the State? Should Israel have a Ministry of Diaspora Affairs?

British Jews today and their relationship with Zionism

According to the 2010 JPR survey, 72% of British Jews self-define as Zionists, with 21% saying they are not Zionists and 7% unsure. However, according to a 2015 survey there seems to have been a major change in self-definition. Only 59% now say they are Zionists, with 31% saying they are not and 10% unsure. And yet, as the authors of the report discuss at some length, these "non-Zionists" (those who say they are not Zionists and those who say they are unsure, totalling 41% of British Jews) are hardly your classic anti-Zionists. 75% agree ideologically with Zionism (that Israel has a right to exist as a Jewish state). 67% feel emotionally attached to Zionism (saying that they take a deep pride in Israel's achievements).

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And almost half — 46% — place Israel as central to, or important to, their own Jewish identity. Indeed, 36% of the non-Zionists agree with all three.

So, what is the explanation for this? Well, 43% of the non-Zionists believe that there is a contradiction between being a Zionist and criticising Israeli government policy (for what it is worth, 85% of self-defined Zionists disagree). But this cannot be the full explanation. There are clearly now a body of British Jews who have all of the attitudes, feelings and behaviours of Zionists, who say you can be an Israel critic and a Zionist, but still reject this label.



The authors venture that one possible explanation is the extreme pejorative connotations of the term “Zionist” in some of the discourse but say there needs to be more research.³

Discussion Points

- Why do you think there was such a drastic change between the number of British Jews who identified as Zionists in 2010 and 2015? Do you think this represents actions taken by the State of Israel in those years or the changing nature of the Jewish-British community?
- Are these challenges relevant to Bnei Akiva? How can we effectively educate our Chanichim towards a strong Zionist identity considering these challenges?
- What is the future for British Zionism? How does BA play apart in that future if any?
- Is advocating for Israel or advocating for change in Israel an inherently Zionist activity?
- How might Zionism differ, or go beyond, these activities?

“Zionism is too important to the Jewish people to give up on. Zionism is too profound an idea to be reduced merely to a tick-box list of attitudes about Israeli politics. As educators, let’s embrace Zionism and let’s create strong Jewish and strong Zionist identities, not just strong advocates for Israel or strong activists for change”. (Robin Moss, 2015)

³ Taken from an excellent article by Robin Moss: <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/identity-or-designation-whats-going-on-with-zionism-and-british-jews/>



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Given the challenges that classic Zionism as a strong identity, (rather than just an opinion on Israeli government policy), is facing in the UK, perhaps BAUK unique approach as religious Zionists can continue to educate towards strong Zionist identities, despite people's political leanings and views of the conflict. Religious Zionism sees the establishment of Israel as more than just a reality but in fact a divinely inspired tremendous historic event. Our Zionism goes far beyond a political opinion. It is part of our religious experience and our religious identity and Machane is our opportunity to educate towards that identity.

K4: 'The Four Tribes': Society and Citizenship



Aims:

1. **Explain** the major social divisions within Israeli society and show that it is more than Arab-Israeli conflict.
2. **Explore** different ways to engage our Chanichim in Israel's social divisions.
3. **Consider** how a Bnei Akiva world view will tackle these issues.

Introduction – 'Four Tribes'

In 2015, President Rivlin addressed a conference about the state of Israeli society. In it, he referred to a 'new Israeli order' - the reality of Israeli society today, quite different from how it was 25 years previously.

In 1990, the majority (52%) of Israeli primary school children were in the 'secular' mainstream Zionist stream, and there were 3 smaller 'minority' streams: 23% in Arab schools, 16% in religious (Zionist) state schools, and 9% in Charedi schools.



Now, the numbers are somewhat different: 38% in secular Zionist schools, 25% in Arab schools, 15% in religious (Zionist) schools, and 22% in Charedi schools.

Rivlin claimed that the reality now is four more-or-less equal-sized 'tribes' who, unfortunately, live quite separate lives and have little interaction. Yes, there are other 'divisions' - the left-right split (on both national-security issues and economic ones), Ashkenazi-Mizrachi, poor-rich - but the basic structure is based on these four tribes.

Israel has what we can call 'fault-lines' - specific divisions which are the 'border' between two tribes or groups in society. At the fault-lines, there can often be tensions or even conflict, which are important for madrichim to understand and educate about in a nuanced way.

Each section will look at a sector of Israeli society and will include one or two historical events which explain the development of that sector's identity.

Charedim and the State

Charedi Jews ("Charedi" means "trembling" or "one who fears" G-d) are a group within Orthodox Judaism. They are also known as "ultra-Orthodox," though not all Charedim like to be referred to this way, due to possible negative connotations of the word "ultra" as "extreme." It currently has a population of 1.1 million people



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in Israel, and Charedi society is large and diverse in terms of lifestyle, social status, and religious and intellectual ideology.

Despite this, it is united by some overarching characteristics. Firstly, Charedim are united by a reverence for Torah as a central factor in all aspects of their lives. Second, as Jerusalem-based researcher of Charedi society Aharon Rose writes, *“what primarily sets this Jewish movement apart from others is its total rejection of modern values, norms, and forms of inquiry.”*

What is behind this objection to modern life? Rose explains that this is both to prevent outside influence and *“remain loyal to the traditional Jewish identity in Eastern Europe that preceded the Emancipation.”* From the perspective of the Charedi community, it is only by safeguarding and expressing their particular identity that Jews can truly fulfil their religious obligations and ensure continuity of the community. Some argue that this worldview stems from the ideology of their forebear, the Chatam Sofer (Rabbi Moshe Sofer), who famously asserted, *“Chadash assur min haTorah - All that is new is prohibited.”*

In 1947, forced to concede on some level to the Zionist vision, Charedi representatives from Agudat Yisrael met with soon-to-be Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion. In what became known as the “Status Quo Agreement,” Ben-Gurion acceded to the following requests made by the group: Shabbat would be a national day of rest, Kashrut would be observed under state auspices, religious courts would decide matters of marriage and divorce, and existing religious educational systems would be recognized by the Jewish state. Agudat Israel even sent two representatives, Rabbis Yitzhak Meir Levin and Meir David Loewenstein, to sign Israel’s Declaration of Independence and to join Israel’s first government as a political party. The state of Israel was officially born, and so was its complicated relationship with its Charedi citizens.

<p>Jerusalem, Sunday 1 Tammuz 5707/June 19, 1947 In honor of the World Federation of Agudas Israel, Ben Yehuda Street, Sirsur Building, PO Box 326 Jerusalem</p> <p>Dear Sirs, The Agency administration heard from its chairman your request concerning guaranteeing matters of personal status, Shabbos, education and kashrus in the Jewish state which is now being established.</p> <p>As the chairman of the agency's administration told you, the Jewish Agency or any other entity in the country do not have the jurisdiction to predetermine the constitution of the Jewish state until it will be founded. The country's establishment requires UN approval, which is not possible if freedom of conscience is not guaranteed for all its citizens and it is clear that there won't be a theocratic state. The Jewish state will also have non-Jewish citizens — Christians and Muslims — and it is obvious that, retroactively, equality of rights must be guaranteed for all citizens, and there must be no coercion or discrimination in matters of religion or any other matters.</p> <p>We are pleased that you understand that there is no competent body to determine retrospectively the state constitution, and the country will be in certain areas free to determine its constitution and regime according to the will of its citizens.</p> <p>However, the administration appreciates your requirements, and she knows that these things trouble not only members of Agudas Israel, but many pious Jews in Israel who are in the camps of the Zionists and not involved in any political party. It completely understands your demands that the Agency's administration</p>		<p>should inform you of its stand concerning the questions you presented, and what she is willing to do if she has the influence and ability to decide, to fulfill your above-mentioned requests.</p> <p>The Agency's administration backs the undersigned to formulate its position on questions which you brought up in the discussion, and we hereby notify you of the Agency administration's stand: ...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shabbos. It is clear that the legal day of rest in the Jewish state will be Shabbos, while of course allowing the members of other religions to rest on their weekly holiday. 2. Kashrus. All necessary measures should be taken to ensure that every government kitchen which is serving Jews should have kosher food. 3. Personal status (<i>Ishut</i>). All members of the administration appreciate the seriousness of the problem and the major difficulties. From the point of view of all the entities that the Agency administration represents, everything possible will be done to provide the deep needs of the religious, to avoid, G-d forbid, dividing the house of Israel into two. 4. Education. Full autonomy of each educational system will be guaranteed and the government will not violate the religious status and religious conscience of any group of Jews. The State, of course, will determine the minimum obligatory courses, Hebrew language, history, science, etc., and will supervise compliance with this minimum, but it will give full freedom to every stream to manage education as it sees fit, and will stay away from encroaching on their religious conscience. <p>Yours truly, On behalf of the Jewish Agency D. Ben-Gurion Rav J. L. Fishman J. Greenbaum</p>
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Original letter sent from the Jewish Agency to the Executive Committee of Agudas Yisrael, later referred to as the Status Quo Agreement.

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עם ישראל בארץ ישראל על פי תורת ישראל

Am Yisrael b'Eretz Yisrael al pi Torat Yisrael

K4: 'The Four Tribes': Society and Citizenship

Since the establishment of the State, issues pertaining to religion and law such as marriage, military service and Shabbat policies have driven wedges between Charedi and secular Israelis. However, many Israeli Charedim have grown to identify more with the state of Israel in that time. This is partly the effect of simply living and growing up in Israel, and partly due to the involvement of Charedim at the highest levels of Israeli government.



From the outset of mandatory conscription, the Charedi community was opposed to joining the army and insisted it should be exempt from military service; instead they would learn Torah – a life philosophy known as *Torato Umanuto*, “*The Torah is his occupation.*” Prime Minister Ben-Gurion granted an exemption to the Haredi community while Israel was fighting for its existence. However, this applied to a relatively small population compared to today: In 1949, 400 Haredim were exempted from military service. Now that Israel’s population has grown by 15,000 percent, 62,500 Haredim are excused from serving in the army, causing significant controversy in Israeli politics and society.

In 2002, the Knesset passed the Tal Law, which allowed for the continuation of *Torato Umanuto*, but with the hope that the number of Charedim exempted would gradually reduce. However, in 2012, Israel’s Supreme Court determined that the Tal Law was unconstitutional. In 2017, Israel’s Supreme Court ruled that Charedi exemption from army service was unconstitutional and gave the government until December 2018 to come up with new legislation. This prompted protests from the Charedi community, and the Supreme Court extended the deadline for passing new legislation. The issue continues to be debated by politicians and Israelis.

Whilst the normative Charedi opinion is that Torah study is its community’s contribution to society, there is a Haredi unit in the IDF, and while the number of Haredi men and women serving in the army has grown, this still represents a small fraction of Israel’s large Charedi population.





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From the speech Yair Lapid didn't give at the 2021 swearing-in ceremony for the new government

"One of the Charedi Knesset Members sent me a message just before Shabbat which said, "The Kotzker Rebbe defined the saying, 'Just as their faces are not the same, so their opinions are not the same' as meaning, 'Just as no person is angry that his friend has a different face, so no person should be angry at his friend's different opinions.'" And then he added: "Let us hope for days of common good."

If the Kotzker Rebbe had known his words would become a WhatsApp message full of good intentions between two Knesset Members, one Charedi and one secular, in a free and democratic Israel, then I think he would have been pleased. I believe he would have said to us, "It cannot be that you do not see how close you are." We have an argument between us over politics and values, but we are not enemies. We live here together. Our fate is intertwined."

On the other hand, the majority of the population (four out of five Israeli Jews, according to a 2018 survey) thinks that Charedim should have to serve in the army (or do national service) just like everyone else. They do not like the fact that they and their own children risk their lives protecting the country while Charedim enjoy the safety of yeshiva.

In 1977, Prime Minister Menachem Begin asked the Agudat Yisrael party to join his Likud coalition; the party's influence was deepened in 1992 when it joined the United Torah Judaism (UTJ) alliance. UTJ currently holds seven seats in the Knesset, while the Shas party holds nine. Omer Yankelevich of the Blue and White party, was the first Haredi woman to hold a cabinet position in the Israeli government, serving as Minister of Diaspora Affairs in the last Knesset.

With the Charedi birth rate being considerably larger than the Israeli average, the considerable political power held by Charedi parties, and the slow shift towards viewing the State positively, the years to come will certainly be interesting with regards to the relationship between Charedim, the State and wider Israeli society.

Chilonim

Chilonim are the largest group – or 'tribe' – in Israeli society, making up 40% of the population according to a 2016 PEW Research Center study. Although the term 'chiloni' literally means 'secular', given that Israeli culture is religiously-infused, many oppose this translation.

"Although their standard of observance is low by Orthodox standards, many of the ostensibly secular exhibit an array of religious acts that would mark them off as fairly religious in the American context. Though the term is misleading, "secular" is the common label to identify people who do not consistently practice the ritual behavior mandated by Orthodox Judaism."

- K. D. Wald and S. Shye,
The Nonreligious: Understanding Secular People and Societies.



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While Chilonim are often hostile to the state rabbinate, fear the growth of the Charedi community, and oppose further religious legislation in Israel, secularisation in the common sense of the word is rather rare.

Defining Secularisation

"Disassociation or separation from religious or spiritual concerns."

- Oxford English Dictionary

Orthodoxy plays a central role in defining national identity in Israel, and religious issues like conversion are regarded as crucial by the vast majority. When "separation of religion and state" is used in the Israeli context, it is mostly understood as a wish to abolish the many laws curtailing personal freedom, not actual separation.

This tension led to a state of affairs dubbed by Professor Stephen Sharot as *"secularization without secularism"*: since the 1990s, the demand of both Masorati and Chiloni Israelis for consumer activity on the Sabbath (technically illegal), non-kosher food and the like, considerably liberalised the public sphere, but barely affected religious legislation and did not introduce principled secularism into the political arena.

Case Study – Yisrael Beitanu

Yisrael Beiteinu is a secularist, nationalist right-wing political party, which currently has seven Members of Knesset. Their platform states that the party opposes the separation of religion and state. However, Yisrael Beiteinu's platform states that religion should be separated from political activity, the party believes that religion should not be a source of income and instead should be preserved as a source of "inspiration and belief" for every Jew. Despite the platform's statement that the party opposes separation of religion and state, the party is considered a force for secularism in Israel, and is strongly opposed to the religious policies of Israel's Ultra-Orthodox parties, refusing to sit with them in government following the 2021 elections.



Yisrael Beiteinu's policies on state and religion are as follows:

- Compulsory national or military service for all ultra-Orthodox Jews.
- Permitting city Rabbis to perform conversions. Currently this right is reserved for the Chief Rabbinate of Israel.
- The opening of the registration areas for marriage, so that couples can marry in any city and with any Rabbi that they desire.
- The operation of public transportation on Shabbat, in neighbourhoods with demand for it and without significant religious population.



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- Opposition to the "Supermarket law", which bans the operation of businesses on Shabbat.
- The party opposes DNA tests for Jewish converts or for Jews of Russian descent.

Israeli-Arabs/Palestinian Israelis - The 'others'...

Approximately 25% of Israelis are not Jewish. Over 75% of Israeli non-Jews are Muslims, the rest being Christians, Druze and a few other smaller groups. The Muslims and the vast majority of the Christians identify as Arabs; generally, as Palestinian Arabs who hold Israeli citizenship, and have integrated considerably into Israeli Western culture but at the same time also share feelings of solidarity with their Palestinian brethren in the West Bank, Gaza and elsewhere.

Jewish and Arab co-existence is perhaps one of the greatest challenges for the modern state of Israel. Since 1948, Jews and Arabs have lived side by side, enjoying full equality under the rule of law. Arabic is one of Israel's official languages (alongside Hebrew), Jews and Arabs work together and are treated together in Israeli hospitals, there are even Arab members of the Knesset, and some Arabs even serve in the IDF.



Salim Joubran, the first Arab Supreme Court Justice

Nonetheless, tensions continue to exist. Two events took place earlier this year which may have far-reaching consequences for the future dynamic between Jews and Arabs in Israeli society.

First, alongside the recent war in Gaza, riots and attacks took place in many of the cities housing "mixed" populations of Arabs and Jews - including Lod, Akko, Yaffo and Haifa. Suddenly, areas where peaceful co-existence had taken place for decades, became the scenes of violent confrontations which led to physical damage, injuries and sadly loss of life.

Second, for the first time ever, one of the Arab parties joined the government coalition. Time will tell whether either of these events marks a harbinger of change in the relationship between Jews and Israeli Arabs.





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Dati-Leumi

Dati-Leumi is usually translated as 'Religious Zionists.' Religious Zionists believe that Eretz Israel was promised to Am Yisrael by Hashem. By extension of this, they argue that Jews today have the obligation to possess and defend the land, and thus Dati'im make up the vast majority of settlers in the Yehuda v'Shomron (West Bank) and of those who were expelled from Gush Katif.

Some argue that the Dati-Leumi ideology can be traced back to the beginning of Jewish history, but most conclude that what we now define as 'Dati-Leumi' originated with Rav Zvi Hirsch Kalischer in his 1862 'Derishat Tzion' where he advocated for immigration to Israel, the admissibility of the observance of sacrifices in Jerusalem at the present day. Perhaps most significantly, he also



wrote in support of the belief that the ultimate Geula, as promised by the prophets, would occur in a natural manner on account of human actions. This book made a very great impression, especially in Eastern Europe, and he is considered to have been one of the most important of those who prepared the way for the foundation of modern Religious Zionism.

Rav Avraham Yitzchak haKohen Kook was the next chain of Dati-Leumi thought. וצריכה ארץ ישראל להיות בנויה וכל ישראל יושבים עליה מסודרים בכל סדריהם, מקדש ומלכות, כהנה ונבואה, שופטים ושוטרים וכל תכסיסיהם, אז חיה היא תורה שבעל פה בכל זיו תפארתה

(אורות התורה א:ג)

"It is needed for Eretz Yisrael to be built and for all of [Am] Yisrael living in it, with every organization in order and running smoothly: Mikdash and Kingship, Priesthood and Prophecy, [Halachic] Judges and Police. Then the Oral [experiential] Torah lives in all its splendor and glory." (Orot haTorah 1:3)

Interestingly, he argued that *"In all paths of life it is the secular which awakens first, and then the holy is compelled to awaken, to complete the renewal of the secular, to beautify it and to redeem it."* (Ma'amarei Ha-Reiya, pg. 403) This formed the basis of his positive and respectful relationships with Secular Zionists and secular Zionism as an ideology, through he maintained it was a means to an end.

The chain continues with his son, Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook, as well as his other Talmidim, who in turn have taught and inspired the current generation of Rashei Yeshivot and leading Dati-Leumi figures.



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Case Study – Hesder

Most Dati-Leumi men do Hesder. Hesder, literally meaning 'arrangement' refers to the model of IDF service which combines both time spent learning in Yeshiva, and also serving as an active soldier. It was envisaged by Rav Yehuda Amital zt'l, after his service in the Haganah and the War of Independence, and the first Hesder Yeshiva, Yeshivat Keren b'Yavneh, was established in 1953.

Hesder service usually lasts a total of five years, within which participants are officially soldiers in the IDF. Through those five years, 16 months are dedicated to actual army service, comprising both training and active duty, and the rest is spent in Yeshiva. Whilst critics point out that this is significantly less than the normal length of service for men (2 years and 6 months), Religious Zionists view it as ideologically ideal, and are often therefore more driven soldiers. Additionally, everyone - whether they do Hesder or not - have the same Reserve Duty.



"Hesder does not merely provide a religious cocoon for young men fearful of being contaminated by the potentially secularizing influences of general army life - although it incidentally serves this need as well. Hesder at its finest seeks to attract and develop Bnei Torah who are profoundly motivated by the desire to become serious Talmidei Chachamim but who concurrently feel morally and religiously bound to help defend their people and their country; who, given the historical exigencies of their time and place, regard this dual commitment as both a privilege and a duty; who, in comparison with their non-Hesder confreres love not (to paraphrase Byron's Childe Harold) Torah less but Israel more. It provides a context within which students can focus upon enhancing their personal spiritual and intellectual growth while yet heeding the call to public service, and it thus enables them to maintain an integrated Jewish existence.

... Fully appreciative of both the price we pay and the value of that which we safeguard in return, we approach our task with responsibility and humility; and, impelled by both commitment to Torah and compassion for our people, we strive to fulfil it with a sense of broader spiritual and historical vision. Standing in tears atop Har Hazeitim, the bleak sight of kol hamekudash mehavera harev yoter mehaver stretching before him, what would the Ramban have given to head a Yeshivat Hesder?"

- Rav Aharon Lichtenstein zt'l
 The Ideology of Hesder

<https://www.etzion.org.il/en/philosophy/great-thinkers/harav-aharon-lichtenstein/ideology-hesder>



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Ashkenazi-Mizrachi tensions

When people think about the issue of race in Israeli society, they most often think about Arab citizens of Israel, or perhaps about Ethiopian Jews. The split between Mizrahi Jews and Ashkenazi Jews is often overlooked and, although it is a rift that is healing and whose impacts are increasingly invisible/less relevant, it is one which historically shaped the identity of many Israelis.

DISCUSSION POINT - How has the identity of Israel and Zionism has been dominated by Ashkenazi history rather than Sephardi, Mizrahi etc?

The Yemenite Children Affair was the likely disappearance of hundreds of babies and toddlers of new immigrants to the newly founded state of Israel, mainly from Yemen, from 1948-1954. Most cases involved the parents being told in the hospital that their newborn children had died, although they never received further information about their fates. The parents claim that their children were really kidnapped and given or sold to Ashkenazi families, yet In 2001, the Cohen-Kedmi government-commissioned investigation concluded that most of the Yemenite babies had died and 56 missing infants were indeed missing, and that there was no evidence of systematic removal of children and there remains no proof of an institutional abduction-and-adoption program.

What's even more fascinating about this part of the chapter is a plot twist. As journalist Ofer Aderet has reported, it turns out dozens of Ashkenazi babies also disappeared, with some vanishing as early as the 1930s and 40s during the British Mandate.

The socio-economic gap of the 1950s continued into the 1970s. This gap can be seen in the areas of income, education and social influence:

- Accounting for their higher family size, the average per capita income of Mizrahi Jews in 1969 was only 48% of that of Ashkenazi Jews.
- In 1961, the average Mizrahi had 64% of the education (measured in years) of an Ashkenazi.
- Although this had increased to 72% by 1975, the representation of Mizrachim in the educational system resembled a pyramid; representation decreased as the level of education increased (only 15% of university students were Mizrahi Jews).
- During the early years of the state, the degree of power and influence held by Mizrahi Jews was negligible. Even in the mid-1970s this was the case in the media, academia, top positions in the private and public sectors, and the IDF.



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In 1977, after almost three decades of Mapai rule, the Likud (led by Menachem Begin) became the ruling party. Though Begin himself was not strictly observant and Ashkenazi, Likud were supported by a wide range of Israelis, including many religious and Mizrachi Jews. Likud's win was a symbol of the end of the era dominated by a socialist Ashkenazi 'elite' and, for many Mizrachi Jews, the first time they felt they had meaningful political representation.

By the 1990's and up to the current day, the gaps that previously existed narrowed. Mizrachi Jews largely integrated into society and have served as President of the State (Yitzhak Navon – see photo), Deputy Prime Minister (Moshe Nissim, David Levy), Foreign Minister (David Levy), and Chief of Staff of the IDF (Moshe Levy). However, socio-economic gaps (particularly in education) continue to exist, and the discrimination that Mizrachim historically faced lingers in their collective memory and is an aspect of their identity which is important to note.



Today, life for Sephardic/Mizrachi Israelis has significantly improved since the communities first arrived in Israel. Rabbi Daniel Bouskila, director of the Sephardic Educational Center, noted in an interview that Sephardic/Mizrachi culture has largely "won the day" in terms of Israeli music, culture and food. Yemenite Israeli singers like Zohar Argov, known as "the king of Mizrahi music," and Ofra Haza, who voiced Yocheved in the 1998 Dreamworks animated film, "The Prince of Egypt," found success both at home and abroad.

Integration has dramatically improved in other areas of Israeli society as well, with Sephardic/Mizrachi Israelis represented as top commanders in the military, members of Knesset and university professors.

At the same time, disparities between Israel's Ashkenazi and Sephardic/Mizrachi communities persist. For example, studies have indicated a large wage gap between Ashkenazim and Mizrachim, and Israel has yet to have a Sephardic/Mizrachi prime minister. Additionally, Bouskila said Israel's public schools still promote a European-centric narrative of Jewish history: one of the community's current priorities is getting the curriculum to appropriately address Sephardic/Ashkenazi experiences.

Religion-state issues

One of the greatest challenges in Israel is the tension between religion and state. As a Jewish state founded on democratic principles, issues such as transportation and commercial activity on Shabbat can be in tension between the two ideals.



Second Zionist Congress, 1898

When Zionism began establishing itself as an ideology, and later, when this vision was manifested with a Jewish state, there were competing visions for what a Jewish state would mean. An even bigger question emerged with regard to the definition of Judaism. Is Judaism a religion like Christianity and Islam, or is Judaism a nation, like the Germans or the French? As the Jewish Agency points out “these differences were anything but theoretical.” What would the character of the Jewish state be? How would standards of kashrut be expressed? What would the education system look like? What would Shabbat look like in a Jewish state?

When the State was founded, religious affairs were ceded to the Charedim as we’ve seen above, in the Status Quo Agreement. Though this was not a legal letter, it has served as a north star for issues for religion and state, with many arguments about the interpretation of the law.

Israel has no “Shabbat Law.” However, the issue is addressed in three main sources: The Hours of Work and Rest Law, municipal bylaws and transportation regulations.

The first law to regulate work and rest on Shabbat was the 1951 Hours of Work and Rest Law, which forms the basis of Shabbat regulation in Israel until the present day. The law was passed by the first Knesset, despite the opposition of religious parties who wanted a Shabbat Law. Had the religious parties had their way, the Shabbat Law would have included a declaration by the Jewish state of the sanctity of the Sabbath and clearly delineated the official form of Shabbat observance. Instead, the law that passed is very much socially-oriented, and is concerned with the number of weekly work hours permitted, as well as workers’ right to a weekly rest, which was unsurprising given the socialist leanings of the early secular parties.



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The law's section 7 states:

(a) *The worker's weekly rest period shall consist of at least 36 consecutive hours.*

(b) *The weekly rest period shall consist of:*

i. *For Jews—the day of Shabbat.*

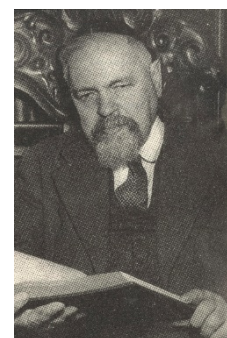
The implication of this section, and of the law's other sections, is that it is forbidden to employ a Jewish worker on Shabbat. Another section also forbids Jews from working in their businesses on Shabbat. In addition, there is a separate source for the preclusion of operating businesses.

The Work and Rest Hours Law is a cornerstone of the Shabbat status quo. Yet, as can be seen from its provisions, the law says nothing about observing or desecrating Shabbat in the religious ("halachic") meaning of these terms. The general permits, issued to such sectors as the hospitality industry and public beaches, are the result of the need to sustain entire market sectors. And the discretion afforded the Minister of Labour to issue special permits is far broader than any halakhic range of options for permitting work on Shabbat, which mainly relate to life-threatening circumstances.

There is public transportation on Shabbat in certain parts of the country, like Haifa (which predates the law), and there are parts of the country where this would never be considered, like Bnai Brak. Where the tension comes to the surface is the law in places like Tel Aviv or Jerusalem. What should happen there?

This question boils down to a more fundamental issue: what should a Jewish state look like?

Rabbi Meir Bar-Ilan (Berlin), a leading religious Zionist imagined the state in one way. He coined the term, "*Am Yisrael b'Eretz Yisrael al pi Torat Yisrael.*" Quite expressly, he wanted the spirit of the Torah to express itself in the public square. In 1922, Rabbi Bar-Ilan wrote: "*When we have a state, should anyone try to separate church and state, this will represent not a separation but a contradiction.*"



Albert Einstein imagined a Jewish state differently. The goal of a Jewish state would be a "*place of refuge where human beings may find security and peace and the undisputed right to live under law a law and order of their making.*" Essentially, he imagined a state for Jews with self-autonomy, without any interest in Judaism guiding the way.

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Ruth Gavison, a leading Israeli legal scholar tackles a third vision for Israel. A self-described secular Jew, Gavison remains *"aware that my unique culture is the Jewish-Hebrew one...Israel must be a democracy that upholds human rights, including freedom of religion and conscience, along with the right to equality, while fulfilling the Jewish people's right to self-determination...Does the right of freedom of religion and conscience demand a regime of "separation of church and state? The answer to this question is "no."* Gavison's vision is for a democratic state guided by a distinctly Jewish culture and following a Jewish way of life.

Case Study – Buses on Shabbat in Tel Aviv

This all came to head in November 2019, as Tel Aviv and other neighbouring cities began to operate a few free bus lines in the area on Shabbat.



Tel Aviv Mayor Ron Huldai explained the plans: *"Their goal is to provide a solution to the increasing demands of the public... and to create transportation alternatives which will help reduce the need for... a private vehicle, and will reduce their usage. This will contribute to a reduction in the cost of living, will ease problems with transportation and parking [in the city], and provide mobility for weaker sections of the population."*

A recent poll by the Israel Democracy Institute showed that 60% of Israelis support public bus transportation on Shabbat (aside from predominantly religious areas). 97% percent of Ultra-Orthodox oppose this, and 86% of secular Israelis support this. Dr. Shuki Friedman, Director of the Center for Religion Nation and State at the Israel Democracy Institute, explained: *"The survey once again proves that the majority in Israel is seeking to change existing arrangements."*

Uri Keidar, director of Israel Be Free, "a grassroots movement that strives for an Israeli society that practices cultural and religious pluralism," lent his support to the plan: *"Public transport is a basic right, on Shabbat as on any other day, and soon in our days we will see the trains running and will bring Israel up to the standards appropriate for 2019."*

On the other hand, religious-Zionist organization Hotam, which seeks to bring Jewish practice into mainstream society, issued a statement of opposition: *"This is a dangerous trend which is trying to eradicate any memory of Judaism."*



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Extra Chomer

Independence in Black and White: On Charedim and Jewish Nationalism

Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer, Tzarich Iyun, Elul 5778, August 2018

For decades, Charedi society denied the significance of the State of Israel and advocated isolationism. And it still does. Yet, recent times have brought about new trends, both in Charedi society and in Israeli, non-Charedi society, that herald significant change. This change is replete with both challenge and opportunity.

The Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv handed a proposal to our holy Rabbi the Hazon Ish to allow marriages on the 5th of Iyyar. Since he feared revealing his true reason for the proposal, he argued that this is the time when soldiers get leave and can get married. Our holy Rabbi said: If so, I tend to permit this from the beginning of the month of Iyyar until Lag Ba'Omer. Tel Aviv's Chief Rabbi claimed that this is excessively lenient. Our holy Rabbi asked: Why am I being lenient while you are being stringent? Finally, the Chief Rabbi was forced to admit that his true reason was that he wished to lift the mourning practices customary during the Sefira in honor of the Israel day of "independence." Our holy Rabbi responded sharply: Surely it would have been worthy to make it a fast day! (Notes of Rabbi Moshe Sheinfeld)

Since the 1950s, and especially from the 1970s until today, this quote has characterized the public rhetoric common in Charedi society regarding the "Zionist Independence Day." Every year, the mockery of Yated Ne'eman's journalists vis-a-vis the "holiday" of independence (scare quotes in original text), including expressions of contempt and dismissal of the state and its achievements, remind us of the lingering tension between the camps.

Alongside marking the "celebrations of heresy" of the State and its reliance on "my strength and the power of my hand" (Devarim 8:17), the Charedi editor will draw attention to some recent scandal, material or spiritual, that reached the public awareness. As if to say: celebrations of independence not only contain heresy, but also a healthy dose of foolishness—what is there to celebrate? In its editorial section on the eve of Israeli Independence (1.5.17), Yated Ne'eman published a piece of the "disaster" of Israeli independence and its dire ramifications for the Jewish people.

The sharpness of expressions used against the public holiday varies by sub-sector. The abovementioned approach is subtle compared to the sledgehammers of Edah Charedis publications, where we are told that any Jew who celebrates Independence Day is a "devout heretic." On the other hand, the rhetoric of (Eastern bloc) Shas leaders is quite different. Even if Independence Day is not quite celebrated (many do), it is certainly recognized as a fact of reality, and an attempt is made to transform it into a "day which is all Torah." This follows the tradition initiated by Shas leader Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef.

The more working Charedim there are, the more celebrate Independence Day. Though they are unlikely to say Hallel during the morning prayer, they will tend to enjoy the free day, to take pride in the state's impressive accomplishments, and if invited will also light a torch for the glory of the Zionist state.

However, rhetoric must not be confused with reality on the ground—which is quite another matter. In reality, a Charedi individual working for a living and getting a day off for Independence Day will tend to enjoy it like any other Israeli. The more working Charedim there are, the more celebrate Independence Day, whether at a traditional barbeque or with other forms of leisure. Though they are unlikely to say Hallel during the



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morning prayer, they will tend to enjoy the free day, to take pride (like the overwhelming majority of Charedim in the country) in the state's impressive accomplishments. In the unlikely event of being honored by an invitation, they will also light a torch for the glory of the Zionist state at the televised ceremony—provided this does not clash with too delicate a position for Charedi sensibilities.

Two years ago, MK Israel Eichler declared that it is actually impossible to celebrate Independence Day “while a government of heresy has occupied the nation of those who believe in God.” According to Eichler, it is Shavu'os which warrants an exclusive title as the “Jewish day of independence.” Concerning the first part of the statement, thousands of Charedim clearly disagree. But what about the second part? Does the debate hang on the technical matter of taking a vacation day, or is there a deeper dispute here?

A Central Religious Component

Customs of Independence Day among a Charedi minority open a portal into a question that often occupies the Charedi space, and which stands at the heart of the recent internal strife that has shorn asunder the Lithuanian community—a split the like of which has not been seen for many a year. The core issue is the attitude of Charedi society toward the State of Israel and its various institutions. This complex issue may not be new, but it has morphed and changed form over the years, and is now stands at the center of a crossroads at which Charedi society stands.

We can summarize the public debate as a struggle between two values, both ancient, which have received new expression in recent decades. One is Jewish nationalism; the other is isolationism.

Despite various attempts at denial in the modern period, it is clear that Judaism has a central national component to it. Judaism is not just a religious community. Even in our private religious experiences, we combine a distinct national element.

Despite various attempts at denial in the modern period, it is clear that Judaism has a central national component to it. Throughout their years of exile, Jews prayed and continue pray for national redemption, for a Return to Zion, and for the establishment of a Jewish kingdom in the Land of Israel. Indeed, the covenant struck between Hashem and Avraham Avinu did not include a religious promise but rather a territorial one: “To your offspring I shall give this land.” Clearly, Judaism is not just a religious community, and even in our private religious experiences we combine a distinct national element. The prayer of Hannah, on which the Talmud bases many laws of prayer, begins with private salvation but ends with a national wish: “God will judge the ends of the earth and give strength to His king and raise the horn of His anointed” (I Samuel 2:10).

In this spirit, the People of Israel received the Torah at Sinai as a nation striving for national sovereignty in the Land of Israel, where the Torah was destined to receive its full expression. The verses of Devarim repeat this principle time and again: “And these are the commandments, the laws and the ordinances that the Lord, your God, has commanded to teach you, to perform in the land which you are going over to inherit” (Devarim 6:1). In this context, we can note the famous words of Rashi (on Devarim 11:18) and the Ramban (Vaikra 18:25), which emphasize the added value of mitzvah performance in the Land of Israel over their upkeep outside the Holy Land. Certainly, the national element of Judaism is integral to the tradition.

A New National Framework

Zionism took the value of Jewish nationalism as its founding principle. However, to Charedi eyes this Jewish nationalism exacted a heavy cost. The cost is not secularism itself; that preceded Zionism, a consequence of the European Enlightenment. The deep cost of Zionism was the transformation of Judaism itself by means of a nationalism that demanded exclusivity. Instead of a framework for a relationship with Hashem—as it was seen through the lens of tradition—nationalism became the be all and end all. Instead of a means for establishing the Kingdom of Heaven overflowing with Torah and spiritual content, nationalism became a purpose in and of itself. Indeed, it became the cornerstone of a new Jewish identity, detached from the traditional self-understanding that had maintained Jewish life for thousands of years.



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The form of Jewish nationalism changed accordingly, becoming European and modern, and involved an attempt to adapt the new Israel to the familiar national framework of all nations. Peretz Smolenskin, among the founders of Jewish national thought, sharply criticized Moshe Mendelssohn both for his anti-national views and because of his adherence to the traditional ways of Judaism. According to Smolenskin, "The man who loves his nation will not spare and will not take pity even on those things that are foundations of the religion, if he wishes to bring good to his people in his work. ... Every person who loves his nation will do this in the right spirit and with a giving heart" ("A Time to Plant," Hashahar [Hebrwe] 1874). Since nationalism is key, and religion is in its service, the parts of religion that do not contribute to nationalism must be abolished.

The deep cost of Zionism was the transformation of Judaism itself by means of a nationalism conception that demanded exclusivity. Instead of a framework for religious and Torah content, nationalism became the be all and end all.

For most Zionists who actively built the State, this formula left precious little room for religion; Zionism did not invent secularism, but it was certainly a secularizing influence. And the apple of the State of Israel fell close to the tree of its Zionist parent. This is evident in the words of Education Minister Aharon Yadlin, who sadly noted (in 1977) the enormous gap between the Zionist worldview and Jewish consciousness, beseeching that "the sabras should see themselves not merely as Israelis, not just as the citizens of Israel, but as Jews!"

Religious Zionism, which hoped to infuse spiritual content therein, fully accepted the modern form of the new national framework. Even as it detached nation from religion, religious Zionism gave the new nationalism religious value. If Sa'adiyah Ga'on knew that "our nation is not a nation except in its Torah," prominent religious-Zionist leader Rabbi Yehuda Leib Maimon stated that "we are one nation and a united people not only by force of religion, but by force of natural inheritance, by force of heritage from father to son, by force of the homeland, of race and of science." The very title "national-religious" was heresy for the Charedi leader R. Abraham Yeshayahu Karelitz (the Hazon Ish): "As though religion and Israeli nationalism are two separate things, God forbid, which need to be brought together."

After clearing away all the peripheral claims (there are many, which cannot be elucidated here), this is the main argument of Charedi Jewry against Zionism. Rabbi Dr. Isaac Breuer, one of the more successful formulators of the Charedi approach, argued passionately that Jewish nationalism can only exist by force of the Torah, and any national concept that does not derive its nature from the Torah is a foreign implant. Under the inspiration of Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman ("If nationalism is idolatry, then religious nationalism is service of both God and idolatry"), he defined Zionism as "a national home for idolatry with a small room for God." Rabbi Uriel Zimmer, also a significant formulator of Charedi thought, stated in this spirit that "The core innovation of Zionism is changing the definition of Judaism. The definition of Judaism from the days of Mount Sinai until Zionism was: Torah; from now on the definition will be: nationalism, national belonging" (Judaism, The Torah, and The State [Hebrew], 1959).

Then as now, Charedi leadership fears a foreign nationalism that might empty Judaism of all religious content. They view Zionism as doing just this: placing modern nationalism at the core, while internal Jewish content loses its significance. In a trope that repeats itself every so often in Yated Ne'eman, we learn that the only thing there is to say of "secular nationalism" among the Jewish people is that "there is no such thing." Countering the attempt at "normalization" made by Zionism and the State of Israel, the Charedim argued (and argue still) that the Jewish nation simply cannot be "normal."

Separation from the Other

One thing is indisputable: Zionism succeeded. Big time. Against all odds, and in stinging contrast to the prophecies of doom that Charedi leaders voiced before and after the establishment of the state, the Zionism movement brought hundreds of thousands (and, later, several million) of Jews to Israel, founded the state, repelled Arab armies, became a regional economic and military powerhouse—and continues to reach great achievements in a wide variety of fields. It even brought about the renewal of the Hebrew language as a spoken, modern language. When even charity collectors from closed communities in the heart of Meah She'arim give their synagogue speeches in fluent Hebrew and without a foreign accent, it becomes crystal



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clear that Zionism has won a decisive victory in the struggle over language. To a large degree, and as I will explain below, the same is true even in terms of Jewish identity.

The principle of isolation is the driving force behind separate Charedi education, the avoidance of military and national service, residence in exclusively Charedi neighborhoods, the fear of academic studies and the entry into the general labor market.

The Charedi response to this success was not long in coming, and its main focus: deepening the isolationism concept already established in Europe. The Torah, and especially the Talmudic Sages, established the principle of isolating the Jewish People from their non-Jewish neighbors in general, and from idolaters in particular. However, "Charedi-ism" gave this value a renewed form. Charedi society invested and invests a great deal of energy to separate itself from the non-Charedi world, for fear of the latter negatively influencing the former. The principle of isolation is the driving force behind separate Charedi education system, the avoidance of military and national service, residence in exclusively Charedi neighborhoods, the fear of academic studies and the entry into the general labor market, the development of an alternative "Charedi culture" (literature, music, cinema), and more. But we should not think that separation is just a matter of distancing oneself and one's group from secularism; far beyond this, it involves the founding of a Charedi identity.

When a proposal arose in 1996 for a "united religious front" in the coming elections, the response of Yated Ne'eman (by editor R. Zvi Friedman) was that the principle of separation must be preserved, as "It is the only way to prevent the transfer of infected bacteria into the Torah camp." Due to this ideal, the creation of a common front must be avoided, for "Forming a covenant with the Mafdal [the religious-Zionist party] will lead to the blurring of the unique identity of the Charedi world, and may lead—God forbid—to the destruction of the remnant of Israel." The only cure for the bacteria of Israeli nationalism, in all its forms, is isolation. The alternative is no less than danger of extinction.

Both sides of the fence therefore have contrary values—Israeli nationalism versus Charedi isolation. But with time, it seems that the sharpness of the contrast is beginning to dull.

A Shrinking Distance

Close to the founding of the state, Martin Buber declared that the separation between the nation and religion was a founding "rift" in the character of the State of Israel. According to Buber, "a barrier has been erected between Israel and its foundational essence." Buber wondered about the possibility of a Jewish culture developing in Israel, since "Where and when has a true culture emerged, without it adhering to such a foundational principle and employing it to light the way!" ("Judaism and Culture," *The Crisis of Spirit* [Hebrew], 1953). Yet at the end of the day, nationalism is only a framework; like a vacuum, it will ultimately draw in some form of content. By contrast with the Buber era—a time of socialism, militant secularism and a boiling melting pot for the "new Israeli Jew"—it seems that recent years have seen that content becoming more and more Jewish.

By contrast with the Buber era—a time of socialism, militant secularism and a boiling melting pot for the "new Israeli Jew"—it seems that recent years have seen that content becoming more and more Jewish

Israel has thus become the global center of Torah, the greatest supporter in history of the study of Torah (albeit with the aid of political pressure applied by Charedim), and a significant factor preventing assimilation and supporting Jewish demographic growth—just witness the difference in birthrates between the growing Israeli Jewish population and the demographic disaster of Diasporic Jewry. The last point demonstrates the specific value of Jewish nationalism, even in its modern and secular form, in providing nonobservant Jews with Jewish identity. Across the sea, too, Zionism helps a secular Jew identify as such, and his chances of marrying a Jewish partner increase dramatically. Moreover, today many secular Israelis are returning to Jewish tradition, to the study of Jewish texts, and to the observance of a wide variety of Jewish custom. The huge Teshuva movement, in all its variety, is a distinctly Israeli phenomenon. In short: Israeli nationalism has



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indeed remained secular, but the distance between it and traditional Judaism—between nation and religion—is dwindling.

Charedi isolationism has also undergone significant change. Indeed, it is hard to speak of a isolated community when the person in charge of Israel's nationalized healthcare system is himself Charedi. We also see the erosion of the walls of separation in the thousands of Charedim flocking to many college campuses, with graduates energetically entering the Israeli workforce, and in the opening up of frameworks for secular studies even for younger ages. More generally, it is hard to conceive of hermetically sealed barriers in an age of open information. The exposure to Internet has created social and cultural changes that cannot be denied. The popularity of the television series Shtisel among Charedim is but one example of the cultural and social influences that the new age of communications has had on the Charedi community.

A Natural Sense of Belonging

These phenomena point to a change in the character of Charedi isolationism—no longer a total separation allowing no contact with the outside world, but rather one that keeps its distance from secular society (which threatens the core of “Charedi-ism”) while avoiding the kind of segregation that unnecessarily rejects civic obligations.

Charedi society justifiably wishes to live in the modern era without blindly accepting the entire package of modern values—including Israeli nationalism. But alongside the healthy distance it must maintain, Charedi society has begun to take a significant and active role in filling the national framework with content, whether in political struggles that were once left to the religious-Zionist Mafdal (such as those over Shabbat in the public domain), organizations that have become nationally influential, or an increased public involvement at both municipal and national levels.

A variety of reasons underlie these changes, but one of these is nationalism itself. Ahead of its consideration as a value and ideal, nationalism is a natural human feeling, deriving from organic connections between people who share a language, territory, race, history, culture and fate. The average Charedi individual largely shares this list with his non-Charedi counterpart. We should therefore not be surprised at the trend of “Israelization” of Charedi society: it would takes a great deal of ideological energy to prevent the trend, and over the course of generations the initial drive that animated Charedi society naturally fades. Of course, there is an inverse relation between the degree of Israeliness and the degree of separation from Israeli society.

Another reason is religious. As time goes by, the religious, even if not messianic, significance of the State of Israel becomes harder to ignore. The fact of Jewish sovereignty over the Land of Israel; the settlement and the blooming of the Holy Land, as prophesized by Scripture; the miraculous rebirth of the Israel's Torah centers and religious vibrancy—these, and much besides, are credited to a large degree to the Jewish State. Charedi attempts at explaining that these were achieved despite, rather than because of the State, are unconvincing—notwithstanding painful episodes such as the Yemenite Children Affair. The moral responsibility that comes with demographic growth joins this religious sentiment in forging an ever-closing connection with Israel.

Fate has determined that these two trends, one the Judaization of Israeli nationalism and the other the weakening of Charedi isolationism, have met at a single inn—the inn of the 21st century. Precisely when Israeli nationalism becomes more Jewish, “Charedi-ism” becomes less isolated.

The change taking place within Charedi society has not been welcomed by certain parts of the Charedi world, who hark back to a militant “Charedi-ism” that shares no commonality with broader Israeli society. The unruly demonstrations of the “Jerusalem Faction,” which are primarily aimed internally—toward other Charedim, rather than externally to the army or government—are an apt demonstration of Charedi objection to change. Whether their actions are a sanctification or a desecration of God's name—this depends upon whom you ask—there is no doubt that the deep divide within the Lithuanian community points to deep processes with inevitably powerful reactions.



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Fate has determined that these two trends, one the Judaization of Israeli nationalism and the other the weakening of Charedi isolationism, have met at a single inn—the inn of the 21st century. It stands to reason, moreover, that one trend fortifies the other. Precisely when Israeli nationalism becomes more Jewish, “Charedi-ism” becomes less isolated. The combination of these trends allows the Charedi public an easier and less threatening entry into the national field.

It may be that this will lead to the creation of a new “Charedi-national” society (unrelated to the national-religious version bearing the same name), one that will necessarily subsist in a complex and complicated relationship with original “Charedi-ism.” The more radical, Left-leaning branches of Charedi society are moving in this direction; observing some Charedi Facebook groups, one is led to think that this social group already exists, at least in a virtual reality. But we can also speak of the same “old Charedi-ism,” a natural continuation of the authentic Charedi model, which preserves its core values even as it enters the playing field of Israeli nationalism. It seems that such a group already exists, too.

Both options will require a significant educational effort to enable the preservation of Charedi identity, with its cultural uniqueness, despite the changes in question. We should hope—as many do, Charedi or otherwise—that one of the fruits of change will be a Charedi society that takes an active role in the Israeli public sphere, in the discussions and important decisions of all those who reside in Zion, and in infusing Jewish content into the Israeli national framework of which we are all a part—like it or not.

Last year (2017), I was invited to a Charedi ceremony to mark Israel Memorial Day. Alongside testimonies of bereavement (from a Charedi perspective), the ceremony contained Torah content and musical accompaniment appropriate for Charedi events. The event left a strong impression. More than anything, the feeling was of national belonging. We, even those who did not serve in the IDF, felt an integral part of the national story. Deeper, we felt the burden of responsibility of writing the next chapter.

This sentiment leads inevitably to the conclusion of publicly expressing the moral obligation of gratitude to IDF soldiers who paid the ultimate price for our protection. The isolationist strategy is no longer able to justify the moral cost of silence. On the other hand, I have yet to be invited to a Charedi ceremony celebrating Independence Day. Even changing trends have their limits. And so they should.

In sum, it is tempting to make a comparison between the situation of Charedi society, and the processes which religious Zionism underwent for many years. I wish to avoid this comparison. Charedi society has unique characteristics at the religious, cultural, and ideological levels. Its starting positions, if you will, are fundamentally different from those of religious Zionism. Religious Zionism was always a part of Zionism. This provided it with a great deal of influence, but also exacted heavy costs. In contrast, some believe that the next significant Aliyah will be the “Charedi Aliyah.” Precisely because of this, it will be fascinating to see how these processes will affect Charedi society on the one hand, and Israeli society on the other. It will be more fascinating still to take an active role part in them.



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Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's Speech in the Knesset (13 June 2021)

H.E. President Reuven Rivlin; President-elect Isaac Herzog; Mr. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu; President of the Supreme Court, Justice Esther Hayat; Speaker of the Knesset Yariv Levin; my partner in forming the Unity Government, Member of Knesset Yair Lapid, and his wife Lihi; Ministers of the outgoing government; Ministers of the incoming government; Members of Knesset; honored guests.

I want to begin my words by saying, on my own behalf, and in the name of the members of the designated government, in the name of this House, and in the name of all the citizens of Israel – thank you. Thank you to the outgoing Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, for your many years of service, replete with achievements, for the sake of the State of Israel. As Prime Minister you acted throughout many years to embolden Israel's political, security, and economic strength. I saw you from up-close, in extensive security deliberations, late into the night, investigating, making inquiries and considerations out of a sense of grave responsibility.

Benjamin and Sara Netanyahu, over the years, we have not always agreed, but we have both sacrificed much on a personal level in order to serve our people, the people of Israel. Expressing gratitude is a fundamental principle in Judaism. This is the time for the people to say to you, thank you.

I also want to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to the Tenth President of the State of Israel, Reuven Rivlin, for his years as President, as Speaker of the Knesset, and as a public servant. And to congratulate President-elect, Isaac Herzog, and wish him much success. God willing, we will work together very well.

Honored ladies and gentlemen, this is a special moment. The moment in which the baton of leading the people and the country passes – as in a relay race – to the next generation. It is a sacred endowment.

The State of Israel is not 'just another country'. It is the dream of generations of Jews – from Marrakesh to Budapest, from Bagdad to San Francisco – a dream we merited to see realized every day before our very eyes. Each generation has its own challenges, and out of each generation comes the leaders that can overcome them.

The external challenges we face are great: the Iranian nuclear project, which is moving towards a crucial point; the ongoing war on terror; Israel's image in the world and the unfair treatment it receives in international institutions – these are all sizable and complex tasks.

At this time, we are also facing an internal challenge. The ongoing rift in the nation, as we see in these very moments, which continues to rip apart the seams that hold us together, and has thrown us – one election after another – into a maelstrom of hatred and in-fighting.

Such quarrels, between the people who are supposed to be running the country, led to paralysis. One who quarrels, cannot function.

And so Israel ceased to be managed: a lack of governance in the Negev and loss of the South for 12 years, riots in mixed cities, the lack of state budget, the terrible disaster in Meron.

Dear friends, in the guests gallery today, sits Maya Moreno, widow of my friend, Lieutenant Colonel Emmanuel Moreno, of blessed memory. At every important juncture of my life, I think of Emmanuel. The intensity of his devotion and sense of mission guides us.

Friends, as the Jewish people tend to be people with opinions... and as we see here, the Parliament of the Jewish state, is a parliament of opinions, and anyone who has ever seen a pair of students studying Talmud together, or a heated debate about a product in the office corridors of an Israeli start-up, understands the



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force for good of "disputes for the sake of Heaven". But there are points in Jewish history in which the disagreements between us have gone out of control, in which they were no longer "disputes for the sake of Heaven", times in which they threatened us, and all that we have built with our sweat and blood.

Twice in history, we have lost our national home precisely because the leaders of the generation were not able to sit with one and another and compromise. Each was right, yet with all their being right, they burnt the house down on top of us. I am proud of the ability to sit together with people with very different views from my own.

This time, at the decisive moment, we have taken responsibility. We understood that we have to safeguard our home. To continue on in this way – more elections, more hatred, more vitriolic posts on Facebook – is just not an option. Therefore, we stopped the train, a moment before it barreled into the abyss. And I want to thank my friend, Foreign Minister-designate, MK Yair Lapid, who showed national responsibility, political generosity, and without whom we would not be here today.

Bibi raised, and betrayed, a generation of politicians. Last night they dethroned him
Naftali Bennett, next Israeli PM: The man behind the slogans and stereotypes
Bennett's new government: 27 ministers, nine of them women
The time has come for different leaders, from all parts of the people, to stop, to stop this madness.

The government that will be formed represents many of Israel's citizens: from Ofra to Tel Aviv, from Rahat to Kiryat Shmona. Precisely here lies the opportunity. Our principle is, we will sit together, and we will forge forward on that which we agree – and there is much we agree on, transport, education and so on, and what separates us we will leave to the side.

To the citizens of Israel I say: this is a sensitive moment, of political change. I call on all, to demonstrate maturity and restraint.

The new government will be a government which strives for real, practical solutions, to the problems faced by the country and its citizens. The work-plan which we are presenting today is the most detailed in years. We have come to work. To remove the barriers, to free up the jams, and to turn our country into what it can be.

The following, are some of the things the government will promote immediately:

We will take responsibility for the education of Israeli children from birth. The most formative years. As a first step, we will transfer responsibility for infant daycare to the Ministry of Education.

We will enable many ultra-Orthodox youth to go out to work by lowering the (national service) exemption age from 24 to 21. Not by force, but by positive encouragement, allowing young people who want to learn a vocation to be able to, and those who want to study Torah will continue to do so.

We will close with immediate effect the Ministry of Digital Affairs, the Ministry for Water, the Ministry for Communal Advancement, and the Ministry for Strategic Affairs.

Foreign Minister-designate and Alternate Prime Minister-designate, Yair Lapid, will lead a process to rehabilitate the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is a fundamental tool for building Israel's political strength.

Finance Minister-designate Avigdor Lieberman, will lead a plan by which we will return to work those who lost their employment due to COVID-19. We will bring in as many people as possible in the high-tech industry, where there are higher salaries, by setting a national target of raising the number of high-tech workers to 15% of the workforce by 2026.



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We will reduce superfluous regulation and frustrating bureaucracy, and we will work for citizen-friendly government services, as in Singapore among other countries – without paperwork, without queues.

We will make life easier for independent workers and small business owners, including through unemployment benefits.

We will increase income support for the elderly to 70% of the minimum wage.

We will open up competition in Kashrut (kosher certification), and set standards for the system. This will lighten the burden on restaurant owners, ending the stranglehold monopoly in this area, bringing down the cost of food, and strengthening the public's faith in the level of Kashrut.

Justice Minister-designate Gideon Sa'ar will lead a process to create an appropriate balance between the judicial, legislative, and executive branches of government, whereby his initiative to split the role of the Attorney General is a significant first step.

We will – finally – promote a national plan for the North of Israel, including establishing a hospital and a university in the Galilee.

Defense Minister Benny Gantz will lead a process to significantly strengthen and build up the IDF through a multi-year plan, which will include significant investment in offensive and defensive capabilities. We must invest because the threats will not leave us. Our soldiers deserve the best and most advanced equipment in the world.

We will work to upgrade Israel's public transport system, led by Transport Minister-designate Merav Michaeli.

We will strengthen the building of communities across the Land of Israel.

We will ensure Israel's national interests in Area C – and we will increase standards to that end after much neglect in this area.

And yes my friends, we will open a new page in the relations between the State of Israel and the country's Arab citizens. The Arab community will be represented in the coalition by Mansour Abbas and his party. This is a process that I must give credit to Prime Minister Netanyahu who held a groundbreaking series of meetings with Mansour Abbas, who reached out a hand. This was the right thing to do. We understand the plight and needs of the Arab society. The fight against crime and violence, the housing crisis, the gaps in education and infrastructure – will be addressed.

We will begin the process of regulating the Bedouin settlements in the Negev, so that Israel's Bedouin citizens can live in dignity.

Health Minister-designate Nitzan Horowitz, will prepare the health system for a new age of community, and home based medical care, and together we will prepare an emergency plan in the case of future pandemics. You can't always know there will be a vaccine, not every illness has a vaccine, and you have to be prepared to build on vaccinations, but also on an organized plan and not as we saw in the last year.

We will accelerate the pace of building homes in Israel. The government will take the initiative, remove obstacles, and allow for extensive construction throughout the country, in order to but the breaks on the rise in the cost of housing. There has been a slowdown in the building of houses in the last year – we should be seeing the opposite – we should have increased the building, there is a deficit in housing which drives up the prices, and no propaganda will hide that. Therefore we will up the pace of building to but the brakes on the rise in prices, and allow young people – who serve in the army, fulfil reserve duty, pay their taxes, and have no chance of building a house. So yes, we need to deal with this.



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The government will work to promote Jewish immigration (Aliyah) to Israel, and the best integration for them.

We will strengthen the bond between the State of Israel, and the Jews of the Diaspora. We will care for our brothers and sisters around the world, we will fight against the wave of antisemitism.

We will safeguard the State of Israel, the nation state of the Jewish people, as a Jewish and democratic state.

And that is just part of our plans. As I said, we have come to work! For everyone.

From here, I turn to the ultra-Orthodox community. Although the ultra-Orthodox parties chose not to join the coalition, that does not mean you are not represented - I will represent you, we will represent you. The new government will respect the study of Torah, the Torah which kept us safe for so many years in exile, and at the same time will work to remove the barriers which prevent the ultra-Orthodox community's integration into the employment market, and Israeli society. Instead of perpetuating the same methods, we will have the opportunity to address the deep problems which burden ultra-Orthodox society: key amongst them the housing crisis. The pace of construction of apartments, neighborhoods, and cities simply does not keep up with natural growth, and there is room for the establishment of new ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods and even a new city in Israel.

I was asked by the father of Eliyahu Shmuel, of blessed memory – a 16 year old ultra-Orthodox boy, who was killed in the Meron Disaster – to remember him in my swearing in address. Eli was a sweet child. He always helped his friends, and saw the good in everyone. We will not forget Eli, and we will not ignore his death. A State Commission of Inquiry will be set up.

Honored ladies and gentlemen. The government is setting out on its path, as the greatest threat to Israel, the Iranian nuclear project, is reaching a critical point. The Middle East is still yet to recover from the effects of the first nuclear deal, which emboldened Iran to the tune of billions of dollars, and with international legitimacy.

Iran, through its Quds Force of the Revolutionary Guard, has established terrorist outposts - from Syria, through Gaza and Lebanon, and to Yemen. Renewing the nuclear deal with Iran is a mistake that will once again lend legitimacy to one of the most discriminatory and violent regimes in the world.

Israel will not allow Iran to be equipped with nuclear weapons. Israel is not party to the agreement, and will maintain full freedom to act.

Last month, we received a reminder that the conflict with the Palestinians is still here. We must remember, and remind the world, that our enemies deny our very existence in the Land of Israel, and that this is not a dispute over territory.

We need military strength, civil resilience, and a belief in the justness of our path at times when the conflict raises its head.

I hope the ceasefire in the south is maintained. But if Hamas again chooses the path of violence against Israeli civilians, it will encounter a wall of iron.

Violence and terrorism are not a natural phenomenon or destiny with which we are supposed to just come to terms. The Palestinians must take responsibility for their actions, and understand that violence will be met with a firm response.

That said, security calm will lead to economic moves, which will lead to reducing friction and the conflict.



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עם ישראל בארץ ישראל על פי תורת ישראל

Am Yisrael b'Eretz Yisrael al pi Torat Yisrael

K4: 'The Four Tribes': Society and Citizenship

To the Goldin, Shaul, Mengistu, and Sayed families. The government led by me will work to bring home the IDF's fallen, and the Israeli citizens held in Gaza by Hamas. We see in their return a sacred duty, which should be undertaken out of responsibility.

The government will work to establish and expand peace agreements with the Arab states, to increase regional economic, entrepreneurial, and cultural cooperation, and to deepen the direct connection between the peoples of the region, such as the connection between the citizens of Israel and the citizens of the United Arab Emirates.

Dear friends, on behalf of us all, I want to thank the President of the United States of America, Joe Biden, for standing alongside Israel during the last operation in Gaza, "Guardian of the Walls", and for his longstanding commitment to the security of Israel.

President Biden said during the operation, "Until the region says, unequivocally, they acknowledge the right of Israel to exist as an independent Jewish state, there will be no peace".

It is important that this message be heard, and internalized, in the Middle East.

We greatly appreciate the support of the United States, our greatest friend. My government will make an effort to deepen and nurture relations with our friends in both parties – bipartisan. If there are disputes, we will manage them with fundamental trust, and mutual respect.

My fellow Members of Knesset, in light of the ongoing turbulent debate, the people are looking to the House. Let us maintain respectful debate. I understand those for whom today is difficult, but friends, this is not a day of mourning. There is no Disengagement here. There is no harm being caused to anyone. There is a change of government in a democracy. That's it. And I assure it is a government that will work for the sake of all the people. We will do all we can so that no one should have to feel afraid. We are here in the name of good, and to work. And I say to those who intend to celebrate tonight, don't dance on the pain of others. We not enemies, we are one people.

Now, hours before accepting this responsibility, I pray to G-d that He grant me wisdom and understanding to lead the State of Israel.

"Heavenly Father, Rock and Redeemer of Israel, bless the State of Israel, the first flourishing of our redemption, guard it in your abundant kindness, spread over it the shelter of Your peace. Send forth your light and truth to its leaders, ministers, and advisors, and grace them with Your good counsel. Strengthen the hands of those who guard our holy land, grant them deliverance, and adorn them in victory. Give peace in the land, and grant its inhabitants eternal happiness."

With G-d's help, we will do and we will succeed. Amen.

K5: Youth Empowerment



The Palmach and Bnei Akiva standards made into a monument at Birya

Aims:

1. **Learn** the story of Bnei Akiva's involvement at Birya.
2. **Think** about the Jewish view of the responsibilities of young people.
3. **Consider** how your Chanichim can impact BA, the Jewish community and Israel.

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Introduction

You are 15 years old.

You are cold. It's wet and dark. The rain is falling in sheets and you can barely see the pale shape of your friend's backpack five paces in front of you. Your back aches from the weight of your own pack. Your knees are torn and your hands bloody from the uncountable times you have slipped and stopped yourself falling from the path and plummeting into oblivion.

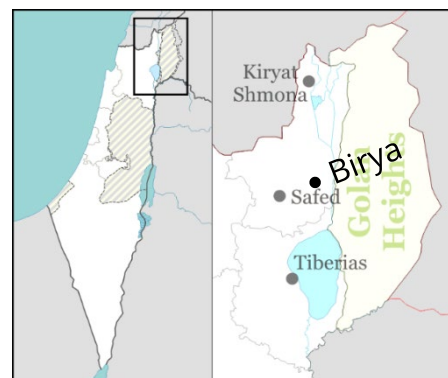
But the rain is good, it means you don't have to worry as much about being quiet, even so, you can't call out. You twist your ankle and stifle a cry. If the British sentries hear you, they'll find you. If they find you, they'll find the gun hidden at the bottom of your bag. If they find the gun hidden at the bottom of your bag they'll arrest you. You've heard stories about people arrested by the British, public beatings, deportation back to Europe, and worse.

It's the second time you've done this in as many months. And the night doesn't end when the climb is over. You have to build a whole village before the sun rises.

As well as the tools on your back you are carrying the dreams of a nation-in-waiting. You are carrying their life along with your own, their dream of not having to give up a single village, even a single house. Their dream of having a place to call home. You still hear their cries and shouts ringing in your ears from when you set off all those long hours ago: "Birya! We are going to take back Birya! Chaverim, we shall go up to Birya!"

The story of Birya

In 1946, members of Hapoel Hamizrachi in connection with the JNF went to establish a small settlement in the Galil next to Tzfat. Birya was to be a new village, a place to base reservist Palmach soldiers to protect Tzfat and the surrounding area. At this point the Palmach was still viewed by the British as an underground militia. There were routine raids, arms were confiscated, and members arrested and taken to the prison at Acre.



After little more than a year, the British came, deported the few residents of Birya and demolished the buildings. They claimed that shots had been fired at a local sentry and that the trail led back to Birya. This was one of the very first times that



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the British completely destroyed a Jewish settlement and deported its inhabitants. The residents of the Old Yishuv (the pre-state Jewish community in Mandate Palestine) were in uproar. A stand was taken, Birya could not be allowed to fall. It became a symbol of resistance against the British and their White Paper policy of severely limiting Jewish immigration during and after the Holocaust. The Yishuv would not give in.

That night, people young and old made the climb from the surrounding villages. With tools and timber on their backs they reached the site just across the fields from where Birya had stood. The morning after the British tanks had demolished the settlement at Birya, the soldiers woke to see that a whole new village had appeared. Birya II had materialised overnight.

A few hours later, Birya II was also demolished, and her builders arrested. As they were being driven away the bystanders heard their cry: *"Birya must not fall! Chaverim, go up to Birya!"*

Even before the dust had settled on Birya II, a group of young Chaverim of Bnei Akiva made their preparations. They led a group of 1,200 people back to the site, and only hours after the camp had been destroyed a new wall surrounded it, new buildings stood inside, and the Magen David flew proudly at its centre. More Chaverim came to relieve the old and exhausted. They were 14 and 15 years old, Shevet Haroeh.

That night was Purim, and a group of people went from Tzfat to visit Birya. One of the elders of the city walked at the head, carrying a megillah that would be read at the camp. As he entered the gates, he said the blessing *"shehechyanu"* for this hill in the Galil which had been resettled by Jews. That morning they sang Hatikvah, and the phrase *"od lo avda tikvateinu - our hope is still not lost"* took on a new meaning for everyone there.



A Bnei Akiva Semel monument at Birya

The British could not believe that Birya had been resurrected. Twice! Right under their noses! Through public pressure and the resilience of these young, passionate dreamers, Birya stood. For the next two years it became a waystation for Jewish migrants fleeing the Middle East through Syria and it was from Birya that, in 1948, Operation Yiftach was launched which protected the Holy City of Tzfat and ensured the inclusion of the Galil region in the State of Israel.



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Every year in Israel, around Purim time, Bnei Akiva takes all the Chaverim of Shevet Haroeh on a tiyul to Biryah. They walk in the footsteps of those youth who risked everything to protect their home and won.

Magen David Adom

MDA serves as the Israeli Red Cross. Like Red Cross organizations across the world, MDA trains nurses, coordinates blood donations, helps the disabled, the needy and the elderly, and provides ambulance and rescue services. In Israel however, there is one major difference: out of MDA's 14,000 volunteers, 8,500 are teenagers aged 15 to 18! This is not a typo: More than 60 percent of the volunteers of the Israeli Red Cross are teenagers. They invest more than 1,500,000 hours of volunteering per year.

Israeli youth have been participating in MDA's operational activities since its establishment in 1930: from youth brigades in the 1948 War of Independence, to evacuating casualties during wars and murderous attacks in the 1970s, and in the unprecedented terrorism of the 1990s.



Unlike youth Red Cross volunteers in other Western countries, Israeli MDA youth perform advanced-level CPR; save people injured in car and work accidents; and care for the critically sick.

In recent years, questions have surfaced regarding youth's extraordinary involvement in Israel's ambulance service infrastructure. Can they handle it? Should youth be charged with such grave social responsibility?

Regardless of the claims on either side of the debate, the fact remains that Israeli youth are highly involved, physically and emotionally, in all medical events in Israeli society.

The Jewish View of Responsibility & Action

In previous generations, responsibilities tended to kick in at much younger ages. Older children looked after younger children so that parents could earn enough to support the family. Education was often limited so that children could join the

family workforce. There is a reason why the ages of 12 and 13 were chosen to mark a young Jew's progression into the age of responsibility.

With the development of the modern world, schools and other attitudes have slowly eroded the ability for young people to engage in an adult world. Sometimes this has been for purely beneficial purposes (in 1833 the UK's Factory Act limited the ages at which children could join the workforce, limited the hours of those permitted to do so, and sought to increase their education with compulsory hours of schooling).

But nowadays, on the whole, most teenagers think "what can I do?" or "people who know what's going on will sort this out".

This is not the Jewish view. The Rambam highlights the responsibilities placed on young people:



(א) קטן אביו חייב ללמדו תורה, שנאמר "ולמדתם אותם את בניכם לדבר בם" [...] (ג) [...] מי שלא למדו אביו חייב ללמד את עצמו כשיכיר שנאמר "ולמדתם אותם ושמרתם לעשותם" ...

1) A parent is obligated to teach their child Torah, as it says "And you shall teach them to your children, to speak about them" ... 3) ... **One who had not been taught by their parent is obligated to teach themselves when they as soon as they recognise (the importance of learning), as it says: "And you shall study them and take care to perform them" ... (Rambam Hilchot Talmud Torah, Chapter 1)**

Once we see this responsibility, we can better understand the statement of Hillel in Pirkei Avot:

הוא הִזָּה אוֹמֵר, אֵין בּוֹר יָרָא חֲטָא, וְלֹא עִם הָאָרֶץ חֲסִיד, וְלֹא הַבַּיִשׁוֹן לָמֵד, וְלֹא הַקֶּפְדָּן מְלָמֵד, וְלֹא כָּל הַמְרַבֵּה בְּסַחֲוֹרָה מְחֻכָּים. וּבְמָקוֹם שֶׁאֵין אָנָשִׁים, הַשְׁתַּדֵּל לִהְיוֹת אִישׁ:

He used to say: A boor cannot fear sin. An ignorant person cannot be pious. A person prone to being ashamed cannot learn. An impatient person cannot teach. Not all who engage in a lot of business become wise. In a place where there are no people, strive to be a person. **(Avot 2:5)**

Hillel is giving us clear instructions to better ourselves, to improve ourselves. To his mind, fully rounded, responsible individuals must fear sin, be pious, be able to learn etc. And in a place where no one has these character traits, one must strive to take on those character traits. And if there is no one to teach those character traits, the Rambam is clear that we must learn them ourselves.

Young people are also more idealistic, as Rav Kook writes:

*"A child's sense develops before his understanding so that he can develop a true world view without the interference of subjective influences. This sense of the world, which is developed without explanation, now gives a person a clean base to understand the world and life ahead of him. He sees the world as plain as it is. **Every elevated ideal that he pursues or is inspired by in his later life, originated from this untainted period of development.** This pure youth must be given the freedom to flourish as necessary to drive him for the rest of his life."* (Arfalei Tohar, 80)

Rav Kook is explaining here the special qualities that develop during youth and how this period differs to that of adulthood. We can see this description of Rav Kook very clearly nowadays. At a young age, a person looks at the world from a very idealistic point of view. They have not yet been tainted by the hardships of life and therefore have a very positive outlook on the world.

This idealism, however, is often lost as they get older and see the world in a different light. Rav Kook explains that we are specifically created this way so that our original understanding of the world will be pure. We need this in order that our ultimate goals, dreams, hopes and efforts come from this pure, idealistic place, not from the subsequent, less idealistic view that we have of the world now. According to Rav Kook, our thought processes and goals we have when we are young are what should gear us though our lives.



To summarise so far, the story of the Chaverim at Biryah and the attitudes of the sages clearly show that there is no lower age limit on getting involved with a good cause. And more than that, it is an obligation to do so once its values are understood.

Going forwards

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has. – Margaret Mead

The concepts of responsibility, and of being able to take action despite being young, shouldn't be too much for your Seenai Machane chanichim. Making it personal to them and getting them to think about what they can do will cement this point.



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K5: Youth Empowerment

Peulot ideas:

- 📖 Think big: Get your chanichim to think about what they want to change in the world, then think about the practical ways they could get involved with those ideas (charity work, volunteering abroad/locally etc.)
- 📖 Start small: Plan with your chanichim what they want to be a part of post-Machane. Think about places to volunteer; being a madrich, getting involved at shul, school, cheder, tutoring etc.
- 📖 Make it meta: Work with some of your chanichim in advance so that they plan a Peula **and take responsibility for running it.**
- 📖 Role models: Look up young people from all around the world and share their stories of the changes they inspired, big and small e.g. Malala Yousafzai, Ryan Lambeth (search "guardian uniform no shorts") and any others you can find.
- 📖 Bnei Akiva in Israel: Research some of the incredible things BA in Israel has done to bring the community together (e.g. after the 2014 kidnapping of Naftali, Gilad and Eyal; after the 2016 wildfires).

K6: Torat Yisrael



Aims:

1. **Learn** about the two Torahs.
2. **Discover** the unique relationship between Am Yisrael and the Torah.
3. **Explore** our relationship with Torah.

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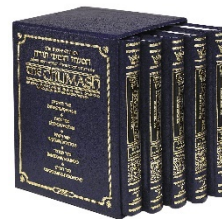
Two Torahs?!?

On Har Sinai, Moshe received both Torah she'Bichtav (the Written Torah) and Torah she'Baal Peh (the Oral Torah). The term Torah She'Bichtav very simply refers to Tanach, which is made up of Torah, Neviim (Prophets) and Ketuvim (Writings). These were written by prophets or great Jews of the time like David haMelech and are also considered "from G-d", by virtue of the fact that they were written under the influence of Ruach haKodesh, Divine inspiration.

Torah She'Baal Peh is essentially anything that is not included in Torah She'bichtav. This means that anything that is taught beyond the parameters of Tanach can be classified as Oral Torah. When referring to Torah She'Baal Peh, we are primarily talking about the Mishna and Gemara. We believe that all the laws and details that are included in Torah she'Baal Peh were also given to Moshe at Sinai, in addition to the Chumash.

What's the difference between the Oral and Written Torah?

While the word 'Torah' can simply mean the Chamisha Chumshei Torah (Five Books of Moses), as we have seen earlier, there is a much wider meaning as well. What we would call culturally transmitted ideas and practices, in ancient times was Torah she'Baal Peh. Since society changed much less rapidly than today, and valued the past more, greater value was placed in old traditions.



Rav Kook (Orot haTorah 1:1) suggests that the Written Torah is something that is given to the Jewish people directly from Hashem above. This means that it ultimately has the highest level of holiness possible and affects everything in the world by being above it.

The Oral Torah on the other hand, is something that has the ability to enter our lives in a different way. It is something that we, the Jewish people, are always actively involved in, and have the ability to affect. This means that Torah she'Baal Peh is always changing and comes alive in each new generation.

תורה שבכתב אנו מקבלים על ידי הציור היותר עליון ויותר מקיף שבנשמתנו. אנו מרגישים מקרבה את הבהקת תפארת האורה החיה הפלית של כל היקום. דאים אנו על דה למעלה מכל הגיון ושכל, חשים אנו רוח אלהים עליון מרחפת עליו, נוגעת ואינה נוגעת, טסה על פני חיינו ממעל להם ומזרחת אותם באורה. האור מבהיק, נוצץ וחודר בכל, תחת כל השמים ושרהו. לא רוח האמה חוללה אור גדול זה - רוח אלהים יוצר-לל יצרה, תורת חיים זאת יסוד יצירת כל העולמים כלם. בתורה שבעל פה אנו יורדים כבר אל החיים. אנו חשים שהננו מקבלים את האורה העליונה בצנור השני שבנשמה, בצנור המתקרב לחיי המעשה. אנו חשים, שרוח האמה, הקשורה פשלהבת בגחלת באור תורת אמת, היא גרמה באפייה המיוחד, שתורה שבעל פה נוצרה בצורתה המיוחדת. ודאי כלולה היא תורת האדם הזאת בתורת ד', - תורת ד' היא גם היא. העין הפקוחה של צופה באספקלריה המאירה, הנאמן בכל בית ד', לא אפשר שממנה תהיה



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נְעֻלְמַת שְׁפָעֶת-חַיִּים זֹאת לְכָל פְּתוּחִיהָ. גַּם מֵה שֶׁתִּלְמִיד וְתִיק עֲתִיד לַחֲדָשׁ הַלֵּל נְאֻמֵּר לְמֹשֶׁה מִסִּינַי. וְשִׁנֵּי אוֹרִים הִלְלוּ עוֹשִׂים עוֹלָם שְׁלָם, שְׁשָׁמִים וְאַרְץ יִשְׁקוּ בְּתוֹכָהּ.

We receive the Written Torah through the most elevated and inclusive conception within our souls. From the midst of our souls, we sense the blaze and beauty of that living, encompassing light of all existence. It makes us soar higher than all logic and intellect. We sense a supernal G-dly spirit hovering upon us, touching yet not touching, flying next to our lives and above them, gilding them with its light. This light blazes, sparkles and penetrates everything. It permeates whatever is under the heavens. This great light was not created by the spirit of the Jewish people. Rather, it was created by the spirit of G-d, the Creator of all. This living Torah is the foundation of the creation of all universes.

With the oral Torah, we descend to life. We feel that we are receiving the supernal light in the second stream within our soul: the stream that advances toward the life of action. We sense that the spirit of the nation, bound like the flame to the coal with the light of the true Torah, has, with its unique character, fashioned the unique form of the oral Torah. Without a doubt, this Torah of man is encompassed within the Torah of G-d. It too is the Torah of G-d.

But in the inner form, is it not the case that the Torah is given to Israel for the sake of our inner, supernal unique being? Is this divine, hidden, unique being that caused the Torah to be revealed to us from heaven.

*And so in its root the oral Torah is higher than the root of the hidden Torah.
 These two lights make one complete world, in which heaven and earth are nourished.*

- Rav Kook, Orot haTorah 1:1

What is Torat Yisrael?

Throughout the Torah, the term 'ירושה *yerusha*' is used to describe the passing down of material possessions from parents to children. However, only twice does the term 'מורשה *morasha*' appear; with regards to Eretz Yisrael and to the Torah.

וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתִּי אֶתִּידִי לְתַת אֶתָּה לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיַעֲקֹב וְנָתַתִּי אֶתָּה לְכֶם מוֹרָשָׁה אָנֹכִי ה'.

"And I will bring you into the land that I promised to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you as a 'morasha': I am Hashem." (Shemot 6:8)

תּוֹרָה צְוֵה-לָנוּ מֹשֶׁה מוֹרָשָׁה קְהֵלֶת יַעֲקֹב:

"Moses prescribed the Torah to us, an eternal 'morasha' for the congregation of Jacob." (Devarim 34:3)





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The meaning of *'morasha'*, however, is slightly more muddled. Naturally, we can translate *'morasha'* as 'inheritance' by virtue of it sharing a root with *'yerusha.'* However, the Mishna in Avot (2:12) explicitly states otherwise:

רבי יוסי אומר, יהי ממון חברך חביב עליך כשאלך, והתקן עצמך ללמד תורה, שאינה ירשה לך. וכל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים:

"Rabbi Yose said: 'Let the property of your fellow be as precious unto you as your own; Make yourself fit to study Torah for it will not be yours by inheritance; And let all your actions be for [the sake of] the name of Heaven.'"



Rav Shlomo Riskin notes that *'morasha'* literally means 'to hand over to someone else.' He explains how this differs from an inheritance: *"Silver is an inheritance, and can be used in whatever way the heir desires; silver Shabbat candlesticks are a heritage, meant to be passed down from parent to child and used from generation to generation."* From this, we can already begin to understand the unique relationship that Am Yisrael has with the Torah. It is a special heritage which has been passed down from generation to generation for 3,000 years.

"We are part of a story that began long before we were born and will continue long after we are no longer here, and the question for all of us is: will we continue the story? The hopes of a hundred generations of our ancestors rest on our willingness to do so. Deep in our collective memory the words of Moses continue to resonate. "It is not with you alone that I am making this sworn covenant, but with ... whoever is not here with us today." We are part of that story. We can live it. We can abandon it. But it is a choice we cannot avoid and it has immense consequences. The future of the covenant rests with us."

- Rabbi Sacks zt'l

Additionally, Torah is the cornerstone of who we are as a people. It is Torah which enables us to fulfil our Divine mission:

ואתם תהיו לי ממלכת פהנים וגוי קדוש

"You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation..." (Shemot 19:6)

Without Torah, we lose our identity as the Jewish People. Perhaps this is why the Gemara teaches:

ואמר ר' יוחנן עובד כוכבים שעוסק בתורה חייב מיתה שנאמר (דברים לג, ד) תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה לנו מורשה ולא להם

"Rabbi Yochanan said, 'A non-Jew who engages in Torah is liable to receive the death penalty, as it states, 'Moses prescribed the Torah to us, an eternal morasha'; a morasha for us, but not for them.'" (Sanhedrin 59a)



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Our relationship with Torah

Rav Kook makes a clear connection between the land of Israel and Torah She'baal Peh:

"In exile, these twins were separated. The written Torah rose to the heights of holiness, and the oral Torah descended to the very depths." - Rav Kook, Orot haTorah 1:2-3

He says that only in Israel, when we are ruling ourselves and we have a Beit haMikdash, Torah She'baal Peh will truly flourish. Torah She'baal Peh gives Am Yisrael the potential to become holy by being involved in its creative process. This is no more relevant than is Israel. When we are in Israel, keeping our laws the way we should, building our country, we are directly involved in creating holiness through doing seemingly normal actions. When we fulfil the Torah She'baal Peh in Israel, we are fulfilling our potential as a people.

But in the Galut, we do not have the opportunity to fulfil the Torah She'baal Peh properly, to grow as a nation and therefore, the Torah She'baal Peh cannot properly exist. It therefore had to be written down. When we lost the Beit HaMikdash and the ability to flourish as a people, we also lost the ability for the Oral Torah to flourish as it should.

The writing down of the Oral Torah is a not just a technicality based on practicality, it is a consequence of Am Yisrael not being able to fulfil their proper potential anymore in Israel. In the Galut, we are much more restrained and therefore the Gemara tells us "From the day of Churban (destruction of the temple), Hashem has nowhere to reside in this world save the 4 Amot of Halacha." (Brachot 8a)

Despite the challenges, even in Galut, Torah She'baal Peh is always alive and changing as the world grows and changes. There are many aspects of modern-day life which never existed before and therefore never needed to be discussed. When learning Torah She'baal Peh we often find that to answer our question more questions must be asked. Often to know which way to go and which path to take we must delve a little deeper. It is through constantly asking and learning we find out how to live our lives as Jews in a very changing world.

"Avraham Avinu discovered the Almighty and spread the Word. Avraham halvri was the first to stand alone in his beliefs. He initiated monotheism and hence Judaism, the first roots of what would eventually become Torat Yisrael – 'the way a Jew should live his life.' In a fiercely pagan world, against all the odds, Avraham acted in complete defiance of common public morality. Thus, Avraham Avinu reflects the principle of Torat Yisrael."

- Rav David Milston

Special K: Gwrych Castle



Aims:

1. **Learn** about BA's history with Gwrych Castle.
2. **Explore** Walter Bingham's personal account of BA in Gwrych Castle.
3. **Appreciate** how we are part of the collective BAUK history.



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Way way back many centuries ago

In 1939, Arie Handler, in his capacity as one of the leaders of Bachad (Brit Chalutzim Dati'im), secured a home for a large transport of religious children from Europe in Gwrych Castle in North Wales, on the very day that World War II broke out. The programme for the children included Ivrit lessons and Jewish Studies, as well as agricultural skills in preparation for a life in Israel.



Gwrych Castle thus became the base for 'Bachad', a pioneering movement for young people aged 16+ to prepare themselves for life on a religious kibbutz in Eretz Yisrael.



In December 1940, Arie organised the first ever Kinus (gathering) of Bnei Akiva, then the feeder youth movement to Bachad, which was held in Gwrych as well as Arie Handler's wedding! This was followed by the start of summer machanot in 1942.

Sadly, the Gwrych oasis for refugees ended abruptly with the Earl of Dundonald being forced to sell the estate for death duties, and the War Office who had requisitioned the castle, ordered their expulsion. Instead, Bachad went national, as they sent groups of chaverim to farms and centres around the British Isles, living and teaching a religious lifestyle while working for the local farmers. And so Religious Zionism found itself in places such as Whittingehame, Scotland, St. Asaph, Rosset, Castleton (Thornham Fold Farm), Millisle (Co. Down, N. Ireland), Bromsgrove (Kibbutz Shivat Tzion), Buckingham, Kinnersley, Ollerton and Dockenfield Manor.





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Walter Bingham's Memories

"Doesn't time fly? And it was almost like yesterday, when on the 25th of July 1939 with a group of other Shabbat observant boys and girls I joined the Kindertransport at the Railway Station in Karlsruhe, Germany as member of Brit Hanoar, the youth wing of Bachad, (Brit Chalutzim Dati'im) to be taken to England. At about that time, but unbeknown to us the name changed to Bnei Akiva, which probably makes me today the oldest Bnei Akiva boy.



"As Kindertransport was an umbrella term and because the children went to different destinations, we were separated into groups [at Liverpool Street Station], according to information on the cards around our neck. Some went to pre-arranged foster parents, others to relatives, many were sent to hostels from where prospective foster parents selected a child of their choice. My group was for Hachsharah and taken to Great Engeham farm at Woodchurch near Ashford in Kent where I stayed, sleeping in an old fashioned railway carriage with engraved windows reading 'non smokers' or 'Ladies!' Those were the days! After about 4 weeks I was selected for the advance party to prepare our final destination which was Gwrych Castle at Abergele in North Wales, the former seat of Lord Dondonald. It was secured by contract just days before my arrival with the help of the late Rebecca Sieff, and the Balfour family. Sieff, who besides her work for Youth Aliyah was also the co-founder of WIZO in 1922.

"We were collected in red busses of the Welsh bus company Crossville and the journey took many hours. In those days motorways were not yet dreamt of. From a distance we could see Gwrych Castle perched atop a low hill, overlooking the Irish Sea. What a magnificent place I thought, until I went inside. Yes, there was indeed a stately oak panelled entrance area from which a beautiful marble



staircase led to the upper rooms and there was the large similarly panelled hall on the ground floor that became our dining room with its magnificent fireplace which in due course we supplied with wood from the surrounding small forest. In those days there was no problem with smoke pollution and every room had an open fireplace.



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"So, what was so bad when I went inside, you will justifiably ask? Well, there was no electricity, and an old generator was broken beyond repair. To call the toilets WC's would have been a misnomer, because the sanitation and drainage system was severely blocked. But it was all great fun and we were in England and no longer among the Nazis.

"My task was to assemble and erect the steel beds which had been delivered in preparation for the arrival of the main party about a week later when the Castle came alive. We were about 180 boys and girls and were divided into three groups, Kvutzot Aleph, Bet and Gimmel. It was done I believe according to our maturity level as perceived by Erwin Seligman z'l who was our leader, the head Madrich, and whom I only met for the first time on arrival at the castle. I think that it was more by accident than design that I was allocated to Gimmel.

"Each Kvutza had its own Madrich, ours was David Graneg z'l and he organised our post work activities. In overall charge from his office in London was ArieH Handler z'l, who occasionally visited the Castle. Our resident medical doctor was ArieH's Brother.

"The sleeping areas were segregated, girls I believe on the first floor and boys one floor higher or vice versa. Several slept in one room, according to the space. My room was in a circular tower overlooking the meadow, a daily grazing ground for sheep, and at the appropriate time of year I could see many lambs being born. Beyond the sloping meadow was the main coastal highway along the Irish See. If it would be today, you would think it is a minor road, it was that narrow.

"We had to be self-sufficient and so there was a weekly allocation of work, the Seder Avodah. All our lighting was by paraffin lamps of various types and the daily cleaning, wick trimming and refilling and generally preparing the storm lamps that were the norm and the few bright lamps with gas mantles that lit the open areas was a sought after job. Sawing and chopping wood was less popular but had to be done to feed the fireplaces in our bedrooms. We had a woodwork area where among other things they built bedside tables from wooden boxes in which some of our provisions arrived. It was necessary to have 'protectia' to get one. After having a stint of sawing wood, I was transferred to the locksmith shop, a very important task, because there were many outhouses and other areas that were locked, and we had to get them open without breaking the doors. To that end I made a number of skeleton keys of varying sizes to open all the doors. I actually brought them into our marriage, until my wife z'l made me destroy them for fear of being found and thought to be the tools of my trade as burglar.



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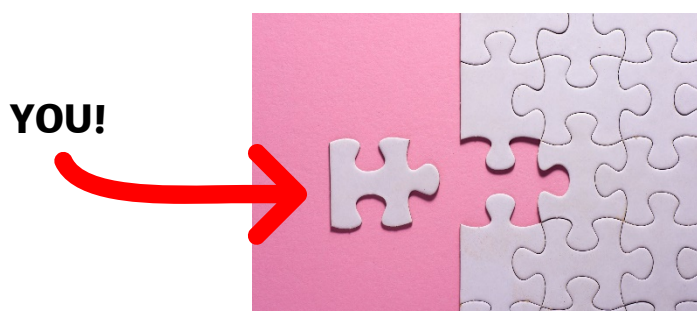
"Not long after I arrived at the Castle, which became my home for some years, my hopes to be soon reunited with my mother who was waiting for the papers to come to England as a domestic servant, were dashed on a day when we all assembled in the square outside the Castle's main entrance and Arieh Handler told us that war had broken out and that it may be quite some time before we shall see our parents again. My father had already been sent to Poland with the mass deportation of Polish Jews on the 28th of October 1938 while I was attending an additional year at school in another city. I never saw him again. Most of the 10,000 Kindertransport children never saw any of their parents again. B"H, I was reunited with my mother after she survived the camps.

"Times were good for us at Gwrych Castle, if one can use that term under all the circumstances. We led a Torah observant life, it was literally Torah v'Avodah. Besides Shiurim and other appropriate activities like English lessons, Erwin Seligman gave a press report once a week to keep us informed of the progress of the war.

"I cannot remember the year, but it was at Gwrych Castle where Arieh Handler married Henny and we had a wonderful celebration. The marriage was performed by Rav Sperber our spiritual head who also lived at the Castle."

A piece in the puzzle

By being a part of Bnei Akiva UK, you become part of our shared Bnei Akiva history. Whilst our Hachshara programmes may look very different, and our Machanot have a different focus nowadays, we nonetheless have maintained the core DNA of Torah v'Avoda, of believing in the power of youth, and striving to do our bit to develop and improve Am Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael.



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Aims:

1. **Understand** Tisha b'Av beyond Antisemitism.
2. **Consider** the relationship between Tisha b'Av and Israel.
3. **Appreciate** how Tisha b'Av is still significant today.

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Tisha b'Av History 101

What is Tisha b'Av? Why is it important? Isn't it about the destruction of the Second Temple by the Babylonians? Wait, hang on, don't we have Chanukah to celebrate how it wasn't destroyed? Then what about the Romans?

Hopefully this brief explanation will give you an easy way to understand the history and the relationship between the events and Jewish History.

By 66 CE most Jews in Israel were treated like second class citizens, soldiers were encouraged to create riots, Governor Florius raided the Temple treasury for his own gain and on one specific day in 66 CE 3,600 Jews were killed in the City of Jerusalem. Consequently, the Jewish population rioted in rebellion against the Romans, causing Cestius Gallus to suffer a humiliating defeat on 8th Cheshvan 66 CE. This was devastating for the Roman Empire, with Emperor Nero sending 60,000 Roman Soldiers alongside General Vespasian (later Emperor Vespasian) to crush the revolt in Judea. After destroying the untrained Jewish rebellion, Vespasian set his sights on Jerusalem. Outside Roman forces prepared to lay siege to the City; inside the Jews erupted into Civil war. It was said that if it were not for the baseless hatred between the Jewish people (Yoma 9b), they would have been victorious.

That is the story in short. However, the day has greater meaning in the Mishna:

6) Five events befell our ancestors on the Seventeenth of Tamuz and five on the Ninth of Av. On the seventeenth of Tamuz, the Tablets were broken, the Tamid offering was ended, the city walls were breached, Apostomus burned the Torah, an idol was placed in the temple courtyard. On the Ninth of Av, it was decreed upon our ancestors that they would not be allowed to enter the Land of Israel, the First and Second temples were destroyed, Beitar was captured, The city of Jerusalem was ploughed over. From when the month of Av starts, we reduce joy.

7) During the week in which the ninth of Av happens, it is prohibited to a person to shave himself, or to wash [his clothes], but on Thursday it is allowed in honour of the Sabbath. On the day before the ninth of Av, a person may not partake of two [different kinds] of cookeries [or dishes], eat meat, or drink wine thereon. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says "[It is sufficient to] alter [from one's customary mode of living]." Rabbi Yehuda considers it obligatory to turn over the bed places, but the sages do not agree in this. (Mishna Taanit 4:6,7).

(ו) חמשה דברים ארעו את אבותינו בשבעה עשר בתמוז וחמשה בתשעה באב. בשבעה עשר בתמוז נשתברו הלוחות, ובטל התמיד, והבקעה העיר, ושרף אפוסטמוס את התורה, והעמיד אדם בהיכל. בתשעה באב נגזר על אבותינו שלא יכנסו לארץ, וחרב הבית בראשונה ובשנייה, ונלקדה ביתר, ונחרשה העיר. משנכנס אב, ממעטין בשמחה:

(ז) שבת שחל תשעה באב להיות בתוכה, אסור מלספור ומלכבס, ובחמישי מתרין מפני כבוד השבת. ערב תשעה באב לא יאכל אדם שני תבשילין, לא יאכל בשר ולא ישתה יין. רבן שמעון בן גמליאל אומר, ישנה. רבי יהודה מחיב בכפית המטה, ולא הודו לו חכמים:

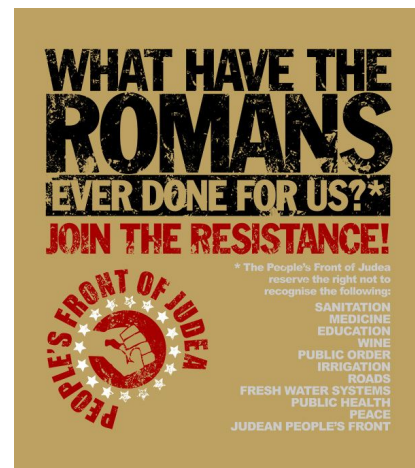
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1. 12 Spies returned from their spying and only two brought a positive report. They returned to say that Am Yisrael the land was occupied by Giants causing panic and fear. The spies spoke out against Eretz Yisrael (big mistake) and doubted Hashem (huge mistake). For this they were punished by Hashem, and it was said that this day would become one of crying and misfortune for their descendants.
2. First Temple built by (buzz in for answer) was destroyed by the Babylonians led by Nevuchadnezzar in 587 BCE.
3. Second Temple built by (buzz) was destroyed by the Romans in August 70 CE starting the Jewish exile from Israel (Question: was this the exile from Jerusalem or Israel?)
4. Bar Kochva (kind of like the Jewish Leonidas) was defeated and his revolt along with him. The Romans also destroyed the city of Betar killing over 500,000 Jewish civilians on July 8 135 CE.
5. Following all of this, Roman commander Turnus Rufus surrounded the site of the Temple.



Whilst these 5 calamities are the source for Tisha B'av in the Mishna, we remember other dates in Jewish history on this day:

- ☞ Remembrance of the 10 martyrs that were killed after the destruction of the second temple by Emperor Hadrian (who built the Wall). Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, Rabbi Yishmael ben Elisha ha-Kohen Gadol, Rabbi Akiva, Rabbi Chanina ben Teradion, Rabbi Chutzpit, Rabbi Elazar ben Shamua, Rabbi Chanina ben Hakinai, Rabbi Yesheivav, Rabbi Judah ben Dama, Rabbi Judah ben Baba.
- ☞ The First Crusade officially commenced on August 15, 1096/ 24 Av, killing 10,000 Jews in its first month and destroying Jewish communities in France. Subsequent Crusades as well.
- ☞ Expulsion from England on July 18, 1290/ 9 Av.
- ☞ Expulsion from France July 22, 1306/ 10 Av.
- ☞ Expulsion from Spain July 31, 1492/ 7 Av.
- ☞ Germany entered WWI on August 1-2/ 9-10 Av. The loss of WWI by Germany and the treatment through the Versailles Treaty is seen as the cause of WWII and so many trace it all back to this date.

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- 📅 August 2, 1941/ 9 Av, Heinrich Himmler formally received approval from the Nazi Party for "The Final Solution".
- 📅 July 23, 1942/ 9 Av, the mass deportation of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto to Treblinka began.

Many communities use this date as a day to remember all tragedy that has befallen the Jewish people. Whilst this is a non-exhaustive list of atrocities that have happened to the Jewish people, others have happened. The Pogroms in Eastern Europe, the treatment of Jews during the Crusades, the York Massacre, the Holocaust, are remembered on this day.



Many also remember the disengagement from Gaza on this day and it was on the 10 Av that Jews were expelled from Gush Katif.

Point to Ponder - With these events we are remembering different things, what are they? If you had to put it down to one key event which one would it be?

Tisha b'Av isn't Antisemitism Remembrance Day

Too often Tisha b'Av becomes a day where we remember Antisemitism (note that there is no hyphen in Antisemitism!). We were observing Tisha b'Av during the Crusades, during the Spanish inquisition and even during the Holocaust. Yet it can be argued that Tisha b'Av has roots in the story of the Spies, way before any event that we remember.

For this let's look at the 5 calamities previously mentioned. These can be looked at in 2 different ways:

1. Still as three separate events. They all take place as three separate events, not linked to one another other than the date, and as a result it has caused us to signify this day as one of importance.
2. As three events all linked to one another. We transgressed the first time so our punishment lasted 40 years. The second time it lasted a number of generations. The final time it resulted in devastating destruction with all attempts of recovery overpowered.

DISCUSSION POINT – Which do you find more convincing?

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Whilst the debate on this can go on and on (which it probably has done already by the time we get here) there is much more in this Kvutza to cover, so let's focus on two parts.

1) The 12 Spies:

We have spoken about the spies and by now everyone is familiar with the story of it. If not let's explain it through pictures.



This was the time in which Am Yisrael believed that Hashem was setting them up to failure and leading them to ultimate defeat. They didn't know why Hashem took them out of Egypt only to go to Israel and have to beat up Giants. Panic ensued and so the Jewish people had to wait till they could go into Israel in order for everyone to die out.

2) Destruction of the Temples:

The story of why the temple was destroyed is one that has a fairly simple answer that gets increasingly more complex the more we read into the event. So let's simplify it: the Temples were destroyed because the Jewish people were behaving badly.

It's all our fault

Now we are at a point where we can truly understand the meaning behind Tisha b'Av and what the 5 Calamities have in common compared to all the other events in Jewish History.



It was the failings of Am Yisrael that saw the Temples destroyed and also the wandering in the desert. It was our failings that have undermined the Jewish peoples work throughout time and so because of this we decided that we must remember Tisha b'Av.

And so there is a distinction to be made between the 3 weeks, the 9 days and Tisha b'Av itself. During the 3 weeks and the 9 days we remember the siege of Jerusalem, the destruction of the city and conquest of the Romans. We mourn the loss in battle, our expulsion from our land and the birth of the diaspora of Am Yisrael. Yet Tisha B'av has additional meaning given to it through the significance

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of these 5 events. We recognise our failings as Am Yisrael and how in spite of all that was promised to us, whether it be failing to uphold our relationship with Hashem or our commitments to Am Yisrael.

To finish on maybe let's look at Tisha b'Av as a day of introspection, of how we as Am Yisrael can do better, how we could learn from the past and how we could possibly try to do better.

The Relationship between Tisha b'Av and Israel

So, by now many of you will be thinking that there is such an obvious relationship between Israel and Tisha b'Av. What do we think they are?

There is loads to go into here at this point but it would be speculative. We can see ourselves asking questions such as: would the crusades have still happened if we did not leave Israel? Are we still being punished for our sins? If we have Israel back does this mean that we have been punished enough?



These questions go on and on and whilst they stimulate interesting debate and push us to consider many critical aspects of the day, let's regard the relationship between Israel and Tisha b'Av more about our relationship with Israel and less about 'what if'.

Link 1: Israel is something to cherish and look after

This argument takes the view that Israel is a reward. Israel being the promised land was given to us because of a commitment to Hashem. After the spies, Am Yisrael wandered the desert for 40 years as punishment. Those who transgressed at this time were not allowed to enter Israel and so died before the end of the 40 years. Also, Moshe was forbidden from entering Israel for hitting the rock. Same again with the destruction of the Temples and the subsequent exiles. Am Yisrael were punished for their transgressions by not being allowed to live in Israel. Based on this having Israel is obviously something to work towards. We need to look after Israel, cherish our ownership of it and keep it.

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Link 2: Using Israel for the betterment of Am Yisrael

Eretz Yisrael is the place where we should be as a nation. It is in this land that our relationship with Hashem is at its peak; agricultural success is dependent on our behaviour, our Mitzvot count for more, and it is the home of the Beit haMikdash, the dwelling place of the Shechina.

Moreover, it is in Eretz Yisrael that we truly have the opportunity to fulfil our Divine mission: to be *"a nation of priests and a holy nation"* - וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיֶינָה לְמַלְכֶת כֹּהֲנִים וְגוֹי קָדוֹשׁ. Medinat Yisrael can only exist in Eretz Yisrael, and therefore the opportunity for us to be an "light unto the nations" can be best achieved on this international scene.

DISCUSSION POINT- What other ways is Am Yisrael bettered by Eretz Yisrael and Medinat Yisrael?

Is Tisha b'Av still relevant today?

What are some of the challenges that we may face in relating to Tisha b'Av today? What arguments could we propose to question its relevance today?

On Tisha b'Av in one fell swoop the Batei Mikdash and Jewish sovereignty were destroyed: *"Her king and her leaders are in exile"* - מַלְכָּה וְשָׂרֵיהָ בְּגוֹיִם (Eicha 2:9). Now that we have, b'Chasdei Hashem, regained Jewish sovereignty and leaders – whether Rav Chaim Kanievsky, Ohad Tal or Naftali Bennett – once again live in the Land. Megillat Eicha and the Kinnot are merely historical accounts of our past, the Jewish equivalent of Wilfred Owen's *'We Will Remember Them.'*



Based on this, we could argue that Tisha b'Av is relevant only as a memorial day, a day to commemorate the tragedies of our history. Yet this is evidently not true. Megillat Eicha, which has come to epitomise the day itself, concludes:

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הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ ה' אֵלֶיךָ וְנִשׁוּבָה חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם:

"Take us back, Hashem, to Yourself, And let us come back; Renew our days as of old!"

We still mourn the lack of the Batei Mikdash, we act like Aveilim, mourners, as opposed to merely 'remembering' what was. As Rabbi Avi Baumol puts it (in the name of Rav Soloveitchik):

"We mourn the loss of the glory of G-d (Shekhina) which was centered within the community. We mourn the erection of a barrier which has separated G-d from His people. We mourn the severing of the special connection each Jew had with G-d, and the great tragedy which manifested the severance of that connection."

Tisha b'Av is a reminder that we need to be better and do better. We don't mourn and fast because of arbitrary events, we recognise that it was our sins which caused them. Furthermore, even when the Beit haMikdash is rebuilt (iyH between now and Tisha b'Av!), the day will still remain significant – it is eternally relevant.

2010 Poll regarding Tisha b'Av

A poll taken to understand the values and views of Israelis on many social issues was taken and showed some interesting features about Tisha B'av. 22% of Israeli Jews fast on 9 Av. 52% of Israeli Jews forego some form of recreational activity. 18% stated that they would go out on this day if places were open and claimed that keeping things shut was a form of religious coercion.

Extra Chomer

It Is Wrong to Fast on Tisha B'Av? Jul 16, 2010 2:20 AM

Tisha B'Av, a day of fasting and mourning marking the destruction of both temples and the exile of the Jews, has lost any relevance beyond the historical. [Anshel Pfeffer](#)



There are variants to the apocryphal story, but all in essence are the same. Napoleon Bonaparte went for a walk one summer night (it could have been Paris or elsewhere in France or his empire) and heard voices lamenting in a strange language. They may have come from a grand synagogue or a miserable hovel. Upon asking why the men inside were sitting on the floor and mourning, he was told these were Jews grieving for their destroyed temple in Jerusalem. "How long ago did this happen?" asked Bonaparte. "Eighteen-hundred years" was the answer.

"A nation that can mourn for so long the loss of its land and temple," the emperor is supposed to have said prophetically, "will return one day to their land and see it rebuilt."

Other versions name other great figures as the accidental visitor to the Ninth of Av prayers, but that does not detract from the power of the story. The day of fast and mourning, marking the destruction of both temples and the exile of the Jews, is the most evocative calendar date for a people who pride themselves, above all, for their historical memory. It's also a date that has lost any relevance beyond the historical.

Tisha B'Av was never supposed to be an eternal day of mourning. The prophet Zechariah, who according to tradition lived 2,500 years ago, at the time of of the first return to Zion and the building of the Second Temple, quoted the Lord of Hosts promising that "the fasts of the fourth month, and of the fifth, seventh and 10th months will become festivals of joy and happiness for the House of Judah. The belief that one day, exile would end and the temple rebuilt is the basis for such customs as leaving the Book of Lamentations in the geniza repository at the end of the fast day in the belief that next year, it will not be needed.

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No need to fast

More than a million citizens of the state of Israel will fast this Tuesday and mourn the destruction of the previous sovereign Jewish state two millennia ago. But, on every level, this is wrong. If Tisha B'Av, is meant to mark the exile of the Jewish people, then it's no longer relevant. For a decade now, there has not been one Jew around the world who was not free to return to Zion. Ever since the quiet exodus of the last Jews of Syria, in the late 1990s, there has not been a country anywhere that has forbidden its Jewish citizens to leave. Even the 20,000 Jews in Iran can emigrate; they choose not to for financial reasons. They cannot receive a fair price for their homes, property and businesses should they leave.

Insufficient attention has been paid to this unique historical development. For the first time in the history of the Jews, a majority of them are choosing not to live in an independent Jewish state in Zion - of their own free will. This is not exile and praying to G-d that all these millions of Jews up themselves and make aliyah is hypocritical; hundreds of thousands of those who will be lamenting on Tuesday will be doing so while living by choice in the Diaspora.

The other reason for the day of lamentations was canceled 43 years ago.

Soldiers in the reserves brigade that captured the Old City of Jerusalem were certain they were securing the entrances to the Temple Mount for the sappers who would arrive shortly with explosives to blow up the mosques, making way for the Third Temple.

Defense Minister Moshe Dayan thought otherwise. He ordered the Israeli flag removed from the mount and assured the astounded Muslim Wakf officials they would have full control of the area. Meanwhile, the Knesset extended Israeli sovereignty to all of East Jerusalem.

The mosques are still there. The decision to replace them with a Jewish temple is not a matter for heavenly intervention, but one for the democratically elected government. The only reason that the third temple has not been built is that a majority of Israelis simply are not interested. Secular Jews have no affinity to a priestly caste sacrificing heifers and goats, while the great majority of religious Jews are not very eager themselves.

The concept of the temple is too distant, and the heavy price Israel would pay for any attempt to remove the mosques does not seem worth it. That is our democratic decision, not a matter for the messiah.

Mourning on the Ninth of Av in this day and age flies in the face of both secular Zionism and religious Zionism. It contradicts the right of Jews around the world to decide where they prefer to live. The exile is over, and the temple has not been rebuilt because we don't want to do it.

The only ideologies that can justify continuing this observance are those that see democratic Israel as a heretic entity defying the majesty of G-d on earth. But if you are not a member of the Eida Haredit or a settler from Yitzhar, how can you mourn on Tisha B'Av in good conscience?

SEENAI MACHANE 5781

עם ישראל בארץ ישראל על פי תורת ישראל

Am Yisrael b'Eretz Yisrael al pi Torat Yisrael

Special K: Tisha b'Av



Yes, we still need to fast on Tisha b'Av

By [Miriam Shaviv](#)

July 16, 2010

My colleague Anshel Pfeffer has written a [thought-provoking piece](#) in *Haaretz*, in which he argues that we no longer need to fast on Tisha b'Av (which falls next week) because we have returned from exile, and because - he says - it would be perfectly possible to re-build a temple nowadays, if only there was the political will and religious interest (which there isn't).

He concludes:

Mourning on the Ninth of Av in this day and age flies in the face of both secular Zionism and religious Zionism. It contradicts the right of Jews around the world to decide where they prefer to live. The exile is over, and the temple has not been rebuilt because we don't want to do it.

The only ideologies that can justify continuing this observance are those that see democratic Israel as a heretic entity defying the majesty of G-d on earth. But if you are not a member of the Eda Haredit or a settler from Yitzhar, how can you mourn on Tisha B'Av in good conscience?

Well, let me explain why I still fast on Tisha b'Av - beyond the fact that it is a religious obligation - and why I believe it is still a fast which is relevant for each and every Jew, no matter where they live, what their religious or political orientation and whether they are interested in the return of Temple life or not.

For me, Tisha b'Av is not about the destruction of the Temple and the exile per se - but about the reasons why both these things happened. Traditionally, we ascribe them to needless hatred, as well as to idolatry, adultery and murder. But if you look closely at the biblical sources, there is something else at play.

In several different covenants with G-d, the Jewish people are given the mission of building a just and moral society, where the needs of the weak - the stranger, the orphan and the widow - are paramount and which can serve as a 'light unto the nations'. The land of Israel was given to us as a place in which to build this society; the Temple, in which G-d dwells, is the centre of all this.

We are thrown into exile when our society is corrupt. Indeed, a close reading of Jeremiah, before the destruction of the first temple, makes it abundantly clear that the Jews in the land of Israel before the destruction of the temple (the majority were already in exile many years beforehand) were what we would consider today 'frum'; they were dedicated to the Temple, they brought sacrifices, celebrated the festivals etc. However, *they were unethical*, and this is ultimately what forced them out of the land and brought about the destruction of the Temple. G-d, Jeremiah explicitly says, does not want sacrifices from such people.

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These themes were explored in detail in a fascinating course by Rabbi Menachem Leibtag on exile and return, which I took recently at the brilliant [London School of Jewish Studies](#). But Rabbi Shlomo Riskin [expresses much the same sentiments](#):

So what is it about the loss of the Temple which engenders such national mourning? I would submit that the Holy Temple was inextricably intertwined with our national mission: to be G-d's witnesses, and thereby serve as a light unto the nations, bringing humanity to the G-d of justice, morality and peace. Our prophets saw the Temple as the living example from which all nations could learn how to perfect society. With the loss of the Temple, we ceased to be "players" on the world stage; we lost the means by which our message was to be promulgated. And a world without compassionate righteousness and just morality - especially with the possibility of global nuclear destruction - is a world which cannot endure.

Ultimately, what we should be mourning on Tisha b'Av is not the effect - the exile - but the cause, our failure to build a society where justice and morality are the guiding concerns, and our misguided emphasis on religious practice without the accompanying ethics.

Surely this is as relevant as ever today?