

Hadracha **Choveret**



תנועת בני עקיבא
BNEI AKIVA
UNITED KINGDOM

BNEI AKIVA'S WEEKLY EDUCATIONAL HANDBOOK FOR MADRICHIM

Yom Ha'atzmaut



Aims:

- To learn about what Yom Ha'atzmaut celebrates.
- To view Yom Ha'atzmaut in its historical context.
- To learn about the religious significance of the creation of a Jewish State in the Land of Israel.

Background

Yom Ha'atzmaut, translated as 'Independence Day', is celebrated on 5th Iyar. On this day in 1948/5708, David Ben Gurion stood up in what is now called Independence Hall in Tel Aviv and declared "A Jewish State in the Land of Israel, to be known as 'The State of Israel'. *(The last remaining person alive at this world-changing event is Ariele Handler, who in 1939 founded Bnei Akiva in the UK as well as bringing over many children from Nazi Europe and ensuring their passage to England).*

Immediately after the State was declared, war broke out between Israel and its Arab neighbours. The new country was victorious and Israel's independence was ensured; it gained support from various countries, joining the United Nations in 1949.

The 5th Iyar became an annual day of national celebration, with the day before, 4th Iyar, designated as Yom Hazikaron, the day of remembrance for Israel's fallen soldiers. There are some years when these two days are moved in order to prevent either falling on Shabbat and it leading to the breaking of Shabbat. Yom Ha'atzmaut is marked by the reciting of Hallel in the morning and a festive service in the evening, sung in the Yom Tov tune. Many people wear Yom Tov clothes to signify the holiness of the day.

1948 and all that

There are people today who doubt the necessity of saying Hallel on Yom Ha'atzmaut.

Israel's government is secular. How can we possibly thank Hashem for a state that is not run by Halacha?

Yes we got independence but it's not like an open miracle like leaving Egypt or oil lasting for 8

Who are we to institute new prayers? The Chagim can only be made by the Torah and the Sages – we just aren't on their level.

Before we deal with these statements, have a read of the following adaption of a speech from Rav Amital, founding Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Har Etzion, given on Yom Ha'atzmaut 5754.

"Today we live in a "now" generation: Peace now, Mashiach now, Terrorism now, Quiet now - everything must be now. We are incapable of imagining what tomorrow might bring...In 1948, it was a different generation, one with historical perspective.

Recently we have suffered terrible terrorist attacks. Let me tell you something: During those few months, between the UN vote on the 29th of November and the Declaration of Statehood on the 5th of Iyyar, there were seven car bombs here. One of them, on Ben-Yehuda Street, killed fifty Jews. And this in addition to the victims killed by



marauders on the roads and by snipers in the yishuvim...And do you know how many victims fell here in Gush Etzion on the 3rd and 4th of Iyyar, 5708? More than a hundred and fifty. Just two days before the declaration of the State! Two hundred and forty victims fell during those five months. And despite it all, the establishment of the State was declared, and the next day everyone recited Hallel with great excitement. People danced in the streets. Had they gone mad?

It was the strong sense of history that prompted this. That generation knew and understood the significance of Jewish independence in Eretz Yisrael after two thousand years. A State meant not for the six hundred thousand Jews living there then, but for millions of Jews. Each person understood that he was fighting for the millions who would come.

What were the borders of that State? They did not include the Kotel. Nahariya was not ours, nor were Nazareth, Lod, Ramle, Ashkelon, Be'er Sheva. Jerusalem was an international city. What were they saying Hallel for? They said Hallel for the sovereignty that had returned to Israel. They remembered the words of the Rambam in Hilkhos Channuka, where he teaches that in the merit of the Chashmona'im, "Sovereignty returned to Israel for two hundred years." They understood the significance of that sovereignty.

I'm not even discussing the fact that the next day I had to rush to finish reciting Hallel because I had been drafted. They began to invade from all sides: from Egypt, from Syria, from Jordan, from Lebanon. Units from Iraq. How were we supposed to stand up to them, after the British had forbidden us to stockpile arms? All in all we were six hundred thousand Jews. Someone who cannot see the past will also be incapable of seeing the future, and of perceiving God's hand, "when God redeems the captivity of His nation." Can a nation rising out of the ashes of the Sho'ah allow itself to ignore this?

True, you are all young. You never saw all of this. You were born, as it were, to a life of freedom. You never experienced Jews living in bunkers, longing for any type of freedom, praying for the day when they could walk in the streets and look around without fear.

Only someone who looks at the entire two thousand years and sees Jews being led into exile by Titus, sees the Crusades and pogroms - only someone who sees all of this understands the meaning of Jewish independence after two thousand years.

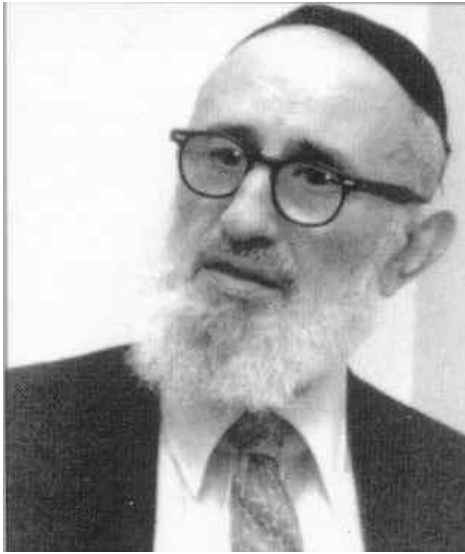
What we, as the primary group of Religious Zionists in the UK, need to do is to remind these people of what happened in history! If only people had an idea of what happened, they might think differently about the need to thank Hashem for the State of Israel. We need to remind people of the fact that although the mass murder of the Holocaust had ended in 1945, the mere end of the War did not solve their problems. Many countries did not want to accept the Jewish refugees. Having a Jewish State gave a home to so many people and is literally responsible for saving the lives of millions of Jews.

In light of this, does a secular government negate our saying Hallel? Is the astonishing victory of a minority over the many not less worthy of saying Hallel than at Chanukah? If individual communities throughout Europe said Hallel when they were saved from tragedy, can the whole nation not thank Hashem for such a wonderful gift, that of the Land of Israel in Jewish hands?



Religious Significance

There are two main approaches to how the day is viewed within the Religious Zionist world. The first is based on the teachings of Rav Kook, who saw the return to Zion as the beginning of the redemption, hence the phrase in the Israeli prayer for the State 'Reishit Tzmichat Geulateinu' – the first flowerings of our redemption. The second approach is based on the teachings of Rav Soloveitchik, who saw the State of Israel as Hashem's call to the Jewish people to return to the Land, but not necessarily as part of a redemptive process.



Either way, Yom Ha'atzmaut was a reaffirmation of the first covenant sealed between Avraham and Hashem – the inheritance of the Land of Israel. By declaring a state, the Jewish people returned to their original birthplace, the only homeland in its history. By saying Hallel, we thank Hashem for the beautiful opportunity of rebuilding Jewish life after it was nearly destroyed; not in the streets of Berlin and Warsaw but in the places of Jerusalem, as the prophets foretold over 2500 years ago. With the State of Israel, Judaism was reborn.



YOM HA'ATZMAUT

69 YEARS

OF ISRAEL'S
INDEPENDENCE

1ST MAY 2017
4TH IYAR 5777

תנועת בני עקיבא
BNEI AKIVA UK

Yom Ha'atzmaut and Yom Hazikaron Service

Once again, we are delighted to be joined by Chief Rabbi Mirvis and a top Israeli dignitary, who will both address the community during the service.

Doors will open at 6:30pm with the service commencing at 7.

Dinner and dancing for all Madrichim and Chanichim of Bnei Akiva will follow the Service

Bachad are also hosting a White House Buffet (£20), for all who want to come after the Service. Contact Sarah at events@bauk.org or 020 8209 1319 ext.* to reserve your spot



MIZRACHI
UNITED KINGDOM



KINLOSS



UJIA



SUMMER MACHANE 5777



3 August - 16 August

Year 6, 7, 8 in North Wales

Year 9 in Holland

Year 10 in Spain

NEW LOCATION!



תנועת בני עקיבא
BNEI AKIVA UK

for more info contact akiva@bauk.org

Peula Ideas

- Wear blue & white to sviva! This is an old Bnei Akiva tradition that has somewhat fallen by the wayside (tell me if I'm wrong) but for Yom Ha'atzmaut, it is a good time to re-introduce it.
- Birthday Bingo: make bingo cards of some of the reasons to be thankful for the State of Israel e.g. a safe space for Jews, scientific research leader, hundreds of new yeshivot etc and play bingo.
- Good News, Bad News: One person says 'Good News' followed by any random comment e.g. I just found a brand-new car. The next person says 'Bad News' followed by some way of turning that statement into bad news, e.g. It was stolen. The next person finds the 'good' in that i.e. 'Good News: As a policeman I get a bonus for that' etc. The aim is to try and be witty (!!) but the serious message is that you can always find the good or bad in a situation – on Yom Ha'atzmaut one can find excuses not to thank Hashem; but is this what He wants from us?
- Religious Zionist Debate: Have different people arguing what is the most significant aspect of Yom Ha'atzmaut/having a Jewish State: political independence, religious renewal, unifying the nation, listening to Hashem's call; the beginning of our redemption etc