



## Creating a place on campus for meaningful conversation about Israel...

makōm מקום  
Israel. In Real Life



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## Session #1

# Israel As We See It: Establishing a baseline of personal connections to Israel



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## Session #1

# Israel As We See It: Establishing a Baseline of Personal Connections to Israel

### Introduction:

“*Israel*”. Just saying or writing this one word provokes a diverse range of feelings and thoughts. In this session we are going to start a long and rich conversation about “*Israel*” that will continue over the next ten weeks and that may open up whole new realms of thought and feeling related to a people, a land, and a country.

This session opens the program with a discussion of the roles that “*Israel*” plays in the lives of the group participants. In advance, participants will be asked to ponder the question, “What does Israel mean to me?” and to express their thoughts and feelings through words and pictures. As we explore their varied representations, the group will start to get to know each other on a personal level.

This session sets the tone for the ten-week talkspace: Israel program. For that reason, the most important goal for today is to foster an open environment in which participants feel comfortable talking freely about Israel and are encouraged to listen carefully to one another.

### Session Outline:

| Segment                             | Suggested Time    | Description   |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|---|
| <i>In advance</i>                   | <i>Flexible</i>   | Ask each participant to write a one-page statement entitled “What does Israel mean to me?”<br>Ask participants to bring photographs (optional, see below) |
| <i>Welcome to talkspace: Israel</i> | <i>20 minutes</i> | Icebreaker activity<br>Welcome and overview of talkspace: Israel  |
| <i>Essay Sharing</i>                | <i>20 minutes</i> | Share and discuss participants’ essays in small groups  |
| <i>Photographs/ Caricatures</i>     | <i>20 minutes</i> | Participants respond to various images of Israel  |
| <i>Wrap Up</i>                      | <i>10 minutes</i> | Share personal and group goals for the coming weeks   |
| <i>Israel Update</i>                | <i>10 minutes</i> | Introduce concept of weekly Israel Update and pass around sign-up sheet<br>Brainstorm questions to answer through these presentations                     |
| <i>Looking Ahead</i>                | <i>5 minutes</i>  | Give a quick preview of the next session  |



## **Success Checklist**

At the end of the session, affirmative answers to these questions will help you know you've been successful:

- Over the course of today's discussions, did participants express and reflect on the ways in which they personally relate to Israel? Did the conversation touch on a variety of dimensions in which to consider and explore Israel?
- Did participants take an active part in discussions and activities?
- Did participants respect and listen to each other's ideas?
- Did you establish a safe space in which participants feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and asking questions that are on their minds?

## **Pre-Session Assignment:**

Because participants will not meet together before Session 1, contact them about a week before the first session to remind them about the meeting and to begin setting the tone for the group.

Also, in preparation for the first session, ask each participant to write a journal entry or brief essay (about 1 page in length) entitled "What Israel Means to Me." Participants should try to explain the nature of their own personal connection to Israel. Explain that these pieces will be shared with others in the group.

If you choose option # 1 in the *Photograph/Caricatures* part of the session (see below), ask each participant to bring an image that best captures how they see Israel. It can be a photograph taken while in Israel, or a picture taken by another photographer. It could be from a news source, postcard, map, advertisement, etc.

## **Preparation:**

### ***Facilitation***

Read over this facilitation guide and make sure you are comfortable with all of the material.

If you want to know more about the themes of this session, check out the suggestions for further reading listed at the end of the facilitation guide for this session. You can also see the appendix for resources to help strengthen your general Israel knowledge.

### ***Materials***

You will need the following supplies:

- Copies of Handout 1.1 for each participant
- Poster board, flip chart or chalkboard; marker or chalk
- Tape to hang images around the room
- If you choose option # 2 in the *Photograph/Caricatures* part of the session, print the map images found online at <http://www.jewishagency.org/NR/rdonlyres/1F88F07D-AAB1-4D72-B41A-2DD7C15BE4DC/53627/ahamapa.ppt>.
- Copies of Handout 2.1, the article by Assaf Inbari that participants will need to read for Session 2.

## **Session Implementation/Description:**

### ***Welcome to Talkspace: Israel – 20 minutes***

Welcome everyone to talkspace: Israel, and to a community that will be getting to know each other well through the upcoming discussions of the next ten weeks. Israel can be a loaded and difficult topic to

explore, and many of the conversations will deliberately include personal elements. To introduce participants to each other and start getting them comfortable with each other, start the session with personal introductions and a short icebreaker activity (see appendix for a list of ideas; as you choose, remember that some of the participants probably already know each other but others are bound to be completely unconnected to anyone in the group).

After introductions, present an overview of the talkspace: Israel program. Hopefully everyone has learned a bit about the format from application materials, interviews, and/or publicity. As you establish the routine and the tone for the program, it will help participants to hear a review of the program outline and expectations. Share why you think it is important to have this program take place in your campus community. Summarize the following goals and program flow, and mention the culminating project that the group will plan. Also, remind participants of the time commitment involved: attending every weekly session, completing reading and reflection assignments in preparation for each session, preparing an Israel Update for one session, and participating in the culminating project.

### **Goals of talkspace: Israel**

The program aims to:

- Create a safe space for dialogue in which members of the campus community – including students, faculty, and staff – can learn and discuss their thoughts and feelings about Israel
- Nurture exploration of both the Jewish values, concepts, and questions that serve as a foundation for connection to Israel and of the role Israel plays in participants' Jewish identities
- Challenge participants to examine their assumptions about Israel
- Expose participants to valuable information about Israel through course materials and joint learning in a pluralistic environment
- Offer a unique forum for unengaged students and/or Taglit – Birthright Israel alumni to participate in Jewish life on campus

### **Session Line-Up**

Loosely, the sessions break down into four main program segments. The first two sessions set the stage by exploring individual and communal relationships between Jews and Israel. The third and fourth sessions explore the relationship between Judaism and Zionism. The fifth through seventh sessions explore specific topics relating to life in Israel. Finally, the last three sessions conclude the program with a forward-looking discussion of the evolving relationships that the Jewish people and the individual talkspace: Israel participants have with Israel.

The sessions are titled:

1. Israel As We See It: Establishing a Baseline of Personal Connections to Israel
2. Land & People: Connection & Ambivalence
3. Our Jewishness & the Jewishness of Israelis: Can Judaism Be Defined?
4. Beyond Israel: Zionism's Impact on "Jewishness" Everywhere
5. Immigration & Growth: Dreams & Realities
6. Standing, Not Singing: Israeli Arabs, Hatikvah, and Symbol-Making in the Jewish State
7. *L'Dor va-Dor*, From Generation to Generation: Presence of The Conflict in Israeli Society
8. Israel and the Diaspora(s): Centers and Peripheries of Jewish Life and Thought
9. Israel Towards the Next Sixty: Old and New Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
10. Wrapping Up & Moving On: Israel in Our Lives

### **Essay Sharing – 20 minutes**

The next part of the program gives the participants a chance to share the essays they wrote before the session. Divide participant into small groups (not more than 3) and have each person read the essay of another group member within the smaller groups. Encourage each partner to ask the other challenging questions to more deeply explore the place that Israel has in his/her life and identity. Each person's essay becomes a text for study and discussion. *Make sure all the essays are read and discussed.*

The following questions from Handout 1.1 can serve as a discussion guide for the small groups:

- Was it easy or difficult to write your essay? Is your connection to Israel easily articulated or more difficult to express?
- How did you decide what to include in your essay? Did you leave anything out?
- Did the knowledge that others would read your piece affect what you chose to include?
- What experiences, events, and/or people have been most influential in shaping your connection to Israel?
- In the context of the American college campus with so many other things going on, how does Israel remain relevant to you?

After 15 minutes in small groups, come back together as a large group. Thank them all for sharing, and ask the following questions to sum up the conversations:

- How did it feel to share your essay with a group?
- Did anyone hear anything from a group member that made you want to add to or change your own essay, or that affected your own views?

We will have more time to process the essay sharing conversations after the next activity. In the meantime, you may want to reflect to the students that in sharing their essays and digging beyond their surface together, they just engaged in the traditional Jewish format of text study. Throughout talkspace: Israel, we will explore texts in just this format—looking closely at texts from a variety of sources and asking questions about their deeper meaning and implications.

### **Photograph/Caricatures conversation – 20 minutes**

We now turn to another exercise in which we examine “texts” as a way of reflecting on our personal feelings about Israel—but this time the texts are images. The next part of the session can proceed in one of two ways:

#### **Option # 1: Participant Picture Gallery**

Collect the photographs that the participants brought and hang or scatter them around the room (you can also collect and hang them before the session starts). Have participants circulate the room and investigate the photographs.

Then come back together as a group for a general discussion, using the following questions as a guide:

- Which of the photographs/pictures best represents your relationship to/ impression of Israel? Why?

*Facilitator's Note: Encourage the participants not to choose their own picture.*

- Which photograph/picture(s) do you find to be the most shocking? What statement are those photographs/pictures making?
- Which photograph/picture best represents how the media and press portray Israel? Do you feel it is an accurate portrayal?

- Which photograph/picture best represents your ideal of what Israel should be?
- Are there any common themes in the essays and/or reactions to the photographs/pictures? Are there any major differences?
- What one component of someone else's statement does and/or does not apply or relate to you?
- In hearing other statements (in the essays or in the photograph/picture interpretations), would you modify your own statements about Israel in any way?
- What is one issue that you found particularly insightful or intriguing that came out of someone else's essay or was evoked by one of the pictures? Why did it appeal to you?
- Under what circumstances would "what Israel means to you" change?
- Should there be a common denominator about what Israel "is" to everyone?

Using a flip chart or similar, you may want compose a list of the issues that were common or overlapping in the ways that various people wrote about and spoke about Israel. Also include a listing of unusual or unique perspectives that were voiced in the group.

### **Option 2: Caricatures Of Israel**

In advance, download and print the interpretative maps which can be found in on the following link <http://www.jewishagency.org/NR/rdonlyres/1F88F07D-AAB1-4D72-B41A-2DD7C15BE4DC/53627/ahamapa.ppt>

Complete the activity as outlined in Option #1 above.

Then, come back together as a group for a general discussion, using the discussion questions above as a guide. You may also want to ask whether participants think there were any interpretations of the map missing. What further interpretations can they think of? What statements would those interpretations make?

### ***Wrap Up – 10 minutes***

To end this session ask each participant to share a personal goal or a question they want to explore in the next sessions of talkspace: Israel. These goals or questions could be inspired by the essays they wrote or heard, the images they saw, the conversation that ensued, or any other trigger.

### ***Israel Update – 10 minutes***

In addition to facilitating the pre-planned session each week, you should spend five to ten minutes at each meeting on an Israel Update. Each week, one or two participants should look at current Israel-related news and prepare a short presentation of the key stories or issues regarding Israel. Today, introduce the concept and pass around a sign-up sheet for all participants to pick the dates on which they will present.

Israel Updates not only help the group keep up on current events, but they're a great way to learn about aspects of Israel about which participants want to learn more. If you have time, ask the group to brainstorm a list of the topics on which they want more information. Then you can share this list with participants during their individually designated weeks to prepare their presentations, and they can each try to focus on one of those areas, sharing a little background information along with the most current update from that week's news stories.

Another suggestion is to help participants choose news events that are connected with the corresponding sessions' topics. If people are able to present on events reflecting talkspace: Israel conversations, it will both empower the participants as learners and also point to the relevance of the talkspace: Israel program in the context of contemporary Israeli life.

### ***Looking Ahead – 5 minutes***

Although each one of us is a developing self built by our individual experiences, we also inherit certain traits and characteristics from our families. We become who we are in conversation with the inherited pasts that we choose to incorporate in our present.

In the first session of talkspace: Israel the participants themselves provided the text, an expression of their personal relationship to Israel. In the second session, we will bring in other voices from the Jewish “family” that influenced and represent the ways in which the People of Israel relate to the Land of Israel. These texts – traditional and modern – highlight the ambivalence and complexity of the Jewish relationship with Israel over time and space. As they engage these texts, participants may find a mirror that helps them more clearly reflect their own ways of relating to Israel.

Distribute copies of Handout 2.1, Assaf Inbari’s article, to be read in preparation for Session 2.

### **Reading Suggestions**

#### ***On the Web:***

**Taglit-Birthright Israel: Impact on Jewish Identity, Peoplehood, and Connection to Israel.** Leonard Saxe, Theodore Sasson, Shahar Hecht. (Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies – Brandeis U: June 2006). <http://www.cmjs.org/Publication.cfm?IDResearch=119>

**Why Israel?** Michael Fisher, Adi Inbar, Marlene Korenstein Esti Moskovitz-Kalman, Marc Rosenstein, & Sigalit Ur. (Makom B'Galil, NAICE, IConnect, & the Jewish Agency for Israel: January 2005 ). <http://www.jafi.org.il/education/jajz/nacie/download/WI17-1-letter.pdf>

#### ***On the Shelf:***

**Irreconcilable Differences?: The Waning of the American Jewish Love Affair with Israel** Stephen T. Rosenthal. (Brandeis (University Press, 2001).

**Two Worlds of Judaism: The Israeli and American Experiences.** Charles Leibman and Steven Cohen (Yale University Press, 1990).

**What Israel Means to Me: By 80 Prominent Writers, Performers, Scholars, Politicians, and Journalists.** Alan Dershowitz (Wiley Books, 2006)



## Session #1

# Israel As We See It: Establishing a Baseline of Personal Connections to Israel

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## Handout 1.1 – Small Group Discussion Questions

As you discuss your essays in a small group, ask each other questions about the personal texts in front of you to reach a deeper level of understanding of the place of Israel in your lives. After sharing each essay, you can also discuss the following questions:

- Was it easy or difficult to write your essay? Is your connection to Israel easily articulated or more difficult to express?
- How did you decide what to include in your essay? Did you leave anything out?
- Did the knowledge that others would read your piece affect what you chose to include?
- What experiences, events, and/or people have been most influential in shaping your connection to Israel?
- In the context of the American college campus with so many other things going on, how does Israel remain relevant to you?



## Session #1

# Israel As We See It: Establishing a Baseline of Personal Connections to Israel

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- How did you decide what to include in your essay? Did you leave anything out?
- Did the knowledge that others would read your piece affect what you chose to include?
- What experiences, events, and/or people have been most influential in shaping your connection to Israel?
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## Session #2

# Land & People: Connection & Ambivalence

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## Session #2

### Land & People: Connection & Ambivalence

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#### **Introduction:**

Although Zionism is a modern political movement, the Jewish relationship to the Land of Israel is as old as the Jewish People itself. From the beginning, Jewish texts have dealt extensively, and Jewish life has been involved intimately, with the complex relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel. In fact, the word 'Israel' itself is used in the Bible to relate to both the human community and the geographic territory of the family of Jacob/Israel.

Like many intimate relationships, the relation between the Jewish People and the Land of Israel has contained elements of yearning and desire, as well as themes of ambivalence, hesitancy, and emotional complexity. In this session, participants will encounter a diverse selection of Jewish references to the Land of Israel. Hopefully, the accompanying texts will help enrich our discussion about our own relationships with Israel by bringing in voices from a variety of Jewish times, places, and positions.

#### **Session Outline:**

| <b>Segment</b>            | <b>Suggested Time</b> | <b>Description</b>   |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| <i>Israel Update</i>      | <i>5 minutes</i>      | Designated student reports on Israeli current events   |
| <i>Opening Discussion</i> | <i>15 minutes</i>     | Reflect on Assaf Inbari's article viewing the connection between the Land of Israel and the People of Israel through the lens of a romantic relationship<br>Use Inbari's framework as an introduction to a conversation about the nature of Jews' communal relationship with Israel, and about participants' own relationships with Israel |
| <i>Text Exploration</i>   | <i>45 minutes</i>     | Introduce participants to the tradition of text study as a mode for exploring ideas<br>Choose one of 3 methodological options for exploring additional texts about the relationship between Jews and the land of Israel  |
| <i>Wrap Up</i>            | <i>10 minutes</i>     | Reflect on the session to help participants process and find perspective on the ideas discussed<br>Encourage participants to apply the ideas they encountered in thinking about their own relationships with Israel  |
| <i>Looking Ahead</i>      | <i>5 minutes</i>      | Prime participants for next session with brief reflection on the way people conceive of and represent their own identities<br>Distribute questions for participants to think about before the next session   |



## **Success Checklist**

At the end of the session, affirmative answers to these questions will help you know you've been successful:

- Did the conversation reflect multiple approaches to thinking about the relationships between the land of Israel, individual Jews, and the Jewish people as a whole?
- Did participants reflect on the label of Jews as the "People of Israel"? Did the discussion explore the uniqueness of the relationship between a people and a land that share the same name even as the majority of the people live outside of the land?
- Did participants start to get comfortable engaging texts as a way of exploring and experimenting with ideas? Did their engagement with the texts enrich the group's discussion?
- Did participants think critically about their own personal relationship with Israel?

## **Pre-Session Assignment:**

Before this session, participants should read the section from Assaf Inbari's "Forever Engaged, Never Married to the Land of Israel" on Handout 2.1.

*Facilitator's Note: This section from Inbari's essay contends with the unique nature of the Jewish people's relationship to the Land of Israel. According to Inbari, the Biblical conception of the link between the land of Israel and the people of Israel is shaped by a covenant that makes the Jews fiancés of a land owned by God. The Zionist movement brought another kind of conception—one that emphasized the Jewish connection to the land of Israel through historical memory, residence, Hebrew culture, and sovereignty. In other words, the Zionist movement sought to make the Jews, according to Inbari, "spouses" rather than "fiancés" (also, "owners" rather than "renters" or "caretakers"). The tensions among these competing metaphors set the scene for this session's discussion.*

## **Preparation:**

### ***Facilitation***

Read over this facilitation guide and make sure you are comfortable with all of the material, including the Assaf Inbari (ah-**sahf** in-**bar**-ee) article and each text for the text study portion of the session. See the Appendix for suggestions on orienting your group to text study.

If you want to know more about the themes of this session, check out the suggestions for further reading listed at the end of the facilitation guide for this session.

### ***Materials***

- Before the session, write the following terms on a poster board, flip chart, chalkboard, or similar, big enough to be seen by your whole group:
  - Infatuation
  - Dating
  - Falling in Love
  - Being in Love
  - Engagement
  - Marriage
- Copy Handouts 2.2 & 2.3 for the text exploration activities.
- If following Option #1 for the text study (making Talmud pages), have on hand at least 4 pairs of scissors; glue sticks or tape; flip chart paper, 11 x 17-inch paper, or posterboards; and markers.
- Copy Handout 3.1 to distribute for students to prepare for Session 3.

## **Session Implementation/Description:**

### ***Israel Update – 5 minutes***

Before launching into the talkspace: Israel content for the session, make time for the participant(s) signed up for the week to present an update on Israeli current events. Including this segment in each session will help talkspace: Israel participants connect the content of the program to the facts of Israel's present-day existence.

### ***Opening Discussion – 15 minutes***

As an introduction to your discussion of today's topic and the article everyone should have read, present your group with the list of relationship-related words you have written to display before the session.

Possible questions to ask your group:

- What do each of these terms mean to you? What are the differences between the terms? You may want to write (or ask a volunteer to write) some of the participants' responses next to the phrases for the group to see.

*Key Points: Each term denotes a different period in a relationship, a different level of commitment, and maybe even a different degree of passion.*

- What do you think it would look like for Jews to have relationships with Israel of each of the types on our list (infatuation, dating, marriage, etc.)?
- In the article you read for today, Assaf Inbari talked about the Jewish people's relationship with Israel in terms of engagement and marriage. What does Inbari say about the essence of the intimate and complex relationship between the Jews and Israel? In what ways do you agree with his assessment? In what ways do you disagree?
- In applying these terms, is there a difference between individuals' relationships with Israel and the relationship between Israel and the entire Jewish People as a whole?
- What term best describes your own current relationship to Israel? Can you describe your relationship with Israel using the distinctions among the relationship terms on our list? Are there dimensions of your relationship with Israel that this list does not reflect?

End this opening discussion by suggesting that Inbari offered an interesting — and perhaps useful — scheme for describing the relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel, but Inbari is just one man. A multitude of other philosophers, politicians, historians, theologians, writers, and texts shed light on this relationship from a dramatic range of viewpoints. We will now turn to some of these other perspectives as we delve deeper into our exploration of the relationship at hand.

### ***Text Exploration – 45 minutes***

This portion of the session further unpacks the nature of the unique relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel by exploring short texts that describe a wide variety of views about relationships to Israel. There are many texts, and there is no need to plow through all of them. The texts are arranged in two separate collections (pre-modern and modern) in Handouts 2.2 & 2.3. They are not presented as authoritative statements on the validity or legitimacy of any particular position. See these texts as partners in your conversation, giving voice to other Jewish points of view from other times and places.

Text study will rear its head as an educational mode throughout the talkspace: Israel curriculum. This session may be the first time that some of your participants have engaged texts in this way. In thinking about how to frame the activity for your group and help participants get comfortable in this kind of discussion, refer to the appendix titled "Leading Successful Text Study."

In this session, we can think of ourselves having a back-and-forth discussion with the texts at hand. Here are three different ways to spark that conversation with your participants:

### **Option # 1 (requires scissors and glue/tape): Talmud Pages**

Use the texts in the collection to create Talmud-style pages of written dialogue. (You may want to show participants a real page of Talmud to demonstrate what it looks like.) Break the participants into groups and give each group a different one of the texts written as a central point of reference in the middle of a piece of 11x17 or flip chart paper. Ask the group to create a commentary on that central text by cutting and pasting additional texts from Handouts 2.2 and 2.3 and by writing their own comments.

Then distribute markers to all participants and continue these conversations-on-paper by spreading the groups' creations around the room and inviting participants to peruse the commentaries, adding their own personal reflections, reactions, questions and ideas.

Finally, bring the group back together to reflect on the process. Ask some of these questions:

- How hard was it to find other texts in the collection that shed light on your central text?
- When you looked at the whole collection of pages together, did you see new connections?
- What was it like to add your own voice to the dialogue among the printed sources we looked at?

### **Option # 2: Text Mix'N'Match**

Divide students into pairs and assign each pair one text from the pre-modern text collection (Handout 2.2) and one from the modern sources (Handout 2.3). Ask them to read and discuss the texts, thinking about the relationship between the texts, the differences between them and what they have in common. How do the traditional and modern approaches differ? Does either text present a challenge that is answered by the other? After giving pairs time to grapple with their texts, come back together as a large group. Ask each pair to briefly—in 1-2 minutes—present their texts and reflections. As groups share, highlight themes and connections that emerge among the various pairs. Ask questions that challenge the group to think more deeply about the meanings of and connections among the texts.

### **Option #3: Guided Text Study**

Choose one of the following study strands and accompanying sets of discussion questions. Ask students to read and discuss the texts in pairs; then come back together as a big group for a larger conversation about participants' reactions. (You may want to create a handout with the questions for the Path you select to guide participants in their small groups.) As pairs share their responses to questions, continue to challenge them to examine their responses more deeply through the questions you ask to guide discussion (Hopefully participants will return to the attached texts after this session to converse with those pieces that did not enter their discussion during this session—you can encourage them to do so!)

*Path A: Texts 1,7 &13: Genesis 17, Rabbi Nahman, & Ozick*

All three texts are about the tension among the places where we live, the places that are our destinations/destiny, and the places that we call home.

- How does each of the three texts play differently with the tension between where we are and where we want to be?
- How is home both a place of being and a place of becoming? How would you define "home" with regard to each of these texts?
- What is the role of the Land of Israel - in a physical and/or metaphorical sense – in each of these texts? In what ways are these takes on Israel similar, and in what ways different?

*Path B: Texts 2,5 & 11: Leviticus 25, Additional Amidah Service, & Buber*

The assumption of most peoples is that their lives in their given territories are matters of nature; their residence is a fact like the kinds of trees found in a particular province or the path of a specific river. The three texts here offer a different take on the connection between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel—a connection rooted in a moral covenant.

- Based on these texts, how would you describe this moral covenant? In this covenant, who is responsible to whom? Do all three texts seem to understand this covenant in the same way?
- According to these texts, does the image of "owners," "tenants," or "caretakers" best describe the relationship between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel?
- What are the similarities and differences in the roles granted to the divine and to the Jewish people in each of the three texts vis-à-vis their respective responsibilities towards fulfilling the moral covenant?

*Path C: Texts 9,10 & 3: Israel's Scroll of Independence, Leibowitz, & Ketubot 111*

The richness of a given culture, like the beauty of a fine tapestry, is in the existence of contrasting and complementary threads. Culturally, the Jewish story(ies) is made up of a wide variety of overlapping threads; each one may tell a different story about who we are and who we want to be. Each of these texts tells a story about the meaning of “home” for Jews.

- What story does each of these texts tell?
- In Ketubot 111, how is the Jew to determine where his/her home is?
- In the modern texts, the question is not about the individual Jew, but about notions of homeland as the place of the community's origin. How do the Scroll of Independence and Leibowitz understand the determination of homeland differently?
- Is it important to define “homeland” in considering the meaning(s) of Jewish peoplehood and the connection with Israel? Why or why not?

*Path D: Texts 6, 12 & 14: Lekhah Dodi, Keinan, & London*

These three texts invoke a broad array of metaphors and vocabulary, reflecting the varied lenses through which the authors and their subjects view Israel.

- What are different ways that the texts relate to Israel? As dream? As reality? As theology? As history and memory? As a home like any other? What else?
- What relationships emerge in these texts between the real and the ideal? Does the ideal set a standard toward which the reality is shaped? Is the ideal an escape from the real? Is the real—with all its difficulties—sustainable without the hope given by an ideal? Is one more important than the other?
- What different metaphors do you identify? How might these reflect some of the different ways that you think about and experience your own connections to Israel?

**Wrap Up – 10 minutes**

Lead participants in reflecting on the text study and bringing closure to the session. Questions to propel this reflection include:

- What was this text study like for you? How did it feel to examine the pieces so closely? Were you comfortable with the process? Why or why not?
- How did the ideas you encountered in these texts fit with Inbari's description of Jews' relationship with Israel? Did any of these texts remind you of Inbari's article? Clash with his article?
- What were some of the most resonant themes that you noticed throughout the texts?
- Did any of the texts particularly speak to you? Why?
- After exploring the various texts' perspectives on our relationship with the land of Israel, what do you think it means to call Jews the People of Israel?
- Has your personal sense of your relationship with Israel evolved at all since the beginning of this session?
- Go around and ask each person to share one new realization or lingering question after today's conversations. (This could be a nice ritual for the end of each session.)

### **Looking Ahead – 5 minutes**

Share the following ideas with participants:

In today's session we talked about different ways of thinking about the relationship between the Land of Israel and the People of Israel. This conversation will continue next week as we explore the meaning of Jewish identity, and the ways in which that meaning impacts, or is impacted by, Israel.

Our identities are inextricably linked to the physical spaces that are important to us. Alain de Botton writes that one strong element of the human experience is an "...impulse to acknowledge the extent to which our identities are indelibly connected to... locations."<sup>1</sup>

This argument suggests that our conceptions of the land of Israel are indelibly tied to our conceptions of who we are as Jewish individuals and as a Jewish people. If this is the case, we won't be able to dig deeper into our relationships with Israel until we dig deeper into our understanding of what it means to be Jewish.

To that end, in the next session, we will focus on this matter of self-imagination as we ask, Who are the Jews? How have we understood ourselves over time? How did the public intellectuals and activists of the Zionist movement understand the notions of nationality and religion, and their place in Jewish identity? How do contemporary Israelis attempt to make sense of these same questions? And does Jewishness mean different things inside and outside of Israel?

Before the next session, ask all participants to think about the following questions and note their answers. (See Handout 3.1.) It could even be interesting for participants to get together with someone else in the group to discuss the questions over coffee.

- What does it mean to be Jewish?
- How do you, personally, know that you're Jewish? What are the daily reminders that you're Jewish?
- How do you express your Jewishness?
- When do you feel the most Jewish? When do you feel the least Jewish?
- Have you ever been around other Jews expressing their Jewishness in ways that were completely unfamiliar to you? How did you feel in those moments?
- How related is Jewishness to religion?

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<sup>1</sup> De Botton, Alain. *The Architecture of Happiness*. <http://www.alaindebotton.com/pages/content/index.asp?PageID=56>

If participants have been to Israel, also ask them to think back to their Israel experience and note their answers to the following additional questions.

- When did you feel the most Jewish in Israel?
- Which expressions of Jewishness in Israel were most familiar to you?
- Which expressions of Jewishness in Israel were most foreign to you?
- What did you most like about expressions of Jewishness in Israel?
- What most bothered you about expressions of Jewishness in Israel?
- On a scale of 1-10, how Jewish was Israel in your eyes?
- What does it mean to be Jewish in Israel? To what extent is religion a part of Jewishness there?

Suggest to participants that thinking about these questions will get the juices flowing for the next session.

## **Reading Suggestions**

### ***On the Web:***

**The Meaning of the Land of Israel for a Jew.** Barbara Spectre (Paedia – The European Institute for Jewish Studies in Europe, & the Swedish Theological Institute: 2001). [http://www.paideia-eu.org/images/docs/1147076174\\_Spectre2001TheMeaningOfTheLandOfIsrael.pdf](http://www.paideia-eu.org/images/docs/1147076174_Spectre2001TheMeaningOfTheLandOfIsrael.pdf)

**The Religious Significance of Israel.** Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks. (Office of the Chief Rabbi, 22 July 2006). <http://www.chiefrabbi.org/thoughts/mattot5766.pdf>

**Zionism and the Myth of Motherland.** Assaf Sagiv (*Azure*, Autumn 5759/1998, No. 5). <http://www.azure.org.il/magazine/magazine.asp?id=203>

### ***On the Shelf:***

**The Biography of Ancient Israel.** Ilana Pardes (University of California Press, 2000).

**A History of Israel and the Holy Land.** Michael Avi-Yonah, Ed. (New York, 2003).

**The Land Of Israel : Jewish Perspectives.** Lawrence A. Hoffman, Ed. (University of Notre Dame Press, 1986.)

## Handout 2.1

### Forever Engaged, Never Married, to the Land of Israel

#### Assaf Inbari

Excerpt from *Azure* (Summer 5767 / 2007, No. 29)

*The editors of Azure provide the following summary of the Inbari article on their website:*  
(<http://www.shalem.org.il/publications/?did=23>)

*Assaf Inbari's "Forever Engaged, Never Married, to the Land of Israel" likens Diaspora Jewry to the unrequited lover yearning for the Land of Israel, here idealized as the undemanding, boundless object of his affection. It is precisely this yearning, writes Inbari that fueled the success of the Zionist dream. He wonders aloud if the return of the Jewish people to Israel shatters this dynamic – as, he claims, the breaking of the glass under the chuppah (or wedding canopy) marks a shattering of sorts.*

An acclaimed essayist and literary critic, Inbari explores the complex relationship of the Jews and their homeland—a relationship defined by a tension between yearning and fulfillment. Published extensively in Israeli journals and newspapers and well-known and respected among the Hebrew-speaking public, Inbari, one of Shalem's first three fellows, is just now being introduced to English audiences as well.

Find the complete article at: <http://www.azure.org.il/magazine/magazine.asp?id=390>

The Zionist choice was neither Rachel nor Leah, neither bachelorhood nor marriage, but something in between. It was a relationship defined by the tension between yearning and its fulfillment in matrimony. It was an eternal engagement to the land of Israel, with no wedding date in sight.

No other nation has chosen this kind of relationship to its homeland, or to experience its country in this manner. This is the secret of the Zionist enterprise: A status vis-à-vis the land that speaks to one's level of commitment and responsibility, while at the same time allows—even insists upon—intense desire. Notably, while this relationship may not have been formulated consciously, and was in all likelihood more the result of hardship and fear than ideological clarity, it was nonetheless one that reflected the biblical approach to the land of Israel.

And what was that approach? The land of Israel, as established in the Bible (and contrary to Ben-Gurion's pronouncements), is not the birthplace of the Jewish people. If anything, that distinction goes to Ur of the Chaldeans, where the Jewish patriarch Abraham was born. Nor is the land of Israel ever described in the Bible as the "mother" or "father" of the Jewish people, or as its wife (it is not for the Jewish, or any other, people to "possess" the land of Israel—that honor goes to the Master of the Universe alone). Rather, the Jewish people's relationship to the land is formulated in the Bible as a covenant, and not as an automatic, organic kind of belonging.

This covenant may best be understood as a type of rental agreement, with the requisite stipulations determined by every landlord in order to protect his property. "If you heed my laws and my commandments and practice no abominations," says subsection 'c,' "the land will not eject you as it did the nation which came before you." The nation of Israel was clearly not of the land's flesh and blood, like the seven nations who were its true natives. Nor did the land of Israel and the nation of Israel belong to one another in some fatalistic fashion. The nation was to live there, always mindful of its status as renter...

In initiating an eternal engagement, the biblical covenant required a sense of commitment on the part of the Jewish people akin to that felt by a fiancé toward his lover. Thus it is not coincidental that this pledge of loyalty on the part of the Jews was exacted in the no man's land between the exile and the land of Israel: the desert. For the desert is not a place in itself, but rather a corridor from one place to another. In this, the desert is the very embodiment of an engagement, with the Tabernacle serving as a type of portable wedding canopy. ..

This engagement was never intended to end in a marriage, but instead to remain an engagement for all eternity. For the engagement, and not the wedding—the commitment without ownership, the desire without its fulfillment—is the pact that prevents stagnation. A husband's lot is the routine of possession; that of the fiancé, of Eros.

## Handout 2.2 – Pre-modern Jewish Texts

### Text #1:

Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, And you will be the father of a multitude of nations. "No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I will make you the father of a multitude of nations. "I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you. "I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. "I will give to you and to your descendants after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." God said further to Abraham, "Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.

Genesis 17, 3-9

וַיִּפֹּל אַבְרָם, עַל-פָּנָיו; וַיְדַבֵּר אֲתוֹ אֱלֹהִים, לֵאמֹר. ד אֲנִי, הִנֵּה בְרִיתִי אִתְּךָ; וְהִיִּתִּי, לְאֵב  
הַמּוֹן גּוֹיִם. ה וְלֹא-יִקְרָא עוֹד אֶת-שְׁמֶךָ, אַבְרָם; וְהָיָה שְׁמֶךָ אַבְרָהָם, כִּי אֲב-הַמּוֹן גּוֹיִם  
נִתְּתִיךָ. ו וְהִפְרִתִּי אֶתְךָ בְּמֵאֵד מְאֹד, וְנִתְּתִיךָ לְגוֹיִם; וּמְלָכִים, מִמֶּךָ יֵצְאוּ. ז וְהִקְמֵתִי אֶת-  
בְּרִיתִי בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ, וּבֵין זֶרְעֶךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ לְדֹרֹתֶם--לְבְרִית עוֹלָם: לְהִיּוֹת לְךָ לְאֵל הַיָּם, וּלְזֶרְעֶךָ  
אַחֲרֶיךָ. ח וְנִתְּתִי לְךָ וּלְזֶרְעֶךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ אֶת אֶרֶץ מִגְרֶיךָ, אֶת כָּל-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן, לְאַחֲזֶתָּ, עוֹלָם;  
וְהִיִּתִּי לָהֶם, לְאֵל הַיָּם. ט וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל-אַבְרָהָם, וְאַתָּה אֶת-בְּרִיתִי תִשְׁמֵר--אֶתָּה  
וּזְרַעֲךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ, לְדֹרֹתֶם.

בראשית פרק יז, ג-ט

### Text #2:

"...so you shall not wrong one another, but you shall fear your God; for I am the LORD your God. You shall thus observe My statutes and keep My judgments, so as to carry them out, that you may live securely on the land. Then the land will yield its produce, so that you can eat your fill and live securely on it. But if you say, 'What are we going to eat on the seventh year if we do not sow or gather in our crops?' then I will so order My blessing for you in the sixth year that it will bring forth the crop for three years. When you are sowing the eighth year, you can still eat old things from the crop, eating *the old* until the ninth year when its crop comes in. The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are *but* aliens and sojourners with Me. Thus for every piece of your property, you are to provide for the redemption of the land."

Leviticus 25, 17-24.

וְלֹא תוֹנוּ אִישׁ אֶת-עֲמִיתוֹ, וַיִּרְאֵתִי מֵאֵל ה'יך: כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה, אֵל הַיָּכֶם. יח וְעֲשִׂיתֶם, אֶת-  
חֻקֹּתַי, וְאֶת-מִשְׁפָּטַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ, וְעֲשִׂיתֶם אִתְּם--וַיִּשְׁבַּתֶּם עַל-הָאֶרֶץ, לְבִטָּח. יט וְנִתְּנָה הָאֶרֶץ  
פְּרִיָּה, וְאֶכְלֶתֶם לְשִׁבְעָה; וַיִּשְׁבַּתֶּם לְבִטָּח, עָלֶיהָ. כ וְכִי תֹאמְרוּ, מֵה-נֶאֱכַל בַּשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁבִיעִת:

הן ל' א נזרע, ול' א נאס'ף את-תבואתנו. **כא** וצויתי את-ברכתי לכם, בשנה הששית; ועשת, את-התבואה, לשל'ש, השנים. **כב** וזרעתם, את השנה השמינית, ואכלתם, מן-התבואה ישן; עד השנה התשיעת, עד-בוא תבואתה--ת'אכלו, ישן. **כג** והארץ, לא תמכר לצמתת--כ'לי, הארץ: כ'גרים ותושבים אתם, עמדי. **כד** ובכ'ל, ארץ אחזתכם, גאלה, תתנו לארץ. {ס}

ויקרא פרק כה, יז-כד

### **Text #3:**

Rab Judah stated in the name of Samuel: As it is forbidden to leave the Land of Israel for Babylon, so it is forbidden to leave Babylon for other countries.... Rab Judah said: Whoever lives in Babylon is counted as though he lived in the Land of Israel; for it is said in Scripture, "Ho, Zion, escape, thou that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon."

Babylonian Talmud, Ketubot 111, Page A, Section 13

אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל כשם שאסור לצאת מארץ ישראל לבבל כך אסור לצאת מבבל לשאר ארצות רבה. . . אמר רב יהודה כל הדר בבבל כאילו דר בארץ ישראל שנאמר **(זכריה ב)** הוי ציון המלטי יושבת בת בבל

תלמוד בבלי, כטובות קיא, עמוד א, פרק יג

### **Text #4:**

A person should remain in the Land of Israel even if he resides in a city whose majority are idolaters as opposed to a city outside of Israel whose population is totally Jewish. This teaches that residence in the Land of Israel is considered equivalent to all of the other commandments in the Torah.

Tosefta, Avodah Zara 5,2

ישרה אדם בארץ ישראל אפילו בעיר שרובה עובדי כוכבים ולא בחו"ל אפי' בעיר שכולה ישראל מלמד ששיבת ארץ ישראל שקולה כנגד כל מצות שבתורה.

תוספתא, עבודה זרה ה, ב

### **Text #5:**

On account of our sins we were exiled from our land and distanced from our native soil, and we are unable to go up and appear and bow down before you, to perform our duties in your chosen sanctuary, in the great and holy Temple that is called by your name, because of the assault against your sanctuary.

May it be your will, O Lord our God and God of our ancestors, merciful sovereign, that you will again show compassion upon us and upon your Temple in your abundant mercy; and that you will rebuild it speedily and increase its glory.

Additional Amidah Service for Festivals

וּמִפְּנֵי חַטָּאֵינוּ גָּלִינוּ מֵאַרְצֵנוּ. וְנִתְרַחֲקֵנוּ מֵעַל אֲדָמָתֵנוּ. וְאִין אֲנַחְנוּ יְכוּלִים לַעֲלוֹת וְלִרְאוֹת  
וְלִהְשֵׁתְחוֹת לְפָנֶיךָ. וְלַעֲשׂוֹת חוּבוֹתֵינוּ בְּבֵית בְּחִירָתְךָ. בְּבֵית הַגְּדוֹל וְהַקְּדוֹשׁ שֶׁנִּקְרָא שֵׁמֶךָ  
עָלָיו. מִפְּנֵי הַיָּד שֶׁנִּשְׁתַּלְחָה בְּמִקְדָּשְׁךָ:

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלֵּהִי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ. מְלֶךְ רַחֲמָן. שֶׁתְּשׁוּב וְתִרְחַם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל מִקְדָּשְׁךָ  
בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הַרְבִּיּים. וְתִבְנֶהוּ מִהֲרָה וְתִגְדֵּל כְּבוֹדוֹ:

מוסף לשלוש רגלים

#### **Text #6:**

Royal sanctuary, city of royalty,  
arise and go out from thy upheaval.  
For too long have you been sitting in the vale of tears.  
He will treat you with compassion.  
Shake yourself off from the dust.  
My people, arise and don the garments of your glory.  
Nearby is the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite.  
Let my soul's redemption draw near.  
Wake, wake!  
For your light is coming. Rise and shine!  
Arise and give forth in song.  
God's splendour is being revealed upon you.

"Lekhah Dodi", Solomon Alkabetz

מִקְדָּשׁ מְלֶךְ עִיר מְלוּכָה. קוּמִי צְאִי מִתּוֹךְ הַהִפְכָּה.  
רַב לָךְ שִׁבְתְּ בְּעֵמֶק הַבְּכָא. וְהוּא יַחְמוֹל עָלֶיךָ חֲמֵלָה.

הַתְּנַעֲרִי מֵעַפָּר קוּמִי. לְבָשִׁי בְּגָדֵי תִפְאָרְתְּךָ עִמִּי.  
עַל יַד בֶּן יִשִׁי בֵּית הַלְחָמִי. קִרְבָּה אֶל נַפְשִׁי גְּאֻלָּה.

הַתְּעוֹרְרִי הַתְּעוֹרְרִי. כִּי בָא אוֹרְךָ קוּמִי אוֹרִי.  
עוֹרִי עוֹרִי שִׁיר דְּבָרִי. כְּבוֹד ה' עָלֶיךָ נִגְלָה.

"לך דודי", ר' שלמה אלקבץ



## Session #2

### Land & People: Connection & Ambivalence

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#### Handout 2.3 – Modern Jewish Texts

##### Text #7:

Wherever I go, I am going to the Land of Israel.

Attributed to Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav

##### Text #8:

A person is nothing other than a tiny country. A person is nothing more than the imprint of the scenes of their homeland.

Saul Tchernikovsky

אדם אינו אלא קרקע ארץ קטנה. אדם אינו אלא תבנית נוף מולדתו.  
שאל טשרניחובסקי

##### Text #9:

The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious, and national identity was formed. Here they achieved independence and created a culture of national and universal significance. Here they wrote and gave the Bible to the world.

Exiled from Eretz Yisrael, the Jewish people remained faithful to it in all the countries of their dispersion, never ceasing to pray and hope for their return and the restoration of their national freedom.

Impelled by this historic association, Jews strove throughout the centuries to go back to the land of their ancestors and regain their statehood. In recent decades they returned in their masses. They reclaimed the wilderness, revived their language, built cities and villages, and established a vigorous and ever-growing community, with its own economic and cultural life.

Israel's Scroll of Independence (5-1948)

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace%20Process/Guide%20to%20the%20Peace%20Process/Declaration%20of%20Establishment%20of%20State%20of%20Israel>

##### Text #10:

The Land of Israel is not the cradle of Judaism nor of the Jewish people. From the perspective of Judaism – the Land of Israel is a task placed on the people of Israel throughout the generations. The essence of this mission is not control of the land, but the implementation of the Torah in the land. The Scroll of Independence of the State of Israel opens with a deliberate lie – "The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people." The Jewish people was not born in the Land of Israel, but came to the Land of Israel as a consolidated nation. The traditional historical consciousness of Judaism sees the birth of the nation – in a symbolic sense – with Abraham our father, who recognizes the Creator in Iraq. The people of Israel comes to crystallization ("and on this day they became a people.") with the covenant sealed in the desert, in a no-mans land. This teaches us that the Torah is not dependent on the Land of Israel. The Torah was given outside of the land, and the bulk of the people of Israel's existence throughout the generations was



outside of the land. The greatest spiritual and religious creativity took place in the Exile. Without the task of observance of Torah there is no religious meaning to possessing the land. . .

Yeshayahu Leibowitz. "On the Significance of the Land of Israel for Judaism." In a symposium at Bar Ilan University, 1979.

#### **Text #11:**

It seems to me that God does not give any one portion of the earth away, so that the owner may say as God says in the Bible: "For all the earth is mine." The conquered land is, in my opinion, only lent even to the conqueror who has settled on it-and God waits to see what he will make of it.

I am told, however, I should not respect the cultivated soil and despise the desert. I am told, the desert is willing to wait for the work of her children: she no longer recognizes us, burdened with civilization, as her children. The desert inspires me with awe; but I do not believe in her absolute resistance, for I believe in the great marriage between man (adam) and earth (adamah). This land recognizes us, for it is fruitful through us: and precisely because it bears fruit for us, it recognizes us. Our settlers do not come here as do the colonists from the Occident to have natives do their work for them; they themselves set their shoulders to the plow and they spend their strength and their blood to make the land fruitful. But it is not only for ourselves that we desire its fertility. The Jewish farmers have begun to teach their brothers, the Arab farmers, to cultivate the land more intensively; we desire to teach them further: together with them we want to cultivate the land — to "serve" it, as the Hebrew has it. The more fertile this soil becomes, the more space there will be for us and for them. We have no desire to dispossess them: we want to live with them. We do not want to dominate them: we want to serve with them. . . .

Martin Buber in an open letter to Mahatma Gandhi (2-19

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/buber1.html>

#### **Text #12:**

Yigal Yadin, the Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces at the end of the War of Independence is the same Yadin who excavated the past and raised it in our consciousness.

Moshe Dayan, also Chief of Staff, a politician, was not an archaeologist in the pure academic sense of the word. However through the passion that he exhibited for deepening, for enriching our roots, he was definitely an archaeologist. He was neither a linguist nor a Bible scholar, but his "Living with the Bible," was his attempt to connect with the ancient roots and from them flower.

Along with the archaeologists in the search for roots should be added the zoologists and the botanists - the first Hebrew zoologist, Yisrael Aharoni, who went in search of the Biblical Oryx; Yehuda Felix, who studied Biblical flora, who sought, but did not find the *Afarsimon*; and Uriah Feldman, who investigated the flora of the *Mishnah*; and Aaron Aharonson who discovered "the mother of wheat". . . .

The passion to know and understand the source of identity is a kind of longing for a lost Atlantis that was the source for every renaissance in the history of peoples. What drove this passion other than a quest to find a point of contact to tradition? Like at the finale of a play by Chekhov, the farmer's plow, the archaeologists pick, the ornithologists binoculars, and the botanists microscope all lead to the inevitable gunshot. This is how the State of Israel was born.

Amos Keinan. "*Shoshanat Yericho: Eretz Yisrael, Environment, Identity, and Culture.*" (*Zemora Botan*, 1998) 193

#### **Text #13:**

Jerusalem is not simply another foreign city. On what ground can I assert this? To explain, I must take you to Pelham Bay, a neighborhood in the northeast Bronx, in the summer of 1936. A group of little girls, all about eight years old, are playing a street game. Almost all of them are the children or grandchildren of

immigrants. The game is played like this: you draw a circle with white chalk and divide the circle into equal segments or pie-slices. Each player is assigned a pie-- slice as her designated territory and writes in it the name of the city she knows to be her own, the city she has "come from." So here is Peggy O'Brien, choosing Dublin; and Dorothy Wilson, choosing Glasgow; and Carolyn Johnson, Stockholm; and Maria Viggiano, Naples. But Allegra Sadacca-whose family is recently from Turkey, a remnant of the Spanish Jews expelled by Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492-Allegra Sadacca picks Toledo. And I, whose forebears had endured the despots of Russia for a thousand years, I, eight years old, in the borough of the Bronx in New York City, claim Jerusalem. I do this with no sense of symbolism or mysticism. I do it unencumbered by history or metaphysics. I do it because I am a Jewish child, and understand that Jerusalem is my inheritance.

Cynthia Ozick. "Melville's Skull and the Idea of Jerusalem." *Partisan Review* (Boston, Winter 2002, Vol. 69, Issue 1) 36-37.

#### **Text #14:**

Yesterday I asked my 20-year-old daughter what picture comes to mind when she pronounces the word "homeland." Because my daughter served in a front line unit, wandering with it throughout the country from Yeruham to Shechem, I assumed that the borders of her homeland are identical with the borders of our military holdings. But that is not what I heard from her. "No particular geographic picture comes to mind," she said. "Homeland for me is about Memorial Day, about sirens, Arik Einstein, the Gashashim [HaGashash HaHiver – an iconic Israeli comedy trio], my Golani company, my best friends."

And what about the seaside dunes sinking under bare feet, the mountains of Samaria on a foggy morning, a trunk of an olive tree in a Galilee grove, the stupefying heat of summer in the Jordan River Valley, the Golan cliffs? No, the word "homeland" did not fill her with these pictures. The vistas of her homeland are Israeli society and not the geography and climate of the Land of Israel.

Yaron London. "A Person is not the Imprint of their Homeland – Just the Opposite."



★ Israel

### Session #3

## Our Jewishness & the Jewishness of Israelis: Can Judaism Be Defined?



The talkspace: Israel curriculum is a collaboration of Scott Copeland, Clare Goldwater, Seth Goren, Doron Rubin, and Robin Weber and a co-production of Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Student Life and the Jewish Agency for Israel's Makom Israel Engagement Network. © February, 2008



## Session #3

# Our Jewishness & the Jewishness of Israelis: Can Judaism be Defined?

### Introduction:

In the previous session, we noted that as we delve deeper into ideas about the land and people of Israel, we are confronted with various understandings of Jewish identity and the meaning of peoplehood. The Zionist movement and the State of Israel sought to continue the traditional notion of the Jews as "the people of Israel" (עם ישראל - Am Yisrael). However, in clarifying the meaning of the title "People of Israel," the founding Zionists largely rejected religion-based definitions of Judaism (which were largely grounded in the separate Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox movements). They invoked the words "nation" and "people" to refer to Jews as primarily a *national ethnic community* rather than a spiritual religious one.

Characterizing this emphasis, Professor Gideon Shimoni writes in "The Zionist Ideology" that, "a distinguishing mark of [Zionist ideology] is the proposition that the Jews are actually or potentially a nation."<sup>2</sup> Zionism sought to bring together Jews of various religious and geographical backgrounds, as Theodore Herzl emphasized by opening his treatise on the Jewish need for political sovereignty, *The State of the Jews*, with the declaration, "We are a people — one people."

However, the meanings of Jewishness and Judaism were hotly debated within the Zionist movement and throughout the history of Israeli society. Even as the Zionist movement succeeded in laying the groundwork for a Jewish national home in some part of the Land of Israel, there was ongoing ideological debate over the nature of Jewish identity, and the role of religion in Jewish private identification and public representation.

What have been some of the key ideological positions in this debate and how do they continue to play themselves out in the contemporary Israeli scene? As with all revolutions, ideology tends to be softened and altered (and maybe overturned) by day-to-day existence. How do young Israelis relate to themselves as Israelis and Jews? What is the resonance of the ideological debates in the ways that contemporary Israelis see themselves? In today's session we will explore the place of religion in modern-day Israeli society.

### Session Outline:

| Segment                   | Suggested Time                                      | Description   |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| <i>Israel Update</i>      | <i>5 minutes</i>                                    | Designated student reports on Israeli current events  |
| <i>Opening Discussion</i> | <i>10 minutes</i>                                   | Reflect on participants' conceptions of Jewishness and its connection to religion<br>Discuss participants' Israel experiences and the Jewish and/or religious nature of those experiences                   |
| <i>Text Exploration</i>   | <i>50 minutes, approx. 15 minutes for each part</i> | Divide into pairs/small groups and allow participants to get a sense of competing conceptions of Jewishness and Judaism.<br>As a group, discuss the general place of religion in modern-day Israeli society |

<sup>2</sup> Brandeis University Press, 1995, p. 4



|                      |                   |  |
|----------------------|-------------------|--|
|                      |                   | Reflect on two visual representations of how religion manifests itself in Israel today   |
| <i>Wrap Up</i>       | <i>10 minutes</i> | Reflect on the session to help participants process and find perspective on the ideas discussed<br>Encourage participants to apply the ideas they encountered in thinking about their own relationships with Israel and religion |
| <i>Looking Ahead</i> | <i>5 minutes</i>  | Prime participants for next session by commenting on the varying definitions of “Zionism,” both today and through history<br>Distribute questions for participants to think about before the next session                        |

### **Success Checklist**

At the end of the session, affirmative answers to these questions will help you know you’ve been successful:

- Did participants discuss the relationship between present-day Israeli society and early Zionist perspectives on Judaism and Jewishness? Did they explore the modern relationship between Israelis, on the one hand, and Judaism and Jewishness, on the other?
- Did participants refer to the various perspectives offered by modern Israeli statistics and social scientists in the discussion?
- Did participants draw on their own experiences in Israel and with Israelis in their comments?
- Did participants compare Israelis’ expressions of Judaism and Jewishness with parallel expressions for themselves and in their own communities?

### **Pre-Session Assignment:**

At the end of the previous session, participants were asked to think about the following questions:

- What does it mean to be Jewish?
- How do you, personally, know that you’re Jewish? What are the daily reminders that you’re Jewish?
- How do you express your Jewishness?
- When do you feel the most Jewish? When do you feel the least Jewish?
- Have you ever been around other Jews expressing their Jewishness in ways that were completely unfamiliar to you? How did you feel in those moments?
- How related is Jewishness to religion?

If participants have been to Israel, they were also invited to think back to their Israel experience and note their answers to the following additional questions.

- When did you feel the most Jewish in Israel?
- Which expressions of Jewishness in Israel were most familiar to you?
- Which expressions of Jewishness in Israel were most foreign to you?
- What did you most like about expressions of Jewishness in Israel?

- What most bothered you about expressions of Jewishness in Israel?
- On a scale of 1-10, how Jewish was Israel in your eyes?
- What does it mean to be Jewish in Israel? To what extent is religion a part of Jewishness there?

## **Preparation:**

### ***Facilitation***

Read over this facilitation guide and make sure you are comfortable with all of the material, including each text for the text study portion of the session. Do a test run of connecting to the YouTube videos included in the Text Exploration section.

If you want to know more about the themes of this session, check out the suggestions for further reading listed at the end of the facilitation guide for this session.

### ***Materials***

- Copies of Handouts 3.2 and 3.3 for the text exploration
- A computer that is connected to the internet, and preferably a projector and screen, to watch YouTube videos as a group
- Copies of Handout 4.1 with the questions participants will be asked to think about in preparation for Session #4

## **Session Implementation/Description:**

### ***Israel Update – 5 minutes***

Before launching into the talkspace: Israel content for the session, make time for the participant(s) signed up for the week to present an update on Israeli current events. Including this segment in each session will help talkspace: Israel participants connect the content of the program to the facts of Israel's present-day existence.

### ***Opening Discussion – 10 minutes***

To introduce this session, ask participants about their reflections on the questions posed at the end of the previous session (Handout 3.1). Use those questions to guide an opening discussion, and/or use these additional questions to explore the broad overview of people's ideas:

- What does Jewishness mean to you, in terms of both your thoughts and your actions?
- How important is religion to your concept of Jewishness?
- If you've been to Israel, how Jewish were your experiences there? To what extent were those experiences religious in nature?

After participants have had a chance to share their personal thoughts, wrap up the discussion by summarizing the overlap and distinctions participants see between Jewishness and religion, in the contexts of both Israel and their lives at home. Highlight the tensions between Judaism as peoplehood and Judaism as religion, Judaism in Israel and Judaism in the Diaspora, and share that these tensions have existed in Zionism since the movement began in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe.

Early Zionist thinkers held a wide variety of perspectives on the relationship between religion and Jewish identity. Let's take a look at what some of these individuals wrote.

### **Text Exploration – 45-50 minutes**

#### *Part One: Notions of Jewishness: People and Religion in Zionist Sources (15 minutes)*

Handout 3.2 shares a variety of viewpoints from public activists and intellectuals who struggled with the nature of Jewish identity and the relationship they envisioned between Judaism and the developing Yishuv בּוֹשֵׁי (the Hebrew term for the Jewish community of the Land of Israel prior to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948). The authors all lived in Europe and in pre-1948 Palestine, and were all central to the Zionist movement's struggle to accomplish not only the political goals of Zionism, but also the cultural goals of a new Jew and new kind of modern Jewish culture.

Participants can break into pairs or small groups to read and explore the texts. After reading the texts, here are some questions to consider:

- How would you characterize the various viewpoints presented? What are the themes? What are the similarities and differences represented?

*Key points: tension between primacy of religion (Pines, Gordon, Kook) and primacy of peoplehood (Klatzkin, Herzl, Ha'Am); conflict of opinions about whether religious faith is necessary for Jewish peoplehood; role of the land (Berdichevski) and peoplehood (Kook) in definitions of Jewish holiness*

- What elements of these viewpoints (all written at the end of the 19th and in the first half of the 20th centuries) are relevant today? Are there elements that are no longer relevant?
- If you've been to Israel, which of the views best describe the Israel that you encountered during your time there?

#### *Part Two: The Current Israeli Scene (15 minutes)*

Having gotten a sense of the historical context, we can now look at how Judaism manifests itself in 21<sup>st</sup> century Israel. Next, read through the brief descriptions of the current Israeli religious scene in Handout 3.3:

- *A Statistical Perspective* lays out the bare-bones statistics on how Israelis define themselves religiously, presenting five discrete religious categories and Conservative and Reform movement estimates.
- These neat definitions are challenged in an excerpt from *"The New Discovery of the Secular Believer."* Presenting a study by Dr. Ezra Kopelowitz and Hadar Franco, the author suggests that many Israelis define themselves as secular, but continue to subscribe to Judaism as a religion.
- Another view as compared to that of Kopelowitz and Franco is expressed in the excerpt from *"In Praise of Abnormality."* This excerpt argues that Jewish and Zionist identity in Israel has been replaced with an Israeli identity.

After reading the excerpts, consider the following questions:

- How do these social scientists and their work present contemporary Israeli understandings of Jewishness and Israeli identity?
- Did any of these excerpts surprise you? Why?
- How "normal" is Israeli society? How "Jewish"? How "Zionist"? Does one dominate over the other two? Does any of the three conflict with "Israeli"?
- To what extent is it possible to be a "secular believer" outside of Israel?

#### *Part Three: Israeli Jewish Identity in Crisis? (15 minutes)*

Take a look together at two short YouTube videoclips that provide a snapshot of two particular Israeli scenes.

In the first, a young woman takes us on a bike ride through the streets of Tel Aviv on Yom Kippur (<http://www.youtube.com/user/gershwin1>).

In the second, a group of largely Ashkenazi, middle class Israeli families gather at the Tel Aviv port – a popular seaside venue full of restaurants, coffee shops, art galleries, and boutiques – for a unique Friday night prayer service combining elements of the traditional Friday night kabbalat Shabbat – קבלת שבת – with Hebrew poetry and Israeli music.<sup>3</sup>

(<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=7270763440091528238&q=beit+tefila+tel+aviv+shabbat&total=1&start=0&num=10&so=0&type=search&plindex=0>).

Use the clips as a launch pad for a discussion about Jewish religion. Use the following questions:

- In what ways are the activities shown in these videos Jewish? Israeli? Religious?
- What is your reaction to the Yom Kippur bike ride?
- How is the Beit Tfilah Friday night event in the second clip similar to or different from a Friday night experience at a typical synagogue with which you are familiar?
- To what extent does our Jewishness need connections to the Jewish past, or to patterns of behavior, that are traditionally recognized as Jewish?
- Is there a limit to reasonable innovation on existing traditions, a threshold at which an activity loses its meaning because it is no longer a variation on an old custom but instead becomes an entirely new and separate practice?
- What is the function of innovation and experimentation with new forms of religious or cultural practice? Why not continue exactly as in the past?
- How is this type of experimentation in Israel similar to and/or different from the kinds of Jewish experimentation that you have seen in the United States and Canada, on campus, at Hillel, and/or in other familiar contexts that you may be involved with?
- After hearing voices from the world of research, seeing the two videos, and taking into account the Israelis you have met, how would you describe the ways that Israelis relate to their Jewish identities?

### **Wrap Up – 10 minutes**

To close out the session, pose the following questions:

- Has this session made you think of Israelis as more Jewish or less Jewish than you thought they were before? How?
- In what ways are Israeli Jewish identities and expressions of Jewishness similar to your own? How are they different?
- What do you think Israelis have to learn from North American Jews about being Jewish, and vice versa?
- Go around and ask each person to share one new realization or lingering question after today's conversations.

### **Looking Ahead – 5 minutes**

Share the following ideas with participants:

Theodore Herzl called Israel an "Old-New Land."

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<sup>3</sup> You can learn more about Beit Tfillah, the organization that coordinates this event, at <http://www.btfila.org/en/>.

Many of the issues that Israelis struggle with are part of the historic Jewish struggle to make sense of who we are and who we want to be. Our ancestors grappled with the same questions of identity when they wandered the Negev after leaving Egypt, and when they lived in Jerusalem in the time of the Temple. These are the issues we began exploring today, and the issues that underlie other debates and discussions in Israel.

At the same time, Israel is a young country. The Zionist movement is little more than a century old. The State of Israel will mark its sixtieth birthday in May 2008. As they grapple with their identity as part of the long tradition of Judaism, Israelis also struggle with what it means to support this new country in which they live. In the next session we will take on that question, looking at some of the meanings of Zionism in the past and present.

In anticipation of the next session, ask participants to Google the two word combination “definition Zionism.” Based on the results received, ask them to think about and complete the following from Handout 4.1:

- What are the best explanations of Zionism from among the websites that you encountered? Bring printouts of one or two of the best explanations to the group.
- What themes are repeated most frequently across a variety of sites? What do different definitions have in common? What are the biggest differences?
- How many of the definitions are positive and how many are negative? How do you evaluate this?
- Did anything you read surprise you? What did you disagree with as you read? What were your own responses to these ideas?
- Write your own definition of Zionism. (Note that you will be asked to share this with the group.)

## **Reading Suggestions**

### ***On the Web:***

**A Portrait of Israeli Jewry: Beliefs, Observances, and Values among Israeli Jews 2000.** Elihu Katz, Hanna Levinsohn, Shlomit Levy, (The Guttman Center of the Israel Democracy Institute for The AVI CHAI Foundation, 2002). [http://www.avi-chai.org/Static/Binaries/Publications/EnglishGuttman\\_0.pdf](http://www.avi-chai.org/Static/Binaries/Publications/EnglishGuttman_0.pdf)

**Israeli-Jews vs. Jewish-Israelis: The Public and Private Ritual Basis of Israeli Jewish Identification with the Jewish Diaspora.** Ezra Kopelowitz and Lior Rosenberg. (Conference on “Dynamic Jewish Belonging”, The Advanced Institute of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. 6-04). <http://www.researchsuccess.com/images/users/1/Israeli-Jew.pdf>

**Religion & State in Israel: A Discussion.** Anat Hoffman, Steve Mazie, & Avi Shafran (NIF Forum, 30-5-06). <http://nifblog.kesem.net/index.cfm?catID=21>

### ***On the Shelf:***

**Divergent Jewish Cultures: Israel and America.** Debra Dash Moore and Ilan Troen, Eds. (Yale University Press, 2001).

**Jewish Identity in Modern Israel: Proceedings on Secular Judaism and Democracy.** Naftali Rotenberg, Ed. (Urim Publications, 2002).

**Real Jews: Secular Vs. Ultra-Orthodox – The Struggle for Jewish Identity in Israel.** Noah J. Efron (Basic Books, 2003).



## Session #3

# Our Jewishness & the Jewishness of Israelis: Can Judaism be Defined?

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## Handout 3.1 – What is Jewishness?

In preparation for this upcoming session, think about the following questions and note your answers. To help jumpstart your thinking, you may even want to get together for coffee with someone else in the group to discuss your ideas.

### Questions:

- What does it mean to be Jewish?
- How do you, personally, know that you're Jewish? What are the daily reminders that you're Jewish?
- How do you express your Jewishness?
- When do you feel the most Jewish? When do you feel the least Jewish?
- Have you ever been around other Jews expressing their Jewishness in ways that were completely unfamiliar to you? How did you feel in those moments?
- How related is Jewishness to religion?

If you have been to Israel, think back to your experiences there and note your answers to the following:

- When did you feel the most Jewish in Israel?
- Which expressions of Jewishness in Israel were most familiar to you?
- Which expressions of Jewishness in Israel were most foreign to you?
- What did you most like about expressions of Jewishness in Israel?
- What most bothered you about expressions of Jewishness in Israel?
- On a scale of 1-10, how Jewish was Israel in your eyes?
- What does it mean to be Jewish in Israel? To what extent is religion a part of Jewishness there?





## Session #3

# Our Jewishness & the Jewishness of Israelis: Can Judaism be Defined?

## Handout 3.3 - The Current Israeli Scene

### 1. A Statistical Perspective

The State of Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) uses five categories to describe people according to their Jewish religious identification:

- Haredim (ultra-Orthodox) – חרדים
- Orthodox – דתיים – Datim
- Traditional/Orthodox – מסורתיים/דתיים – Masortim/Datim
- Traditional/Not-Orthodox – מסורתיים/לא דתיים – Masortim/Lo Datim
- Not Religious/Secular – לא דתיים/חילוניים – Lo Datim/Chilonim

Boundaries among these groups can be very difficult to define, with divisions even more blurred because respondents are asked to self-identify in surveys. In general, the groups toward the top of the list are understood as being more religious/observant.

According to the CBS, the religious identification breakdown for the Israeli population above the age of twenty is as follows:

|                                   |     |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Haredim                           | 7%  |
| Orthodox                          | 10% |
| Traditional/Orthodox <sup>4</sup> | 14% |
| Traditional/Not-Orthodox          | 25% |
| Not Religious/Secular             | 44% |

[http://www.cbs.gov.il/hodaot2007n/19\\_07\\_104b.doc](http://www.cbs.gov.il/hodaot2007n/19_07_104b.doc) (Hebrew document)

The figures above do not take into consideration the ways that Jewish identification in Israel may be affected by factors like socio-economic position, education, and Jewish historical background (Jews from or whose families came to Israel from largely Christian countries as compared to largely Muslim countries).

In addition, the figures above do not show the small Reform/Progressive and Conservative movements in Israel. People in these two categories are most likely divided between the categories of "Traditional/Not-Orthodox" and "Not Religious/Secular."

The Conservative (מסורתי – Masorti) movement in Israel, according to their website, includes:

"Approximately 50,000 Israelis are members and affiliates of our kehillot and national programs, which engage some 125,000 Israelis each year. More than sixty percent of the Masorti community are native-born Israelis or come from lands in which English is not their native tongue."

(<http://www.masorti.org/about.html>)

The Israeli Movement for Progressive Judaism (the equivalent of the Reform movement) - מתקדמת – Mitkademet – "has about twenty congregations and as many as 5,000 members" according to an American Jewish Congress report by Ephraim Tabory.

(<http://www.ajc.org/site/apps/nl/content3.asp?c=ijIT12PHKoG&b=840313&ct=1051515>)

<sup>4</sup> Neither of these two categories is explained in the Israel Bureau of Statistic report. With that said, the categories of Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Secular, etc. come out of the European Jewish experience and do not apply Jews from elsewhere. In Israel today, about half of the Jewish population is made up of families who came to Israel from North Africa and around the Middle East. Sometimes referred to as "Aidot Mizrach" (Oriental Communities), they tend towards a Jewish observance that, although perhaps not rigidly halachic, does embrace Shabbat observance, synagogue attendance, and kashrut. Daniel Elazar provides additional background at <http://www.icpa.org/dje/articles3/sephardic.htm>.



## 2. Excerpt from: "The New Discovery of the Secular Believer."

(Daliah Shehori. Haaretz 12/9/02)

[http://www.myjewishlearning.com/history\\_community/Israel/Israeli\\_Society/ReligiousSecular/SecularBeliever.htm](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/history_community/Israel/Israeli_Society/ReligiousSecular/SecularBeliever.htm)

When they took part in a study on Jewish identity, students at Ruppin College came up with a term to describe themselves: "secular believer." Most of them—91 percent—defined themselves as secular, and 10 percent of this group described themselves as "anti-religious secular." Just seven percent of those taking part in the study described themselves as traditional, and two percent as national religious. Nevertheless, the study indicated that beneath the secular veneer lies a craving for tradition and religion, if not exactly as Orthodox Jews would understand it. Instead they seek a traditional religious life that is open and liberal—a live-and-let-live Judaism, a post-modern approach that accepts any expression of Jewish identity....

The term "secular believer" may sound like an oxymoron. On the one hand secular, on the other believing in God, religion, tradition. Dr. Ezra Kopelowitz and Hadar Franco conducted the study and both are aware of the apparent contradiction. They emphasize that the concept was proposed by those taking part and must be further explored by additional research. Still, Kopelowitz and Franco say this is an authentic, correct category that has been lacking in public discourse. It is a category that responds to the needs of a very large population of educated secular young people. They want to define themselves as complete Jews with a world view of their own that is not derived from religious or ultra-Orthodox Judaism, and is independent of both. By this conception, tradition should serve as a source of strength, not a nuisance and not coercion.

## 3. Excerpt from: "In Praise of Abnormality"

(Elisha Haas, YNET, 8/28/06)

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3296694,00.html>

Most of the first generation of secular Zionism departed from this world in the 1970s. It was a generation that enjoyed an exclusive privilege: The maintenance of a clear Jewish identity despite their secular way of life, which did not support this identity. However, in the process of generational change, this privilege was lost.

The experiment by generation A to provide generation B with an Israeli identity as a substitute, or alternately, a new Jewish identity, failed, and Israeli society lost the source of its strength in its existential struggle.

The Jewish and Zionist mission was replaced by a normal Israeli mission, which is the natural default option. The current prime minister expressed it well in his speech on election night: "Normal life in a country that is fun to live in."



★ Israel

## Session #4

# Beyond Israel: Zionism's Impact on "Jewishness" Everywhere

makōm מקום  
Israel. In Real Life



The talkspace: Israel curriculum is a collaboration of Scott Copeland, Clare Goldwater, Seth Goren, Doron Rubin, and Robin Weber and a co-production of Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Student Life and the Jewish Agency for Israel's Makom Israel Engagement Network. © February, 2008



## Session #4

# Beyond Israel: Zionism's Impact on "Jewishness" Everywhere

### Introduction:

In successfully fighting for a Jewish state, the Zionist movement radically altered the collective fate of the Jewish people on the stage of international geo-politics; the movement also transformed notions of Jewish identification and community around the world. As Zionist thinkers began establishing their ideologies, Jews in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries were experiencing a drastic change in their relationship with the societies around them as the social climate of those countries changed. As equal rights for all minorities, and specifically for Jews, were granted across Europe, Jews were forced out of their traditional closed communities and offered the option of integration into the modern world on the one hand while exposing them to the hostility of modern anti-semitism on the other.

Faced with this new and unprecedented situation, Jews in Europe chose between several options: assimilation into the majority society, adoption of new forms of Jewish religious expression, emigration to the New World, universal socialism, and Zionism. The competition between some of these options continues until this day. In this vein, Eli Lederhendler, from the Hebrew University's Department of Contemporary Jewry, asserts that supporting Zionism is a choice about the meaning of Judaism and Jewishness.

Although Zionism is often associated with politics, in this session we will explore some other ways in which Zionism can be defined. Taking Lederhendler's lead, we will explore the relationship between Zionism and Jewish identity, not only in Israel but around the world.

### Session Outline:

| Segment                         | Suggested Time       | Description  |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|--|
| <i>Israel Update</i>            | <i>5 minutes</i>     | Designated student reports on Israeli current events   |
| <i>Zionism Graffiti Board</i>   | <i>20-30 minutes</i> | Participants document, and then dialogue about, various definitions of Zionism by writing on paper covering the walls of the room.   |
| <i>Text study: Lederhendler</i> | <i>15 minutes</i>    | Explore Eli Lederhendler's notion that Zionism is more about Jewish identity than about responding to anti-semitism.   |
| <i>Text study: Berlin</i>       | <i>15 minutes</i>    | Consider Isaiah Berlin's explanations of nationalism and communal identification, and evaluate the questions that frame his article.   |
| <i>Wrap Up</i>                  | <i>10 minutes</i>    | Reflect on the session to help participants process and find perspective on the ideas discussed. Consider the implications of the conversation on the nature of Jewish communal identity in the United States. |
| <i>Looking Ahead</i>            | <i>5 minutes</i>     | Introduce next week's session on immigration with the question of what it would look like to translate Lederhendler's and Berlin's concepts into real life in a real state.                                    |



## **Success Checklist**

At the end of the session, affirmative answers to these questions will help you know you've been successful:

- Did participants explore several possible ways of defining Zionism and the relationships between those various definitions?
- Did participants articulate, and then challenge, their own definitions of Zionism?
- Did participants consider the relationship between Zionist thinking and Jewish identity around the world?
- Did participants consider the nature of their own engagement in Jewish life, identity, and community?

## **Pre-Session Assignment:**

For this session, students should have been asked to Google the two word combination “definition Zionism.” Based on the results, they were asked to think about and complete the following (as listed on Handout 4.1):

- What are the best explanations of Zionism from among the websites that you encountered? Bring printouts of one or two of the best explanations to the group.
- What themes are repeated most frequently across a variety of sites? What do different definitions have in common? What are the biggest differences?
- How many of the definitions are positive and how many are negative? How do you evaluate this?
- Did anything you read surprise you? What did you disagree with as you read? What were your own responses to these ideas?
- Write your own definition of Zionism. (Note that you will be asked to share this with the group.)

## **Preparation:**

### ***Facilitation***

Read over this facilitation guide and make sure you are comfortable with all of the material and methodology. Conduct your own web search for “definition Zionism.” Read the articles by Eli Lederhendler and Isaiah Berlin and reference the recommended background reading for more information on points that are unfamiliar to you. Then walk through your selected method for unpacking the texts, envisioning how you want to start and conclude the conversation.

### ***Materials***

Before the session, cover the walls of your meeting room with butcher paper (or something similar). Scrawl, paint, or print “Zionism,” “What is Zionism?” or another creative title across the top of the paper. (For an extra graphic edge, go to <http://www.graffitcreator.net>, where you can design and print graffiti-style images.)

You will also need these materials on hand:

- Markers for participants to write on the graffiti wall—at least one marker per person
- Tape and scissors in case participants want to literally cut and paste any printed definitions they brought along onto the wall
- Extra copies of the pre-session assignment questions for today (Handout 4.1), either to distribute to participants or to post somewhere on the graffiti wall

- Copies of the Lederhendler and Berlin articles for each person in the group (Handout 4.2)
- Copies of Handout 5.1 to distribute in preparation for Session #5
- Optional: You may also want to have a camera handy to capture the finished graffiti wall for posterity at the end of the session.

## **Session Implementation/Description:**

### ***Israel Update – 5 minutes***

Before launching into the talkspace: Israel content for the session, make time for the participant(s) signed up for the week to present an update on Israeli current events. Including this segment in each session will help talkspace: Israel participants connect the content of the program to the facts of Israel's present-day existence.

### ***Zionism Graffiti Board – 20-30 minutes***

As people arrive, invite them to post on the walls the definitions of Zionism that they brought with them, from both their internet research and their own articulations. Bring several of your own definitions from your web search to jumpstart and model the sharing. Also invite them to post any observations they have on the definitions and to document connections or disconnections among definitions.

After participants have posted their own content, ask them to take some time to check out the definitions, associations, and connections offered by others, and to create a written dialogue by responding in writing to others' posts. Encourage a quiet atmosphere, reminding participants that they will have time to talk later, but for now the conversation should be happening solely on paper. (See appendix on text study methodology for more on this "Talmud-style" model of dialogue.) As they circulate, ask participants to again reflect on the pre-session assignment questions from Handout 4.1 as they relate to the variety of wall postings in the room.

After participants have had time to get a full sense of the range of ideas on the walls, convene the group for a ten-minute discussion about the complex tangle of perspectives on Zionism. Suggested questions include:

- What were the main themes that repeated in these definitions?
- What were the biggest differences among definitions and ways of viewing Zionism?
- What different influences might have colored the definitions that came from different sources?
- What implications might people's different definitions of Zionism have on the ways in which they engage Judaism and Zionism?
- What were the sources of the definitions that were most similar to your own? The most in conflict with your own? How did it feel to read those sentiments?
- What influences conditioned your personal definition? Do you think your definition affects other aspects of your thinking or your behavior?

Although there is a good chance participants will want to continue this conversation about the definition of Zionism, after about ten minutes, interject to segue into the next portion of the session—an exploration of two additional and unique ways of viewing Zionism.

### ***Text Study: Lederhendler – 15 minutes***

This initiative is called talkspace: *Israel*, and most of the content focuses on how we think about Israel. However, in the course of Zionist history, theories have emerged that not only impact how people view Israel but also shine light on how people view Judaism and Jewish community. The next two texts we will engage define Zionism in unique ways, and offer commentary on Jewish life both inside and outside of Israel.

First, consider the short article by Eli Lederhendler: "Reclaiming Zionism" from *Sh'ma* (see Handout 4.2). In this article, he puts forth his own definition of Zionism, which is likely to differ dramatically from many of the ideas discussed in the first portion of today's session. Ask students to read the article in pairs, considering these questions as they make sense of the author's argument:

- According to Lederhendler, what is Zionism?

*Key Points: To Lederhendler, Zionism is an approach to Judaism that entails living, thinking, and feeling Jewishly. He highlights three main elements of Zionism:*

- *First, active and ongoing discourse on the Jewish condition, including consideration of assimilation, identity, and peoplehood;*
- *Second, reclaiming a Jewish outlook on life, in which Judaism, more significantly than any other element of one's identity, is brought to bear on all activities, encounters, desires, griefs, and ideals;*
- *And third, an eros that colors Jews' relationship with Israel, framing all debate and dialogue about the land and among the people of Israel in the "language of love," desire, and intimacy. (You can make a connection here to Assaf Inbari's article from session #2.)*

- Is anything missing from Lederhendler's conception of Zionism?

*Key Points: It might be interesting to note the absence of the ideas of Zionism as a response to anti-semitism, the need for a Jewish refuge, and references to political sovereignty.*

- What surprises you about this definition? Is it plausible to you?

Give participants about 10 minutes to read and discuss, and circulate among them to help them sort out Lederhendler's points. Then reconvene as a large group.

After hearing a few responses to the article as a theory of Zionism, suggest that we can also view Lederhendler's piece as a paradigm for living Jewishly. Consider and compare Lederhendler's **Zionism** with the following approaches to living out one's Jewish identity:

**Universalism** – the notion of Judaism as primary to some people, but no more valid than any other lens through which any other person might view the world and set priorities

**Cosmopolitanism** – Judaism as an element of one's identity of equal importance to any other (like soccer player, musician, American, etc.), and the idea that all ideas are worthy of considering as influences on one's identity

- Where would you see, hear, and encounter each of these approaches among 21<sup>st</sup>-century Jews?
- Are the approaches mutually exclusive?
- Which of these approaches carries the most hope for the Jewish future?
- Are each of these models valid both inside and outside of Israel?
- Which best describes your own approach to Jewish life?

### **Text Study: Berlin – 15 minutes**

Isaiah Berlin also offers an explanation of Zionism that assesses Jewish communal identity. Read his lecture excerpt on Handout 4.2 together as a group. Then spend 10 minutes considering these questions:

- Berlin talks about both nationalism and Zionism. How does he define each of these?

*Key Points: To Berlin, nationalism is awareness of one's community as a group united by some quality or set of qualities that distinguish that group from others; nationalism does*

*not imply superiority. Zionism is the desire to live in an environment in which the distinct qualities of the Jewish people are validated and normalized.*

- What would Lederhendler think of Berlin's definitions?
- What do you think of the questions with which Berlin opens?
- How would you answer these questions?
  - Why must we not have what everyone else has?
  - Is it necessary for us to be a minority everywhere?
  - Surely there be some way of living normal lives on some piece of land in which we are the normal majority?
- Does the State of Israel today achieve the things Berlin asks about for the Jewish people—do we have what everyone else has? Do Jews there live normal lives? Are Jews in Israel the normal majority?
- Berlin seems to suggest that it is easier to be Jewish in Israel than in a place where other groups of people set the societal norms. Do you agree? Do you think it is easier to be a Jew in Israel than in any other country free of religious persecution, like the United States? Does that make Israel a preferable place for Jews to live?

### **Wrap Up – 10 minutes**

Conclude with a recap of the session: your group engaged a wide variety of definitions of Zionism, considered their own definitions of Zionism, then grappled with two Zionist thinkers that seem to have more to say about Jewish identity than about political sovereignty. Ask the group:

- What were the main points from today's conversation?
- In what ways is Jewish communal identity relevant to the definition of Zionism? In what ways is it beside the point?
- Did anything we talked about change your own sense of what Zionism is all about?
- What questions linger in your mind at this point?

### **Looking Ahead – 5 minutes**

We talked today about what Zionism ideally means to a variety of thinkers. End by asking the group, "if we asked the authors of the texts we just examined what they think a Jewish state should actually look like in practical terms, what would they say?"

Next week we will shift gears from considering theories about a Jewish state to talking about what it looks like in practice for Jews to pick up and move from the Diaspora, and to establish Jewish lives in the State of Israel. In preparation for that session, participants should read Handout 5.1.

## **Reading Suggestions**

### ***On the Web:***

**Herzog Speech on Zionism Makes History.** (Ynet, 26.6.07).

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3417539,00.html>

**Prelude to the State of Israel – a Study Guide.** (Hadassah, 2003).

[http://www.hadassah.org/education/content/StudyGuides/Lesson\\_6.pdf](http://www.hadassah.org/education/content/StudyGuides/Lesson_6.pdf)

**Israel In Our Lives - Teaching Israel: Basic Issue And Philosophical Guidelines.** Arnold Eisen & Michael Rosenak (The CRB Foundation, The Joint Authority for Jewish Zionist Education, and The

Charles R. Bronfman Centre for the Israel Experience: Mifgashim. 1997).  
<http://archive.jesna.org/ilive/pdf/philosophy.pdf>

**Zionism.** (Jewish Virtual Library, 2007). [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/zion.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/zion.html)

***On the Shelf:***

**A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People : From the Time of the Patriarchs to the Present.** Eli Barnavi, Ed. (Schocken, 2003).

**Israel: A History.** Martin Gilbert (William Morrow, 1998).

**The Making of Modern Zionism: Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State.** Shlomo Avineri (Basic Books, 1984).

**From Herzl to Rabin: The Changing Image of Zionism.** Amnon Rubinstein (Holmes & Meier Publishers, September 2000).



## Session #4

# Beyond Israel: Zionism's impact on "Jewishness" everywhere

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### Handout 4.1 – Pre-Session Questions

Before Session 4, please Google the two word combination "definition Zionism." Follow the links to several of the definitions, and see how many different answers you can find to the question, "What is Zionism?"

Then, based on the results, think about and complete the following:

- What are the best explanations of Zionism from among the websites that you encountered? Bring printouts of one or two of the best explanations to the group.
- What themes are repeated most frequently across a variety of sites? What do different definitions have in common? What are the biggest differences?
- How many of the definitions are positive and how many are negative? How do you evaluate this?
- Did anything you read surprise you? What did you disagree with as you read? What were your own responses to these ideas?
- Write your own definition of Zionism. (Note that you will be asked to share this with the group.)





## Session #4

# Beyond Israel: Zionism's impact on "Jewishness" everywhere

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## Handout 4.2 – Text Sheet

### Text #1:

### Reclaiming Zionism

Eli Lederhendler

*Sh'ma*, November 2004; [http://www.shma.com/nov\\_04/reclaiming\\_zionism.htm](http://www.shma.com/nov_04/reclaiming_zionism.htm)

Zionism is not for everyone. Zionism came into the world in the 1880s and 1890s like a whirlwind, upsetting the status quo. With the perspective of over a century, and judging by the enormous changes it has wrought in the lives of millions, Zionism may be called the single most powerful idea invented by Jews in the modern era. Indeed, it is the outstanding modern Jewish idea, to be ranked alongside such earlier epochal ideas as Lurianic mystical messianism, Beshtian Hasidism, and the Hebrew Enlightenment, the *Haskalah*. Like those movements, Zionism made revolutionary claims regarding the existential core of Jewish being, altered the Jewish map, and revitalized Jewish life.

As was true of the other movements, potency or the weight of historical influence are not to be confused with consensus. Taken seriously, and not merely as flag-waving pro-Israelism, Zionism is an argument, not an axiom, and it still divides opinion within Jewish ranks. From its inception, Zionism challenged the supernatural language of transcendental Judaism and the cosmopolitan language of Jewish universalism; today these remain the two discourses arrayed against the Zionist idea within the Jewish world.

Zionism is neither the self-indulgent junk food of Jewish pride nor a spectator sport. To reclaim Zionism in our lives, we need to admit its serious claims in three areas: as a culture of ideas, it requires specific articulation. As a mode of living in the world, it demands an active orientation. And as a kind of sentiment, it must be expressed with credibility, ardor, and fidelity. Let me elaborate.

First, to be a Zionist is to associate oneself with a pioneering body of discourse on the Jewish condition. One does not have to be a Zionist to seriously discuss, investigate, or deliberate upon the history or current state of the Jews; though it is difficult, if not impossible, to engage these issues without also engaging the intellectual and cultural legacy of Zionism. This legacy, over the years, has produced an estimable stream of debate, scholarship, artistic and literary representation that crucially extends the terms by which we understand ourselves. Such key issues as Jewish "assimilation," "identity," and "peoplehood," have their discursive origin within Zionist forums, from which they percolated throughout contemporary Jewish thought. To identify oneself as a Jew via this intellectual enterprise is, in itself, a positive form of Jewishness.

Second, to be a Zionist is to reclaim an integral Jewish lifestyle (a goal that is especially pertinent to the non-Orthodox or non-believing modern majority). I am not referring here to the slogan that one cannot be a "full Jew" in the Diaspora. Nonsense: all Jews are "full Jews" (or otherwise) to the extent to which the Jewish dimension is a meaningful aspect of their lives – whether in Israel or abroad. I refer, rather, to the possibilities, within Zionist thought and in Israeli society, of viewing one's Jewishness as a quality that is relevant to most of one's human qualities, activities, encounters, desires, griefs, or ideals.

The deceptively simple imperative behind Zionism is to "be": While others counseled the Jew to be more universalistic, more rationalistic, more pious, more German, more American, more progressive, more feminist – at the expense of Jewishness – Zionism counseled the Jew first of all to be him or herself while continuing to be socialist, secularist, or whatever, and thus to bring a panoply of humanistic, cultural,



political, and philosophical affinities to bear upon the lives of Jews (and non-Jews) in a society founded by Jews. All of human discourse, in its richness and variety, is available to the Jew, but the Jew, as such, must be willing to commit existentially to the primacy of his/her own being.

Third, a Zionist must know the language of love and possess a lover's gaze. Warts and all, language and land become objects of desire, fulfillment, and fierce attachment. Our politics of national desire and the unrelenting quarrel over the terms of national-cultural fidelity comprise the most fraught elements in Israeli/Zionist discourse. This language of intimacy is the least accessible to the outsider and the most vulnerable to kitsch. It is the eros of the Zionist sensibility that undergirds our territorial debate, our religious conflicts, and our relationship with the Palestinians; but it also animates the quests of nature lovers and eco-activists, and it enshrines a hallowed place in our culture for children and poets. Space and language are not objects of love for their own sake, as it were, but as a way for us to "be," and love, in this world.

(Eli Lederhendler has lived in Jerusalem since 1981 and teaches Modern Jewish History at the Hebrew University. His most recent books include *New York Jews and the Decline of Urban Ethnicity, 1950-1970* and *Who Owns Judaism? Public Religion and Private Faith in America and Israel.*)

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## **Text #2:**

### **Excerpt from *The Achievement of Zionism***

**Isaiah Berlin**

Unpublished Lecture at the Institute of Jewish Affairs on 1 June 1975

Modern Zionism – or Jewish nationalism – posed the questions:

- Why must we not have what everyone else has?
- Is it necessary for us to be a minority everywhere?
- Surely there be some way of living normal lives on some piece
- of land in which we are the normal majority?

Let me make plain what I mean by nationalism. Nationalism often means the pathological condition of national consciousness when, for some reason, it becomes diseased and aggressive towards others. But in the Jewish case, all I mean is awareness of oneself as a community possessing certain internal bonds which are neither superior nor inferior but simply different in some respects from similar bonds which unite other nations. It does not preclude holding a large area of ideals in common with everyone else.

This is the normal national consciousness defined by German philosophers like Herder towards the end of the eighteenth century. They tried to say that, besides the basic desires of human beings for food, shelter, procreation and a minimum degree of liberty, there is also the desire to belong to a community which they can regard as their own, in which they feel comfortable and in which they do not feel stared at by others, in which they do not constantly have to justify their existence. This was all that Zionism in its beginnings amounted to – normalization... It was this which planted in Hess the notion that perhaps Jews have a history, are some kind of national entity and not mere holders of certain religious beliefs who are otherwise indistinguishable from surrounding nations. This caused him eventually to write *Rome and Jerusalem* in which he denounced the German Jews in justifiably unbridled terms, telling them that the non-Jews hated them not because of their religious beliefs but because the Jews pretended they were exactly like their neighbors. So Zionism was born."

(See the entire text at: <http://berlin.wolf.ox.ac.uk/lists/nachlass/achiezio.pdf>)



★ Israel

## Session #5

# Immigration & Growth: Dreams & Realities

makōm מקום  
Israel. In Real Life



The talkspace: Israel curriculum is a collaboration of Scott Copeland, Clare Goldwater, Seth Goren, Doron Rubin, and Robin Weber and a co-production of Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Student Life and the Jewish Agency for Israel's Makom Israel Engagement Network. © February, 2008



## Session #5

# Immigration & Growth: Dreams & Realities

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### **Introduction:**

In our last session we discussed the nature(s) of Zionism, and we noted that Zionism didn't only set out to offer a political solution to Jews' problems but it also sought to revolutionize Jewish individual and communal experience. As we began to explore, the attempt to develop a "new Jew" – a model of Jewishness around largely ethnic and national parameters rather than religious ones – formed the basis of the most powerful streams of ideology and education in the Zionist movement, in the pre-state Yishuv (Jewish community in Palestine before Israel's independence), and in the early State.

Zionist-Israeli models of the new man and woman tended to be somewhat dogmatic and monolithic. Nonetheless, the sociological realities of mass aliyah (moving to Israel, literally "going up"), especially in the 1950's and 1990's, contributed to the expanding heterogeneity of the Israeli population, and called for new approaches to issues of pluralism and diversity. This session will focus on issues connected with the heterogeneous Jewish population of Israel. Then Session #6 will look at the complex place of Israel's Arab Palestinian citizens in Israeli society.

The massive, rapid growth of Israel's population since 1948 – from 600,000 when the State was born to some 7 million today – is unparalleled any place else in the world. These numbers represent millions of individual human stories of people leaving places that were their homes and the homes of their ancestors for centuries, places like Poland, Morocco, Yemen, and Ethiopia, and coming to a new home. Zion had been a dream for generations of Jews; now for Israel's newcomers, it was also a tangible reality of asphalt roads, government office lines, and a new language and culture.

We will begin this session with a framing conversation about why people move, then turn to some hard numbers that will lay a foundation for the rest of the conversation. Then, we will concentrate on the experience of Ethiopian Jewry as a case study through which to raise some of the issues of uprooting and homecoming; issues of the dilemmas and responsibilities of both newcomers and veteran Israelis.

### **Implementation Option – Guest Speaker**

In this session, we explore the reality of immigration to Israel, and the ways in which this reality sometimes reinforces and sometimes clashes with our ideals about Zionism. As an alternative to all or some of the session plan outlined below, inviting a guest speaker would particularly enhance this session. See if you can find a member of your local community who at some point immigrated to Israel from another country and would be willing to share his or her story with the group.

You may still choose to include some elements of the outline below to help frame the conversation—particularly the Opening Discussion, Creating a Timeline, and the Wrap Up sections. *It is important that you also include the ideas in Looking Ahead to Session 6 to lay the groundwork for a fruitful conversation at the next session.*

While an Ethiopian Jew would particularly fit with the texts included here, an immigrant from the Former Soviet Union, or another place of birth, could also share vivid and enlightening stories about their immigration experiences. Look at the "On the Web" list of "Reading Suggestions" at the end of this session, and get speaker ideas from the website referenced as "Israel's Ethiopian Community – Ethiopian Israelis." If you have trouble locating someone in your local community, you could also set up a video conference with someone outside your local community; e.g., Penina Gaday, the director of Tel Aviv Hillel, who made aliyah from Ethiopia.



## **Session Outline:**

| <b>Segment</b>             | <b>Suggested Time</b> | <b>Description</b>   |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| <i>Israel Update</i>       | <i>5 minutes</i>      | Designated student reports on Israeli current events   |
| <i>Opening Discussion</i>  | <i>5 minutes</i>      | Discuss the motivations behind immigration   |
| <i>Creating a Timeline</i> | <i>15 minutes</i>     | Examine and reflect on some basic facts about Israel's immigration and population growth.  |
| <i>Case Study</i>          | <i>20 minutes</i>     | Consider the example of immigration to Israel from Ethiopia and the accompanying challenges.   |
| <i>Music as Text</i>       | <i>15 minutes</i>     | Look at the experience of Ethiopian immigration as reflected in a popular Israeli song.  |
| <i>Wrap Up</i>             | <i>5 minutes</i>      | Reflect on the session to help participants process and find perspective on the ideas discussed  |
| <i>Looking Ahead</i>       | <i>20 minutes</i>     | Prime participants for the next session with a first look at "HaTikvah," Israel's national anthem.<br><br>Distribute questions and articles for participants to think about before the next session. |

## **Success Checklist**

At the end of the session, affirmative answers to these questions will help you know you've been successful:

- Did participants appreciate the unique immigration and population challenges faced by Israel (in contrast to the circumstances facing other countries, such as the United States and Canada)?
- Did participants extrapolate from the Ethiopian immigration experience (or the experience of your guest speaker) to the challenges of immigration and absorption for Israel's newcomers as a whole?
- Did participants empathize with the feeling of disappointment experienced when a dream meets with challenges?
- Did participants discuss differences between their idealized Israel and certain realities of Israel?
- Did participants incorporate their own experiences with Israel and Israelis into the discussion?

## **Pre-Session Assignment:**

At the end of the previous session, participants were asked to read the article "Fulfilling a dream? Thirty years later, Ethiopian aliyah a mixed bag" (Handout 5.1). This article sets the stage for a conversation about the real life challenges to ideal conceptions of Israel as a homeland and refuge for all Jews.

## **Preparation:**

### ***Facilitation***

Read over this facilitation guide and make sure you are comfortable with all of the material, including each text for the text study portion of the session. This session is densely packed with information and discussion questions. Mentally rehearse the timeline with your own group in mind, and make appropriate modifications if you think it will be necessary.

If you want to know more about the themes of this session, check out the suggestions for further reading listed at the end of the facilitation guide for this session.

### **Materials**

- Have a flip chart (or similar) and marker on hand.
- Print Handout 5.2 and cut apart the separate text boxes to lay out around the room for the discussion of Basic Facts. (You will use them to make a timeline as a group; if you want to hang your timeline on a wall, also have masking tape on hand.)
- Ideally, have a calculator on hand for number crunching as you process Basic Facts.
- Copy Handouts 5.3 & 5.4 for each (or for every two) participants
- Prepare to play the song “Black Work” by Ehud Banai. The song appears on his first album, “Ehud Banai and the Refugees,” and on his 2007 “Keep Travelling,” a live album compiled from Banai’s appearances 2003-2005. You can also listen to the song on his website at [ehudbanai.co.il](http://ehudbanai.co.il)—click “Audio,” then “Launch Audio Player” (be sure to disable your pop-up blocker), then select “The Refugees Live” from the leftmost menu, and choose “Black Work” from the middle menu.
- Prepare to play an audio recording of HaTikvah. One can be found at <http://www.science.co.il/Israel-Anthem.asp>.
- Copy Handout 6.1 with lyrics of HaTikvah.
- Copy Handout 6.2 to distribute in preparation for session 6.

## **Session Implementation/Description:**

### ***Israel Update – 5 minutes***

Before launching into the talkspace: Israel content for the session, make time for the participant(s) signed up for the week to present an update on Israeli current events. Including this segment in each session will help talkspace: Israel participants connect the content of the program to the facts of Israel’s present-day existence.

### ***Opening Discussion – 5 minutes***

This session marks a shift from the more theoretical conversations we’ve had in past sessions to a discussion of the real and observable experiences of actual people on the ground in Israel. This session focuses on immigration to Israel and its inherent challenges. To frame the topic, lead participants through the following questions, writing the responses on a flip chart or similar:

*Note that the article students read before this session may suggest answers to these questions, but encourage participants to think beyond the scope of Ethiopian immigrants.*

- Why do people move from any one place to another?
- Why do people move from one *country* to another?
- What various reasons might make someone Jewish move to Israel?
- What reasons for Jews to move to Israel—make aliyah—have been suggested by past talkspace: Israel sessions?

*Possible Answers: Living in a community governed by Jews; finding true freedom of religion; escaping anti-Semitism; living in the Jewish people’s historical homeland; taking action to assert the people of Israel’s right to sovereign statehood; finding a home in which Jews are the majority and Jewish traditions are a way of life for the community as a whole*

- How similar/different are these reasons from the general reasons first given for moving from any one country to any other?

These questions can help us think about the concrete reasons why people might decide to move, beyond the ideals set out in theories we have discussed previously. The rest of today's conversation unpacks the facts and realities of immigration to Israel, painting a more complete picture.

### **Creating a Timeline – 15 minutes**

Begin by taking a look together at some hard facts that describe immigration to Israel. Cut apart the text boxes from Handout 5.2 and hand each fact to a different participant. In numerical order, ask participants read their facts aloud, and then to place the facts on a table, floor, or wall that everyone can see to create an immigration timeline.

Here is the list of facts from Handout 5.2. As participants read, note that the bold points are the most important to highlight:

1. In 1948, Israel's population numbered approximately 650,000.
2. Between 1948 and 1951, 687,000 immigrants reached Israel's shores. Most were survivors of Nazi extermination camps in Europe or members of entire communities that emigrated together from the Arab countries in Asia and North Africa. ***This mass immigration doubled Israel's population within less than four years.***
3. Founded in Basle a hundred years ago, in August, 1897, the Zionist movement had as its first objective the creation of a national home for world Jewry in Palestine. Twenty years later, at the end of the World War I, some 55,000 Jews were living in the Promised Land in the midst of 700,000 Arabs. By the time of the creation of the State of Israel in May 1948, they had reached 650,000 and the Arabs 1.3 million. On August 1, 1997 the number of Jews in Israel stood at 4.7 million (80% of a total population of 5.8 million). The 2.6 million immigrants who have arrived since 1948 have made ***Israel the only country whose population has multiplied by nine in the space of 50 years.*** (Amnon Kapeliuk in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 1997, <http://mondediplo.com/1997/11/israel>)
4. After 190,000 *olim* (people making aliyah) reached Israel in 1990 and 150,000 more came in 1991, the stabilization of conditions in the former Soviet Union and adjustment difficulties in Israel caused immigration to level off at approximately 70,000 per year. ***From 1989 to the end of 2003, more than 950,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union had made their home in Israel.*** ([http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Immigration/Immigration\\_Since\\_1948.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Immigration/Immigration_Since_1948.html))
5. ***In 2007, the population of the State of Israel numbered some 7,150,000.*** Israel's 5,415,000 Jews and 310,000 "others" - mostly non-Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union or those whose Jewish status is undetermined - make up 80% of Israel's population. The Arab and Druze population numbers 1,425,000, or 20% of Israel's citizens. (<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull&cid=1177251149135>)

Pause after reading facts # 1-5 to ask if any one has any immediate observations.

6. Around the time of Israel's independence in 1948, when Israel's population was 650,000, the United States had 139,928,165 people, and Canada had 12,072,000 people. (Official numbers dated 1945)
7. By 2007, when Israel's population had reached 7,150,000, the population of the United States was 301,139,947 and the population of Canada was 32,623,490.

Then ask participants to read facts # 6 & 7, which are also portrayed in table form in the gray box below showing the populations in Israel, the United States, and Canada at the end of the Second World War and in 2006-2007:

| Year    | U.S.        | Canadian   | Israeli                    |
|---------|-------------|------------|----------------------------|
| 1945    | 139,928,165 | 12,072,000 | 650,000 <sup>in 1948</sup> |
| 2006-07 | 301,139,947 | 32,623,490 | 7,150,000                  |

After hearing facts # 6 & 7, ask for a volunteer to be the group Number Cruncher. Hand that person a calculator, then consider the following:

- By what factor have the United States and Canadian populations each multiplied from 1945 until 2006-2007? What about Israel?
- How many United States or Canadian residents would there be now if their respective populations had grown at a rate similar to the Israel's ("nine times in the space of 50 years" according to Fact #2; or the rate your Number Cruncher calculated for Israel above)?
- Now, try to imagine what issues the United States or Canada might face if their populations were 1,259,353,485 and 108,648,000 respectively (or the numbers your Number Cruncher calculates). What would be some of the additional economic, social and political challenges that might arise?

### **Case Study: Immigration from Ethiopia – 20 minutes**

The numbers above paint a concrete picture of immigration to Israel—but the numbers are so large that it is still hard to imagine the experience of Israeli immigrants on a personal level. The next section of the session will focus on the experiences of Ethiopian immigrants as a case study to help us better understand what many immigrants have experienced in moving to Israel.

*Background Note: Ethiopian Jews, who refer to themselves as Beta Israel, had few connections to the rest world Jewry until recently. The Israeli Orthodox religious establishment held doubts regarding the Beta Israel's Jewish identity, so it was not until 1973 that the Israeli government officially recognized the Beta Israel as eligible for Israeli citizenship under the Law of Return. Most Ethiopian immigration occurred in very small groups until civil war and famine in Ethiopia precipitated two massive airlifts to Israel in 1984 (33,000 people) and 1991 (20,000 people).*

Ask participants to turn to the person next to them and take a look at their copies of "Fulfilling a dream? Thirty years later, Ethiopian aliyah a mixed bag" (Handout 5.1), the article they were asked to read before this session.

Give pairs about 7 minutes to discuss the article and reflect on the following questions:

- What are some of the challenges that have confronted Ethiopian Jews after they immigrated to Israel? Are there challenges facing Ethiopian immigrants to Israel that you think immigrants from other countries might not face?

*Possible Answers: lack of basic skills and knowledge to excel in a modern, high-tech society; racism; discrimination based on the belief that Ethiopians are not "real" Jews; minimal employability because of lack of occupational training; psychometric barriers to certain educational programs; programs that push immigrants into lower-paying professions*

- What steps has Israel taken to integrate Ethiopian Jews into Israeli society? What other ways can you think of for aiding in integration?

*Possible Answers: Legal aid in fighting discrimination; job training, fast-tracking, and preferential hiring programs to lower barriers to employment; PR campaigns to negate stigmas using positive examples*

Then come back together as a big group, and ask participants to quickly recap some of the challenges they identified. After generating a quick list, turn to the following questions:

- At the beginning of this session, we made lists of reasons for moving anywhere, and especially moving to Israel. Do any of the challenges you identified from this article pose problems for fulfilling the motivations we identified for moving? (You can refer back to the list of reasons you made on a flip chart.)
- In our last session, you developed your own ideal definitions of Zionism. How do the examples provided in this article mesh with those ideas of Zionism?

Now distribute Handout 5.3 and invite participants to consider the following, either in pairs or in the large group:

**The Ethiopian Jewish community (sometimes referred to as Beta Israel<sup>5</sup>) was isolated from the rest of the Jewish world for many centuries, and the Talmudic Judaism that became the norm of the Jewish world from late antiquity until the modern period did not reach Ethiopia. As a result, the Beta Israel's Jewish way of life developed its own unique rituals and holidays.**

As an example, although they did not mark the post-Biblical holidays of Hanukah and Purim, Ethiopian Jews do mark a holy day unknown in other Jewish communities: the Sigid (meaning bow down or prostrate in Amharic, the traditional language of Ethiopian Jews; this is similar to the meaning of "Islam" in Arabic). Celebrated during the Hebrew month of Cheshvan, seven weeks after Yom Kippur, the Sigid marks the Babylonian exile and the subsequent return to Zion under leaders like Ezra and Nehemiah.<sup>6</sup> The following Biblical sections are read out to the community.

- *"Then I proclaimed a fast ... that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions." Ezra 8:21*
  - *"... the hand of our God was upon us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy and from ambush along the road." Ezra 8: 31*
  - *"And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. Then all the people answered 'Amen, Amen!' while lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground." Nehemiah 8: 5-6*
- In what ways does this additional information present challenges for Ethiopian absorption? In what ways could it help in absorption?
 

*Key Point: We have talked about the idea of Israel as a home for the Jewish people as a group with certain shared experiences, traditions, memories, and/or practices. Ethiopian Jews lack a number of these shared communal characteristics, but they also have practices of their own that are important elements of their Judaism.*
  - How does this example of Ethiopian cultural and religious differences mesh with your own ideal view of Zionism?

**Music as Text: Banai's Avodah Schorah – עבודה שחורה – Black Work – 15 minutes**

To spend a little more time digging deeper into the experience of Ethiopian immigrants, we now turn to a song by Ehud Banai, a popular musician who has been performing in Israel since the mid-1980's.

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<sup>5</sup> The Ethiopian Jewish community is called Beta Israel as a designation of its separateness as a line of the People of Israel. If the majority of the world's population is the primary, or Alpha, body of Israel, then Ethiopian Jews are Beta Israel.

<sup>6</sup> The Babylonian exile occurred when Nebuchadnezzar led the Babylonians in taking over Jerusalem, destroying the First Temple, and exiling majority of the Jewish people in 586 BCE. In 537 BCE, the Persians conquered the region and allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem.

Provide each person with a copy of the text of Banai's song "Black Work" in English and in Hebrew (Handout 5.4). Listen together to the song. (See note in the Materials section above for instructions on finding the song online.)

Then read the English translation together. (You may choose to do this while the song is playing, as the song is somewhat long and all in Hebrew, so it may be hard for participants to connect to it without reading the English lyrics).

After hearing the song through, turn to the translation and commentary on Handout 5.4 and consider the following questions (distribute Handout 5.5 to discuss in small groups):

- Before looking at the lyrics, think about the music itself. What mood or feelings does the music evoke?
- Now looking at the lyrics, what is the story that the song tries to tell?

*Key Points: Ethiopian immigrants dreamed of the day when they would live in Zion. Although they have literally moved to the land of Israel, metaphorically they are still on the outside of a culture that they cannot understand and a community that does not make it easy for them to succeed. They have their own rich and beautiful tradition which is no less legitimately Jewish than those of other Jews in Israel, but they are isolated and excluded because of their differences.*

*(Perhaps when Banai reminds listeners that "they kept the faith; Yes, they awaited the call" he is referring to the Sigid as an emblem of Ethiopian Jewry's steadfast loyalty to Jewish tradition and to the dream to return to Zion.)*

- Look at the commentary that accompanies the English translation. How are some of these highlighted phrases important in understanding the song itself and the Ethiopian story in Israel? What are some examples of lines in the commentary that enrich your understanding of the song?
- Reading the quote by Andre Chouraqui below the Hebrew words of the song, how is the story told by Ehud Banai not only about the Ethiopians, but about other Israeli immigrant groups?

*Key Point: The differences among immigrant groups even from the same continent led to misunderstanding and discrimination. This song comments on the experience of all Jews who make it to the land of Israel but continue to experience discrimination based on their unique and different identities.*

- Read the quote by Shula Mula below the Hebrew words (also accompanying the translation). In what ways is the journey that she refers to both the journey of Ethiopian Israelis and of Israeli society as a whole?

*Key Point: As a whole, Israeli society has completed the long journey of achieving statehood and constructing a political and social environment governed by Jews; however, the journey toward truly becoming an inclusive and unified society that belongs equally to all Jews is difficult and ongoing.*

After coming back together as a group, ask people to volunteer some of the thoughts, images and questions that the song raised for them. Acknowledge that the issues raised in this song reflect a deep struggle to reconcile people's recognition of what Israel offers as a homeland with uneasiness about the ways in which the country fails to feel like home to all immigrants.

### **Wrap Up – 5 minutes**

Share the idea with your group that this has been a very full and possibly troubling discussion of the Israeli immigrant experience. We repeatedly confronted ways in which reality fails to live up to ideals.

To conclude the main portion of today's session, ask the following questions:

- Is disappointment a part of every story in which a dream or ideal is translated into reality? Why or why not?

- If you have been to Israel, did you see or hear examples of the meeting point of the dream and the reality? What were they? How were any differences dealt with?

During this session, we've taken a hard look at some of the issues that face Jews coming to live in Israel—and ways in which some Jewish immigrants find difficulty in becoming full-fledged participants in the Israeli community. In our next session, we'll continue this conversation about exclusion from Israeli society. We will examine some of the symbols of the State of Israel that generally speak to Israel's Jews, but can present difficulties for non-Jewish Israelis.

### **Looking Ahead – 20 minutes**

In particular, during the next session we're going to focus on HaTikvah, the Israeli national anthem. We want to start thinking about this song today to warm us up for a more in-depth conversation about it next week.

*Note to Facilitators: The point of this Looking Ahead section is to get participants thinking about, and more familiar with, HaTikvah. It would be ideal for participants to have a meaningful and well-articulated connection to HaTikvah by the start of Session #6. However, we recognize that participants' backgrounds will vary, and it may be more realistic to simply focus on educating them about HaTikvah's origins. This section attempts to balance both of these potential goals.*

Start off by playing an audio version of HaTikvah (<http://www.science.co.il/Israel-Anthem.asp>).

Now, turn to HaTikvah's origins by sharing the following information. These points may be presented in lecture formats, OR, as an alternative, they may be printed out and pasted onto index cards, with each card being read by a different participant. Judge your group's energy level and typical interest in specific facts to decide how many of these facts to share.

- The Israeli national anthem, HaTikvah, has been attributed to Naftali Herz Imber, but the HaTikvah that is sung today has little resemblance to his original poem written in 1878 and published in 1886. The poem was first published under the title of "Tikvatenu (Our Hope)" in Imber's journal Barkai.
- The inspiration of the poem is said to have been the founding of the city of Petach Tikvah (Gateway of Hope) in Israel. The themes of the poem were possibly influenced by Polish patriot songs. The Polish song, "Poland is not yet lost, while we still live," became the Polish national anthem with the birth of the republic between the two world wars.
- The wording went through a number of changes over the years, reflecting changes in nationalistic ideas and customs. The words "Where David once lived" were exchanged for "Zion and Jerusalem" in the choruses. The poem was cut to two verses and the chorus.

Another important change that was made was the call to be "a free nation in our own land," and not just to "live in the land of our fathers." The accent was switched to the Sephardic pronunciation. The melody was also changed to fit the cadence and syllable stress of the new version. These changes can be traced through the various printed editions of the work such as the 1909 version from the Hebrew Publishing Company.

- The first competition for the national anthem was announced in Die Welt, a German newspaper, in 1898. Another competition was called for by the Fourth Zionist Congress in the year 1900, but no song was officially chosen. In 1901, one of the sessions of the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, ended with the singing of HaTikvah (still called Tikvatenu).
- It wasn't until 1905 that the entire HaTikvah was sung by all the delegates present at the Seventh Zionist Congress. It can be said that HaTikvah was then unofficially adopted as the Zionist anthem.

With that bit of history behind us, let's look at the lyrics and meaning of the song. (See Handout 6.1 for lyrics to print and distribute to participants.) Here is one translation of HaTikvah that sticks close to the original Hebrew wording. Read this translation together as a group, then discuss the questions that follow:

As long as deep in the heart  
The soul of a Jew yearns  
And forward to the East  
To Zion, an eye looks  
Our hope will not be lost  
The hope of two thousand years  
To be a free nation in our land  
The land of Zion and Jerusalem.

- Do you have any connection to the music or lyrics of HaTikvah? What kind of connection?
- When have you heard HaTikvah? Do you have any distinct memories of hearing it—perhaps during a Taglit-Birthright Israel trip, at Independence Hall or the Mega Event? How did you feel when you heard it?
- Which phrases are particularly meaningful to you?

The lyrics of HaTikvah have been controversial at points. Some people advocate for rethinking the words of an anthem that would characterize the essence of the State of Israel. Here is one example of a looser interpretation, still based on the lyrics:<sup>7</sup>

We were rent asunder / many years ago  
War, famine, plunder / laid our people low.  
Exile is our history / slavery is our lore;  
Shrouded in mystery / our legacy of yore.  
From these roots must never grow again  
Bitter fruits, expressions of our pain.  
Now in our freedom / comfort and prosperity  
Pledge our response to / liberation's call.  
Counter oppression / bias, greed and tyranny.  
Jerusalem's gate means / hope to one and all.

- Does this version resonate with you more than the first? Why or why not?
- Which version is more “Jewish?”

At the session’s conclusion, ask participants to think about the following questions for next time:

- Beyond being the Israeli national anthem, to what extent is HaTikvah a “Jewish” anthem?
- How appropriate is it to play or sing HaTikvah at Jewish gatherings outside of Israel?

In addition, ask for three volunteers to each read one of the following articles on Handout 6.2:

- Amos Shocken, "Toward the Next 60 years," Haaretz (19-4-07)  
[www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/850285.html](http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/850285.html)
- Shlomo Avineri, "Don't Sing, but Show Respect," Haaretz (30-4-07)  
<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/853684.html>

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<sup>7</sup>Translation by Joshua Mitteldorf, poet and astrophysicist: <http://www.mathforum.org/%7Ejosh/hatikvah.html>.

- Nadav Shragai, "Perhaps We'll Cancel the Flag," Haaretz (25-4-07)  
<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/851869.html>

Ask the participants preparing the articles to be able to present a brief summary of the article at the next session as if they were Shoken, or Avineri, or Shragai.

## **Reading Suggestions**

### ***On the Web:***

**Ethiopian Integration - Education and Employment: New Findings in Brief**, Abraham Wolde-Tsadick (Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute, 13/5/2007). <http://brookdale-en1.pionet.com/files/PDF/Ethiopian-ed-and-emp-update-2007-eng.pdf>

**Ethnic Diversity in Israel: Immigration, Assimilation and Israel's Future**, Calvin Goldscheider (American University-Center for Israel Studies, 2006)  
<http://www.american.edu/israelstudies/whatsnew/docs/06abensohn.pdf>

**Israel's Ethiopian Community - Ethiopian Israelis**  
[http://judaism.about.com/od/ethiopianisraelis/Israels\\_Ethiopian\\_Community\\_Ethiopian\\_Israelis.htm](http://judaism.about.com/od/ethiopianisraelis/Israels_Ethiopian_Community_Ethiopian_Israelis.htm)

**The Oriental Communities in Israel, 1948-2003: The Social & Cultural Creation of an Ethnic Political Group**, Jeremy Allouche (Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva, 2003)  
<http://heisun.unige.ch/publ/workingpapers/03/oriental%20communities.pdf>

**The Question Of Jewish Identity And Ethiopian Jewish Origins**, Ephraim Isaacs (BINA Cultural Foundation, Originally appeared in *Midstream*, Sept-Oct 2005) <http://www.binacf.org/history.htm>

### ***On the Shelf:***

**1949: The First Israelis**, Tom Segev (Owl Books, 1998).

**The Ethiopian Jews of Israel: Personal Stories of Life in the Promised Land**, Len Lyons (Jewish Lights Publishing, 2007)

**Saving the Lost Tribe: The Rescue and Redemption of the Ethiopian Jews**, Asher Naim (Ballantine Books, 2003).

## Handout 5.1

### Fulfilling a dream? Thirty years later, Ethiopian aliyah a mixed bag

26th April 2006

Article from the website of the New Israel Fund for equality and social justice

[http://www.newisraelfund.org.uk/subPages/05\\_newsAndMedia/\\_archivedNews/\\_old/033.html](http://www.newisraelfund.org.uk/subPages/05_newsAndMedia/_archivedNews/_old/033.html)

In 1976, the Israel government gave Ethiopian Jews the right to immigrate to Israel after both Ashkenazi and Sephardi chief rabbis finally accepted their Jewishness. Several hundred Ethiopian Jews already living in Israel at the time were granted full citizenship.

The subsequent dramatic airlifts of Ethiopian Jews from the heart of Africa to the Promised Land in 1984 (Operation Moses) and 1991 (Operation Solomon) captured the world's imagination. For centuries, Ethiopian Jews had cherished the dream that one day they would return to Jerusalem. The dream finally came true, but for most newcomers, the reality has fallen short of their expectations.

Before arriving in Israel, most Ethiopian Jews had been semi-literate subsistence farmers living in villages, usually without electricity or any modern conveniences. Being thrust into a high-tech society has been traumatic, especially for those who were older than 30 when they arrived. For the young, change is always easier.

Some of Israel's 100,000 strong Ethiopian Jewish community have done well, especially the children of community leaders. But most struggle to keep their feet on the lower rungs of the social ladder.

Yitzhak Dessie became the first-ever Ethiopian-born Israeli lawyer when he qualified in 1998. With the support of the New Israel Fund, which promotes social justice and human rights in Israel, he set up Tebeka-Center for Legal Aid and Advocacy for Ethiopian Jews in Israel. Tebeka is suing a major supermarket chain in Israel because one of its sales people in a Rishon Lezion branch refused to serve a woman because she was black.

This type of discrimination, though, is not the main problem. "The kind of prejudice that existed in pre-'60s America or apartheid South Africa is very rare in Israel," said Dessie. "One of the main forms of discrimination is still the belief that Ethiopian Israelis are not fully Jewish."

Thus, Tebeka recently won major compensation from the Arad Labor Court for an Ethiopian immigrant woman who was fired from a restaurant when a local rabbi refused to renew the establishment's kashrut certificate if she continued in its employ.

There is also deep-rooted socioeconomic prejudice. Cities are reluctant to take in large numbers of Ethiopian immigrants, fearing that they will make the city less attractive for young middle class couples. Last September, Yitzhak Bokovza, the mayor of Or Yehuda near Tel Aviv, reversed his refusal to register 42 Ethiopian Israeli immigrant children in the city's schools after Tebeka appealed to the Supreme Court against the action.

Despite these insulting incidents, Dessie believes that the Ethiopian Israeli community's future can be a bright one, and that it is in its own hands. "The essential obstacle confronting Israel's Ethiopian-born community," he insists, "is not discrimination, but lack of employment opportunities and their own ability to grasp Israeli culture."

With this in mind, Tebeka initiated a positive discrimination program with the Israel Bar Association last summer. So far, 12 Ethiopian Israeli law graduates have been fast-tracked as interns with leading Tel Aviv corporate law firms, with eight more due to be employed in the coming months.

Asher Elias had similar motivations and priorities when he established Tech-Career in 2004, a center for training Ethiopians to work in high-tech. He sees employment as the key to the full integration. "Of course, employment is tied to education," he said, "but even so, there are over 3,000 university-educated Ethiopian Israelis. That's a huge potential reservoir. The problem is that they are channeled toward low-paid careers in teaching, social work and nursing. Ethiopians cannot be accepted into the computer science departments of universities and go into high-tech, which is one of the most lucrative areas in the economy, because the academic elite has set criteria in the form of psychometric exams, which our community scores low on."

Elias, who gave up his own lucrative career in high-tech to prove that large numbers of fellow Ethiopians do have the potential to make it in the advanced technology sector, set up Tech-Career together with American immigrant Glen Stein, who was involved with a U.S. project called Byte Back, which trained the disadvantaged for work in high-tech. Based in Kibbutz Nachshon, between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, Tech-Career offers a year-long intensive program for high school graduates from the Ethiopian Israeli community.

In the first year, nine of 15 students graduated the course and found work in high-tech, while in the second course (still running) nine students began and six remain. Benjamin Melko, 26, a graduate of the first Tech-Career class, joined a high-tech company as an Internet site developer.

Today, he earns a salary far higher than his previous job as a security guard. "I immigrated to Israel at the age of 4 with my mother. My father stayed in Ethiopia," he said. "I wanted to go to university, but I knew that in order to live I'd need to work at random jobs and that it would affect my studies. I heard about the Tech-Career project and decided to join. It's one of the smartest decisions I ever made. I still haven't given up the dream of going to university, but right now, with the salary I'm earning, it will be easier for me to finance my studies."

A recent Jewish Agency for Israel campaign to celebrate 30 years of Ethiopian immigration has emphasized this type of success. Ads have focused on Ethiopian immigrants like Maj. Shlomi Vicha, an Israel Defense Forces company commander who reached Israel as a young child, and Shlomo Molla, the former head of the Jewish Agency's Ethiopian immigration and absorption department, who just missed out in March on becoming a Knesset member in the Kadima Party.

"We want the Israeli public to have a positive image of our community," says Dessie, "and our own people to have role models. But let's not lose sight of the fact that most Ethiopian Israelis are not succeeding."

The statistics do not bode well. According to the Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews, more than 50 percent of the community lives beneath the poverty line and almost all who are employed have menial jobs.

The good news, however, is that more than 50 percent of the Ethiopian Israeli community is younger than 18 and not yet alienated from Israeli society. Moreover, Israel has a fresh chance with the thousands of immigrants [from Ethiopia]—mainly Falash Mura who converted from Judaism to Christianity in recent generations and are converting back upon reaching Israel—have immigrated in the past few years.



## Session #5

### Immigration and Growth: Dreams and Realities

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#### Handout 5.2 – Basic Facts on Immigration to Israel

##### ***Fact #1***

In 1948, Israel's population numbered approximately 650,000.

##### ***Fact #2***

Between 1948 and 1951, 687,000 immigrants reached Israel's shores. Most were survivors of Nazi extermination camps in Europe or members of entire communities that emigrated together from the Arab countries in Asia and North Africa.

**This mass immigration doubled Israel's population within less than four years.**



### **Fact #3**

Founded in Basle a hundred years ago, in August, 1897, the Zionist movement had as its first objective the creation of a national home for world Jewry in Palestine. Twenty years later, at the end of the World War I, some 55,000 Jews were living in the Promised Land in the midst of 700,000 Arabs. By the time of the creation of the State of Israel in May 1948, they had reached 650,000 and the Arabs 1.3 million. On August 1, 1997 the number of Jews in Israel stood at 4.7 million (80% of a total population of 5.8 million).

The 2.6 million immigrants who have arrived since 1948 have made **Israel the only country whose population has multiplied by nine in the space of 50 years.**

Amnon Kapeliuk in *Le Monde Diplomatique* (1997)

<http://mondediplo.com/1997/11/israel>

### **Fact #4: Immigration from the Former Soviet Union (FSU)**

After 190,000 *olim* (people making aliyah) reached Israel in 1990 and 150,000 more came in 1991, the stabilization of conditions in the former Soviet Union and adjustment difficulties in Israel caused immigration to level off at approximately 70,000 per year. **From 1989 to the end of 2003, more than 950,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union had made their home in Israel.**

[http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Immigration/Immigration\\_Since\\_1948.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Immigration/Immigration_Since_1948.html)

### ***Fact #5***

**In 2007, the population of the State of Israel numbered some 7,150,000.**

Israel's 5,415,000 Jews and 310,000 "others" - mostly non-Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union or those whose Jewish status is undetermined - make up 80% of Israel's population. The Arab and Druze population numbers 1,425,000, or 20% of Israel's citizens.

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull&cid=1177251149135>

### ***Fact #6***

Around the time of Israel's independence in 1948, when Israel's population was 650,000, the United States had 139,928,165 people, and Canada had 12,072,000 people.

(Official numbers from 1945)

### ***Fact #7***

By 2007, when Israel's population had reached 7,150,000, the population of the United States was 301,139,947 and the population of Canada was 32,623,490.

## Handout 5.3 – The Judaism of Ethiopian Jews

**The Ethiopian Jewish community (sometimes referred to as Beta Israel<sup>8</sup>) was isolated from the rest of the Jewish world for many centuries, and the Talmudic Judaism that became the norm of the Jewish world from late antiquity until the modern period did not reach Ethiopia. As a result, the Beta Israel's Jewish way of life developed its own unique rituals and holidays.**

As an example, although they did not mark the post-Biblical holidays of Hanukah and Purim, Ethiopian Jews do mark a holy day unknown in other Jewish communities: the Sigid (meaning in Amharic—the traditional language of Ethiopia's Jews—to bow down or to prostrate; similar to the meaning of "Islam" in Arabic). Celebrated during the Hebrew month of Cheshvan, seven weeks after Yom Kippur, the Sigid marks the Babylonian exile and the return to Zion under leaders like Ezra and Nehemiah.<sup>9</sup> The following Biblical sections are read out to the community.

- *"Then I proclaimed a fast ... that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions." Ezra 8:21*
- *"... the hand of our God was upon us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy and from ambush along the road." Ezra 8: 31*
- *"And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. Then all the people answered 'Amen, Amen!' while lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground." Nehemiah 8: 5-6*

### Consider the following questions:

- In what ways does this additional information present challenges for Ethiopian absorption? In what ways could it help in absorption?
- How does this example of Ethiopian cultural and religious differences mesh with your ideal view of Zionism?

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<sup>8</sup> The Ethiopian Jewish community is called Beta Israel as a designation of its separateness as a line of the People of Israel. If the majority of the world's population is the primary, or Alpha, body of Israel, then Ethiopian Jews are Beta Israel.

<sup>9</sup> The Babylonian exile occurred when Nebuchadnezzar led the Babylonians in taking over Jerusalem, destroying the First Temple, and exiling majority of the Jewish people in 586 BCE. In 537 BCE, the Persians conquered the region and allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem.

## Handout 5.5 – Discussion Questions for “Black Work”

Consider the following questions as you unpack the music and lyrics of Ehud Banai’s song:

- Before looking at the lyrics, think about the music itself. What mood or feelings does the music evoke?
- Now looking at the lyrics, what is the story that the song tries to tell?
- Look at the commentary that accompanies the English translation. How are some of these highlighted phrases important in understanding the song itself and the Ethiopian story in Israel? What are some examples of lines in the commentary that enrich your understanding of the song?
- Reading the quote by Andre Chouraqui below the Hebrew words of the song, how is the story told by Ehud Banai not only about the Ethiopians, but about other Israeli immigrant groups?
- Read the quote by Shula Mula below the Hebrew words (also accompanying the translation). In what ways is the journey that she refers to both the journey of Ethiopian Israelis and of Israeli society as a whole?



★ Israel

## Session #6

# Standing, Not Singing: Israeli Arabs, HaTikvah, and Symbol-Making in the Jewish State



The talkspace: Israel curriculum is a collaboration of Scott Copeland, Clare Goldwater, Seth Goren, Doron Rubin, and Robin Weber and a co-production of Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Student Life and the Jewish Agency for Israel's Makom Israel Engagement Network. © February, 2008



## Session #6

# Standing, Not Singing: Israeli Arabs, HaTikvah, and Symbol Making in the Jewish State

### Introduction:

All groups define who they are – for both insiders and outsiders – through their symbols. A bowling league has a shirt. A baseball team has a uniform. Universities and companies have logos and mottos. No matter whether a community is intimate or imagined, made up of ten or ten million, uniforms, mottos, flags, and anthems are all part of the paraphernalia that human beings use to define who we are and who we are not.

National symbols both reflect and build national cohesion through their connection to a shared sense of loyalty. As the national anthem of the State of Israel, HaTikvah is called on to be a symbol of Israeli society. However, public loyalty to this song is divided, as the anthem provokes tension between the identity of the State of Israel as a national home for the Jewish people and Israel's identity as a democracy with all of the implied responsibilities of the state towards citizens belonging to minority groups.

The ongoing pressures of conflict between Israel, the Palestinians, and portions of the Arab-Muslim world render questions of national symbols, and their representations of communal identity, extremely complex for both the Israeli Jewish majority and the Israeli Palestinian (also known as Israeli Arab) minority. This session will focus on the ways that the Israeli public debate surrounding Israeli Arab citizens and the Israel national anthem – HaTikvah – התקווה – reflect difficult questions of the importance of symbols, group identity, and the ongoing relation between the Arab minority and the State of Israel.

### Session Outline:

| Segment                           | Suggested Time    | Description  |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|--|
| <i>Israel Update</i>              | <i>5 minutes</i>  | Designated student shares report on Israel's current events.   |
| <i>Opening Discussion</i>         | <i>15 minutes</i> | Discuss the relevance of symbols generally and Israeli symbols in particular.  |
| <i>Israeli Arab Background</i>    | <i>15 minutes</i> | Share facts about the minority Arab population of Israel.  |
| <i>HaTikvah and Israeli Arabs</i> | <i>30 minutes</i> | Examine HaTikvah as an Israeli symbol and its meaning among different segments of Israeli society.<br><br>Discuss the tension between democracy and nationality/ethnicity in Israel.   |
| <i>Wrap Up</i>                    | <i>10 minutes</i> | Reflect on the session to help participants process and find perspective on the ideas discussed.<br><br>Encourage participants to apply the ideas they encountered in thinking about their own relationships with Israel and North American society. |
| <i>Looking Ahead</i>              | <i>5 minutes</i>  | Prepare participants for next session's discussion. Distribute reading assignments.  |



## **Success Checklist**

At the end of the session, affirmative answers to these questions will help you know you've been successful:

- Did participants grasp the broad meaning and importance of symbols?
- Did participants discuss the tension between establishing Israel as a Jewish state and including Israeli Arabs in broader Israeli society?
- Did participants appreciate the role of HaTikvah in both uniting and dividing Israeli society?
- Did participants incorporate their own experiences with Israel and Israelis into the discussion?
- Did participants contemplate possible parallels between their own experiences as Jews in North America and the experiences of Israeli Arabs as minorities in Israel?

## **Pre-Session Assignment:**

At the end of the previous session, participants were asked to think about the following questions:

- Beyond being the Israeli national anthem, to what extent is HaTikvah a “Jewish” anthem?
- How appropriate is it to play or sing HaTikvah at Jewish gatherings outside of Israel?

In addition, three individuals were asked to read one of the following articles and to present a brief summary of the article as if they were Shocken, or Avineri, or Shragai:

- Amos Shocken, "Toward the Next 60 years," Haaretz (19-4-07)  
[www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/850285.html](http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/850285.html)
- Shlomo Avineri, "Don't Sing, but Show Respect," Haaretz (30-4-07)  
<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/853684.html>
- Nadav Shragai, "Perhaps We'll Cancel the Flag," Haaretz (25-4-07)  
<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/851869.html>

## **Preparation:**

### ***Facilitation***

Read over this facilitation guide and make sure you are comfortable with all of the material. Facilitating the discussion on Arab Israeli experiences with HaTikvah toward the end of the session will require particular preparation. Think through your plan for that piece of the conversation and consider the format that will work best for your group.

If you want to know more about the themes of this session, check out the suggestions for further reading listed at the end of the facilitation guide for this session.

### ***Materials***

Prepare the following:

- Writing paper and pens for each participant
- Flip chart (or similar) and markers
- Be ready to show the YouTube video of Gal Fridman's gold medal awards ceremony
- Copies of Handout 6.3
- Copies of the pre-session reading assignments for Session #7, "A People's Army" from Donna Rosenthal's *The Israelis: Ordinary People in an Extraordinary Land* and "Living Dangerously" from Amos Elon's *The Israelis: Founders and Sons* (Note: finding these chapters may take time. Contact Robin Weber if you have trouble obtaining the readings.)

- Copies of Handout 7.1 (cut into half sheets)

## **Session Implementation/Description:**

### ***Israel Update – 5 minutes***

Before launching into the talkspace: Israel content for the session, make time for the participant(s) signed up for the week to present an update on Israeli current events.

### ***Opening Discussion – 15 minutes***

As you open this session, ask participants to put aside the thinking they've been doing about HaTikvah for a little while. We'll get back to it, but we're going to come at it from a different angle and we need to set up our approach.

Distribute sheets of paper and pens to each participant, and give these instructions:

- Divide the page into 2 columns.
- In the first column, make a list of groups or communities that you belong to or identify with.
- Then, in the second column, next to each group or community, list at least one symbol associated with it. (Some examples of types of symbols include mottos/slogans, flags, logos, uniforms, or anthems.)

Once participants have made their lists, ask some of the following questions:

- What were some examples of the groups on your list, and the associated symbols? (You may want to document these on a flip chart or similar.)
- Consider a couple of the symbols on your list. How do you feel about them? Do they evoke any particular emotion for you? Do your feelings about the symbol mirror your feelings about the group?
- What social function do these symbols play? How does it contribute to the group's cohesion?

*Possible answers: Everyone in the group has something in common because we all recognize the symbol; words or images that comprise the symbol represent the shared values of the group; group members participate together in actions regarding the symbols (like singing a song, reciting a pledge, or saluting a flag); members share inside knowledge about the symbols (like a secret handshake); associating oneself with the symbols identifies members as a part of the group, marking them for the benefit of both insiders and outsiders (like wearing a logo or using a catchphrase)*

- When might a particular symbol become particularly potent or convincing, and when does it tend to be less powerful? How is potency affected by contexts like timing of the use of the symbol, or the people involved?
- Does the possession of a shared symbol by a given group necessarily set up a dichotomy of 'insiders' and 'outsiders'?
- Have you ever been a part of a group that experienced controversy over one of its symbols? What was the controversy?

Share with participants that today's session will explore the ways in which Israel's symbols do and don't represent the complete population of the State, focusing on HaTikvah. We will consider the relationship between Israel's national anthem and Arab Israelis' sense of their own membership in Israeli society.

### ***Israeli Arab Background – 15 minutes***

To best understand the relationship between Arab Israelis and HaTikvah, we first need to explore some basic background information about Israeli Arabs that will help us think about their place in Israeli society. (You can find even more detailed historical information at the end of this session. If you think some participants might be interested in learning more, you can make copies for them or refer them to the websites in the Reading Suggestions section at the end of this session guide.)

Before launching into the more interactive part of the session, read or summarize the following to your group:

Like many other states, Israel seeks to embody both a particular ethnic-national (and perhaps religious) character and a commitment to democracy. Israel, like many other states, while striving to live responsibly with the tension between its national-ethnic character and its democratic commitments, is made up of majorities and minorities.

At the end of the War of Independence in 1949, the population of the new State of Israel stood at approximately 150,000 Arabs and some 700,000 Jews. As we learned last time, the Jewish population of the country doubled between 1948 and 1951 as the result of massive immigration from post-Holocaust Europe and from the Jewish communities of the Arab world.

As of May 2007, the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics offers the following population statistics, dividing the Israeli population into three major groupings:

- Jews - 5,415,000 people; 76% of total population.
- Arabs -1,425,000 people; 20% of total population
  - 1 out of every 5 Israelis is an Israeli Arab or Israeli Palestinian. This does not include those Palestinians who live in the Gaza Strip (1.3 million) and the West Bank/Judaea and Samaria (2.1 million), areas whose permanent status has yet to be determined and whose Palestinian residents are not Israeli citizens.
- "Others" - 310,000; 4% of total population—these are predominately non-Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union or those whose Jewish status is still undetermined by the Interior Ministry; this group is largely sociologically integrated into the Jewish community of Israel

The State of Israel as a democracy aspired to implement full civic and political rights for Israeli Arab citizens. However, on the background of the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Arab states, obligations were not always fulfilled. Between 1948 and 1966, the Israeli Arab population lived under military law that included limitations on travel, and the implementation of curfews, and administrative detentions. With that said, the Israeli Arab population enjoys the same basic rights enshrined in Israeli law for all – rights of freedom of religion, of opinion and conscience, and rights of political organization and representation. For example, in the 17th Knesset, there are 12 Arab parliamentarians and one Israeli Arab currently serving as a Supreme Court justice. In terms of economic development, although the standard of living of most Israeli Arabs is better in comparison to current standards in places like Jordan, or the Palestinian Authority, or Egypt; the Arab sector is underdeveloped in comparison to the Jewish majority of the State of Israel

Moshe Arens, former Defense Minister and member of the Likud wrote in Haaretz (March 13, 2007): "A future where possibly a quarter of Israel's citizens feel alienated from the state, hostile to it, and supportive of its enemies is a bleak and even dangerous one. Creating an alternate future in which many or most of Israel's Arab citizens identify with the state and feel a sense of loyalty to it is probably the most important challenge facing Israel."

As you discuss the above information with the group, you might ask the following questions:

- Can you identify any ways in which being an Israeli Arab is at all similar to being a Jew in North America? In what ways is it different?
- Israel is a Jewish state, but it is also a democracy. How might Arab Israelis experience and identify a tension between those two characteristics of the State?

- Moshe Arens writes about “[c]reating an alternate future” for Israeli Arabs. What does he mean by that? What might that alternate future look like?

As we think about the ways in which Israeli Arabs are and are not integrated into Israeli society, we now return to HaTikvah.

**HaTikvah as a Jewish Symbol – 10 minutes**

Before looking at the relationship between Arab Israelis and HaTikvah, check in about last week’s conversation about the anthem, and about its function as a symbol of the Jewish community of Israel and elsewhere.

You may want to play the song again for your group, and have someone read the lyrics aloud.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>HaTikvah – The Hope</b>   |   |
| <i>As long as deep in the heart<br/>The soul of a Jew yearns,<br/>And forward to the East<br/>To Zion, an eye looks<br/>Our hope will not be lost,<br/>The hope of two thousand years,<br/><br/>To be a free nation in our land,<br/>The land of Zion and Jerusalem.</i> | Please see further background on HaTikvah at:<br><a href="http://www.science.co.il/Israel-Anthem.asp">http://www.science.co.il/Israel-Anthem.asp</a><br>or<br><a href="http://www.jafi.org.il/education/estivls/zkatz/atztikva.html">http://www.jafi.org.il/education/estivls/zkatz/atztikva.html</a> |

Then open a discussion about the song:

- Has anyone had any new thoughts on HaTikvah?
- To what extent is HaTikvah a Jewish anthem?
- How appropriate is it to play HaTikvah at Jewish events outside of Israel?

Remind participants that last time, they talked about memories of times that they have heard HaTikvah. Ask if anyone has any new thoughts about how they have felt at times when they heard HaTikvah.

Some people have very strong emotional reactions to the song and what it stands for. Watch together the singing of HaTikvah at Gal Friedman’s winning Olympic Gold in Athens 2004. (This video can be found at <http://youtube.com/watch?v=9K-8vnXGW-o>, with HaTikvah starting approximately 5 minutes in.)

- What reactions do your group members have to this clip?
- What is the significance of this song playing at this moment in history? Why do some people get very emotional about this historical moment?
- What does this clip suggest about the social function of HaTikvah as a symbol for the Jewish community of Israel?

**HaTikvah and Israeli Arabs – 30 minutes**

We just looked at an instance of the playing of HaTikvah that stands out in the memories of many Jews and Israelis. Now, let’s shift our gaze to Arab Israelis, and look at some memories of Arab Israelis about times when HaTikvah was sung.

The boxes below also appear in Handout 6.3. Ask different participants to read each one aloud.

Israeli Minister of Culture, Science, and Sports Raleb Majadele, the first Israeli Arab to serve as a government minister, said the following in an interview with YNET:

"Of course I would not sing the anthem in its current form. But before we talk about symbols, I want to talk about equal education for my children. It's more important that my son would be able to buy a house, live with dignity... the Arabs are not in a mood to sing right now....

As a government minister, I swore allegiance to the laws of the State of Israel, and I intend to honor them....

To the best of my knowledge, the law does not require me to sing the anthem, but to honor it. I fail to understand how an enlightened, sane Jew allows himself to ask a Muslim person with a different language and culture, to sing an anthem that was written for Jews only...."

Quotes above from <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0.7340.L-3377681.00.html>

Minister Majadele added that during the HaTikvah, he expresses his respect by standing, but cannot express identification with the anthem by singing.

One day, a few years ago, the historian Adel Manna attended the graduation ceremony of his son, who had just obtained a law degree. The event was held at the Sultan's Pool in Jerusalem. Toward the end of the ceremony, the Manna family decided to leave, before the singing of "Hatikva," the national anthem. They did not want to remain seated while everyone stood and sang, nor did they want to stand. Embarrassingly, they had not managed to reach the exit when the singing began, and people shouted at them, "What's going on here? What kind of behavior is this? You want equality, but you're not ready to respect the state?!" Manna, who is generally a model of composure, lost his patience and responded, "Shut up, already! You go on singing your Hatikva. It's not mine. What do you want from me?"

Manna afterward described the incident to his colleagues in a working group that was convened by the Israel Democracy Institute, with the aim of formulating a charter to define and regularize the essence of the relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel.

Tom Segev, "Breakdown", *Haaretz* (22-11-06). [http://www.spme.net/cgi\\_bin/printerfriendly/pf.cgi](http://www.spme.net/cgi_bin/printerfriendly/pf.cgi)

It was Abbas Suan who electrified an entire nation when, with Israel a goal down and staring elimination in the face, he powered in a 22-yard strike in the 90th minute of the home game against Ireland. With one in three of all Israelis watching the game on television, his team-mates - all but one of whom were Jewish - enveloped him in an ecstatic embrace. In the Arab town of Sakhnin in the Galilee, where Suan was born and raised and still lives (and which had a year earlier joyously celebrated its team's first ever victory in Israel's equivalent of the FA Cup under Suan's captancy), residents poured into the streets amid a wild honking of car horns and used every firework they could find to mark their local hero's triumph....

But then Suan, 31, is very comfortable in his skin, and at ease whether speaking unashamedly about how, as a Muslim, he still shares the dream of "every footballer in Israel" to play in the national team, or conversely about the discrimination of which Israel's Arab citizens repeatedly complain....

Suan probably has more experience of the latter than any other footballer, not least at the hands of the supporters of Beitar Jerusalem, which has long been linked to the political right and whose fans have the reputation of being the most racist in Israel. Playing Beitar at Jerusalem's Teddy Kollek Stadium, Suan has been confronted with banners saying "Death to Arabs" and "Abbas Suan: you don't represent us." Even during Israel's ultimately unsuccessful World Cup campaign in 2005, Beitar fans chanted during one of their games with Sakhnin: "No Arabs, no terrorism" - though the Sakhnin fans accurately turned this round to: "No Arabs, no World Cup...."

This inevitably raises the oft-asked question of whether Suan is prepared to sing along to the words of "Hatikvah" (the Israeli national anthem) when it is played - as it will be tomorrow at Ramat Gan. "No," he says. "I stand and I respect it. I respect everyone who sings it. But I don't sing 'Hatikvah'. The words do not belong to the Arabs."

"Israel United: Can Football Heal A Divided Nation?" *The Independent* (23-3-07)

These passages give us a taste of Arab Israelis' reactions to Israel's national anthem. In fact, there is a public debate about the place of HaTikvah as a song that represents Israeli society. Now, we will recreate that debate within the talkspace: Israel group.

In preparation for this session, three participants read articles (Handout 6.2) that capture a bit of the debate as it played out in Ha'artez, one of Israel's newspapers. Ask those participants to adopt the personas of the authors of their articles. Ask three additional students to adopt the identities of Majadele, Manna, and Suan from the boxes above. Then, facilitate a conversation among the characters about HaTikvah's place as national anthem of Israel. There are two options for formatting the discussion:

### **Option #1: TV News Panel**

Conduct the conversation as a simulation of a TV show like Larry King or Meet the Press. You can even designate a "host" from among the participants who will interview the "guest panelists" listed above. (Other talkspace: Israel participants can be in the "studio audience," and the host might open the floor to their questions.)

Here are some questions that could be posed to the panel:

- To those of you who wrote opinion pieces for *Ha'aretz*, can you please summarize your position on HaTikvah?
- To those of you who oppose HaTikvah as national anthem, are there changes to the song would make it more palatable to Israeli Arabs?
- To those of you who oppose changing HaTikvah, what broader steps are you willing to take to make Israeli society more inclusive for Israeli Arabs?
- Ask the panelists and the studio audience to consider some of these facts regarding national anthems in other countries:
  - Spain's national anthem is a musical piece without lyrics. After the fascist regime of Francisco Franco was replaced by a democracy, the words were removed, and the tune retained.
  - Switzerland has one national anthem with four distinct sets of lyrics, one for each of the major language groups comprising the state – French, German, Italian, and Romansh.
  - Australia chose its national anthem – "Advance Australia Fair" after two rounds of public polling – in 1974 and 1977. Australia retains "God Save the Queen" as a royal

anthem to be played alongside "Advance Australia Fair" on the occasion of British royal visits.

- Prior to its dissolution, the national anthem of Czechoslovakia consisted of what is today the Czech Republic national anthem and the first verse of the Slovak national anthem played back-to-back.

Could any of these creative suggestions be appropriate for Israel?

- Is it appropriate to also change other Israeli national symbols, such as the Israeli national emblem, which bears the image of a menorah, or the Israeli flag, which bears a Star of David?

### **Option #2: Agree/Disagree**

Turn your meeting space into a giant spectrum, designating one end "strongly agree" and the other end "strongly disagree." Read statements about HaTikvah and the place of Arab Israelis, and ask participants to physically place themselves along the spectrum based on their reactions to the statement. Then ask participants why they stood where they did, and facilitate a conversation about those positions. As conversation wanes about one topic, move on to a new statement.

The six students assigned to authors' identities should maintain those perspectives throughout the discussion. Remaining participants can stay in their own shoes, or you can assign them to take on other group memberships or identities (e.g., Arab Israeli, religious Jew, Theodore Herzl, etc.)

Before launching into the activity, you should ask the students who read articles before today's session to give brief summaries of the articles so other participants know where they are coming from when they speak in character in the discussion.

Some statements you might use as prompts:

- HaTikvah should be replaced by a more universal national anthem. (*Follow-up questions: Why should it be changed, or not be changed? What should replace it?*)
- There are ways we could change HaTikvah to make it a more widely acceptable anthem. (*Follow-up: how would you change it? Read aloud the ways other countries have changed their anthems, listed in Option #1 above, and ask whether any of these might work for Israel.*)
- Israeli society is already adequately inclusive of Arab Israelis. (*Follow-up: If not, how could it be changed to be more inclusive?*)
- The historical background of the song is irrelevant in considering whether HaTikvah should remain the national anthem.
- The Jewish majority and the Jewish purpose of Israeli society should be factors in selecting national symbols.
- There are other symbols of Israel (e.g., flag, emblem with menorah) that are not representative of the population and should be changed.

Conclude the discussion by acknowledging the wide range of positions we saw on the spectrum. You may also want to pose a final statement, such as the first one here ("HaTikvah should be replaced by a more universal national anthem") and give participants the chance to shed their alternative identities and answer as themselves.

### **Bringing It All Together – 10 minutes**

To close out the session and process the discussion, you might want to pose some of the following questions:

- Did anything we talked about today challenge you? What? In what way?
- What questions are on your mind at this point?

- Have your thoughts and feelings changed over the course of this session?
- How does your experience as a Jew living in a mostly non-Jewish country affect how you understand the HaTikvah debate?

### **Looking Forward to Session #7 – 5 minutes**

Share the following ideas with participants:

This session offered the opportunity to look at the tension Israeli Arabs experience in being non-Jewish members of Israeli society. Our own discussion was an example of how that tension can be addressed, if not resolved, using discussion, dialogue and other non-violent means.

Unfortunately, not all encounters between Israel and its neighbors have been as violence-free. For Session #7, we'll take a look at the effect those conflicts have had on Israel culture and society. In particular, we'll focus on how different generations of Israelis have understood the Arab-Israeli conflict and the conflict's impact on Israeli life, culture and society.

In preparation for the next session, ask participants to read one of two choices – "A People's Army" from Donna Rosenthal, *The Israelis: Ordinary People in an Extraordinary Land* or "Living Dangerously" in Amos Elon's *The Israelis: Founders and Sons*. (If you have trouble finding the books that hold these texts, contact Robin Weber, 202-449-6591 or [rweber@hillel.org](mailto:rweber@hillel.org).)

Elon's and Rosenthal's chapters deal with the presence and impact of the conflict on Israeli life at two very different points in Israel's history. Elon writes after the 1973 Yom Kippur War and Rosenthal during the Second Intifada. With that said, there are a number of overlapping observations regarding the role of the conflict and the military in Israeli life that remain constant. Ask students to prepare answers to the following questions:

- How does the author of your article describe the influence of the conflict on Israeli life?
- How does the author describe the ways in which the conflict and military service impacts young people?
- How does the author describe the ways that the immediacy of violence and the threat of personal loss impact Israeli young people?

When we come back together, we will discuss the ways in which these two author's perspectives differ and overlap.

### **Additional Background on Israeli Arabs**

Like many other states, Israel seeks to embody both a particular ethnic-national (and perhaps religious) character and a commitment to democracy. Like Israel, many other states, while striving to live responsibly with the tension between their national-ethnic character and their democratic commitments, are made up of majorities and minorities.

The State of Israel was established to provide a national home for the Jewish people. The 1947 United Nations Partition Plan and Israel's Scroll of Independence define Israel explicitly as "a Jewish State."<sup>10</sup>

In the fall of 1947, on the eve of the November 29<sup>th</sup> United Nations vote that would recognize the international legitimacy of the establishment of a Jewish state and a neighboring Arab state between the

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<sup>10</sup> See The Avalon Project at Yale University for the texts of UN Resoultion 181 and Israel's Declaration of Independence (<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/un/res181.htm> & <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/israel.htm>).

Mediterranean and the Jordan River, and on the eve of Israel's War of Independence, the population of British Mandate Palestine numbered some 1.2 or 1.3 million Arabs and some 650,000 Jews.<sup>11</sup>

From November 30, 1947, the Independence War waged on through the invasion of the Arab armies on May 14, 1948, the day that David Ben Gurion and the National Council declared Israel's Independence on Tel Aviv's Rothschild Boulevard. The war continued until the ceasefire agreements were signed between Israel and the neighboring Arab states in 1949.

At the end of the war, the population of the new State of Israel stood at approximately 150,000 Arabs and some 700,000-750,000 Jews. Between 1948 and 1951, the Jewish population of the country doubled as the result of massive immigration from post-Holocaust Europe and from the Jewish communities of the Arab world.

The State of Israel as a democracy aspired to implement full civic and political rights for Israeli Arab citizens. However, on the background of the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Arab states, obligations were not always fulfilled. Between 1948 and 1966, the Israeli Arab population lived under military law that included limitations on travel, implementation of curfews, and administrative detentions. With that said, the Israeli Arab population enjoys the same basic rights enshrined in Israeli law for all – rights of freedom of religion, of opinion and conscience, and rights of political organization and representation. For example, in the 17th Knesset, there are 12 Arab parliamentarians and one Israeli Arab currently serving as a Supreme Court justice. In terms of economic development, although the standard of living of most Israeli Arabs is better in comparison to current standards in places like Jordan, or the Palestinian Authority, or Egypt; the Arab sector is underdeveloped in comparison to the Jewish majority of the State of Israel.<sup>12</sup>

Moshe Arens, former Defense Minister and member of the Likud, wrote in Haaretz (03/13/07): "A future where possibly a quarter of Israel's citizens feel alienated from the state, hostile to it, and supportive of its enemies is a bleak and even dangerous one. Creating an alternate future in which many or most of Israel's Arab citizens identify with the state and feel a sense of loyalty to it is probably the most important challenge facing Israel."

As of May 2007, the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics offers the following population statistics, dividing the Israeli population into three major groupings:

- Jews - 5,415,000 are Jews (76 percent).
- Arabs -1,425,000 million (20 percent), 1 out of every 5 Israelis is an Israeli Arab or Israeli Palestinian. This does not include those Palestinians who live in the Gaza Strip (1.3 million) and the West Bank/Judaea and Samaria (2.1 million)), areas whose permanent status in international law is yet to be determined, and therefore whose Palestinian residents are not Israeli citizens.
- "Others" - 310,000 (4 percent) predominately non-Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union or those whose Jewish status is still undetermined by the Interior Ministry.

## **Reading Suggestions**

### ***On the Web:***

**Arabs in Israel: On the Move.** Laurence Louer, *OpenDemocracy.net* (20-4-07).

[http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-debate\\_97/beyond\\_zionism\\_4547.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-debate_97/beyond_zionism_4547.jsp)

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<sup>11</sup> Please refer to the text of United Nations Resolution 181 on the partition of Palestine: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/un/res181.htm>. Please also see the section – "The General Assembly Partition Resolution, November 29, 1947" in *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict 1881-2001*, Benny Morris (Vintage Books, 2001) 184-189.

<sup>12</sup> For more details, please see: "Arab Israelis" at [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society\\_&\\_Culture/arabs2.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/arabs2.html) and "The Arabs in Israel – Two Years after the Or Commission Report", Prof. (Emeritus) Shimon Shamir, Lecture delivered on 9/19/05 at Tel Aviv University (The Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation- Tel Aviv University) <http://www.dayan.org/kapjac/files/shamirEng.pdf>.

**New Lyrics For Israel.** Adam Lebor, *The New York Times* ( June 18, 2007).  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/18/opinion/18lebor.html?ex=1339819200&en=532aa5bd8ad8f2f0&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss>

**The Anthem Question.** Philologos, *The Forward* (8-04-2005). <http://www.forward.com/articles/the-anthem-question/>

**"The Model of Ethnic Democracy: Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State."** *Sammy Smooha, Nations and Nationalism* 8, 4 (October 2002):475-503.  
<http://soc.haifa.ac.il/~s.smooha/download/TheModelofDemIsraelasJewDeminNN.pdf>

***On the Shelf:***

**Inextricably Bonded: Israeli Arab and Jewish Writers Re-Visioning Culture.** Rachel Feldhay Brenner (University of Wisconsin Press 2003).

**Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land since 1948.** Meron Benvenisti (University of California Press, 2002).

**Tall Shadows: Interviews with Israeli Arabs.** Smadar Bakovic (Hamilton Books, 2006).

**The Secret Life of Saeed: The Pessoptimist.** Emile Habiby (Interlink Books, 2001).



## Session #6

# Standing, Not Singing: Israeli Arabs, HaTikvah, and Symbol-Making in the Jewish State

## Handout 6.1 – HaTikvah Lyrics

Read this translation together as a group, then discuss the questions that follow:

As long as deep in the heart  
The soul of a Jew yearns  
And forward to the East  
To Zion, an eye looks  
Our hope will not be lost  
The hope of two thousand years  
To be a free nation in our land  
The land of Zion and Jerusalem.

- Do you have any connection to the music or lyrics of HaTikvah? What kind of connection?
- When have you heard HaTikvah? Do you have any distinct memories of hearing it—perhaps during a Taglit-Birthright Israel trip, at Independence Hall or the Mega Event? How did you feel when you heard it?
- Which phrases are particularly meaningful to you?

The lyrics of HaTikvah have been controversial at points. Some people advocate for rethinking the words of an anthem that would characterize the essence of the State of Israel. Here is one example of a looser interpretation, still based on the lyrics:<sup>13</sup>

We were rent asunder / many years ago  
War, famine, plunder / laid our people low.  
Exile is our history / slavery is our lore;  
Shrouded in mystery / our legacy of yore.  
From these roots must never grow again  
Bitter fruits, expressions of our pain.  
Now in our freedom / comfort and prosperity  
Pledge our response to / liberation's call.  
Counter oppression / bias, greed and tyranny.  
Jerusalem's gate means / hope to one and all.

- Does this version resonate with you more than the first? Why or why not?
- Which version is more “Jewish?”

<sup>13</sup>Translation by Joshua Mitteldorf, poet and astrophysicist: <http://www.mathforum.org/%7Ejosh/hatikvah.html>.



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## Handout 6.2 – Articles on Symbols of Israel

| HaTikvah – The Hope   |
|---|
| <i>As long as deep in the heart<br/>The soul of a Jew yearns,<br/>And forward to the East<br/>To Zion, an eye looks<br/>Our hope will not be lost,<br/>The hope of two thousand years,<br/>To be a free nation in our land,<br/>The land of Zion and Jerusalem.</i> |

### Toward the next 60 years

By Amos Schocken

April 19, 2007

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/850285.html>

If there is one minister in the government of Israel who does not sing the national anthem, then perhaps the national anthem should be re-examined.

"Hatikvah" - "The Hope" - was established as the anthem of the Zionist movement and the Jewish people by a resolution of the 18th Zionist Congress, in 1933. It gave apt expression to the aspiration of the Jews to be a free people in their land, Zion. Upon the establishment of the state, it became the national anthem. During the state's first years, when Israel's existence was fragile and not at all secure, "Hatikvah" was still relevant to Israeli aspirations. Today, even if Sderot is still under attack, and only last summer there was a war here, it is clear that the aspirations of the Jews have been realized in a very impressive way. Despite all the difficulties and threats, the State of Israel is one of the great success stories of the 20th century.

The fulfillment of a dream is not a reason to replace an anthem, but "Hatikvah" has an obvious practical disadvantage: It addresses only Jews. "For as long as deep within the heart a Jewish soul is yearning..." - so begins "Hatikvah." How can an Arab citizen identify with such an anthem?

The act of singing the national anthem is an expression of solidarity with other citizens and with the state. This is an opportunity that is denied the Arabs of Israel, who make up one fifth of the population, and it is clear that the losers are both the state and its Jewish citizens.

The State of Israel came into existence despite the Arabs' objections, but many years have gone by since then, and the partnership between the Jews and the Arabs in Israel has become a fact, notwithstanding the difficulties, and even if equality has not yet been attained. Israel's Arab citizens reject the despicable plan of Minister of Strategic Affairs Avigdor Lieberman to transfer Israeli Arab cities and towns to the

territory destined for the Palestinian state. When they compare the progress made by Israel, and by themselves as part of it, during the state's nearly 60 years, to what has happened during the same period in the Arab and Palestinian expanse, their position is complimentary to Israel.

But when we think about the relations between Jews and Arabs during the next 60 years, it is clear there is still a great deal of work to be done, and if by its 60th Independence Day Israel were to adopt a new national anthem, it will have taken an important symbolic step for the future of relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel.

On its 60th birthday, it would be desirable if the Arab citizens of Israel were not alienated from the state's day of celebration. Hasn't the time come to recognize that the establishment of Israel is not just the story of the Jewish people, of Zionism, of the heroism of the Israel Defense Forces and of bereavement? That it is also the story of the reflection of Zionism and the heroism of IDF soldiers in the lives of the Arabs: the Nakba - the Palestinian "Catastrophe," as the Arabs call the events of 1948 - the loss, the families that were split up, the disruption of lives, the property that was taken away, the life under military government and other elements of the history shared by Jews and Arabs, which are presented on Independence Day, and not only on that day, in an entirely one-sided way.

One of the March issues of the British weekly magazine *The Economist* dealt with the difficulties various countries experience in facing alternate, sometimes critical, versions of their history. What is happening in this area in South Africa, says the weekly, is a positive example of the creation of a new "national story," one that is not bound by the rigid ideologies of one side or another.

The Jewish settlers in Hebron must be given credit for their initiative to rehabilitate the Avraham Avinu synagogue and establish memorial sites for the history of the Jews of that town and their slaughter by Arabs in 1929. Under normal conditions, the Palestinian state, had it been established, should properly have encouraged such projects, allotted resources to them and afforded them a place in Palestinian public discourse and in textbooks. We readily accept, in fact almost take for granted, projects to rehabilitate Jewish sites and memorials for Jewish communities that were destroyed in Europe.

It is not always easy, it is sometimes very difficult indeed, but nevertheless, Israel, too, can behave in this manner with respect to the history of the Arabs here. It will be to its credit and benefit if it marks a building that in the past was an Arab institution or a street that in the past bore an Arab name (and perhaps restore the Arab name to at least part of the street, certainly in places where Arabs live today). It is possible to mark a place where there used to be an Arab settlement, whether it was abandoned or whether a Jewish community has arisen in its stead. And it is also possible to mention acts of harshness by Jews toward Arabs.

We must be confident of our right to live here - a right that is not conditioned on the Arabs' agreement, but which is also not conditioned on ignoring their history. In this way we will express the fact that the Arabs in Israel are also children of this land, as well as the equality of their rights alongside those of the Jews, with respect to the history of each of the peoples.

If Israel's 60th Independence Day, a year from now, is the first on which the story of the Arabs in this country is part of the official content and receives a public stage, it would be an important step in the direction of the creation of a common denominator for Jews and Arabs in Israel. A way to give this concrete expression would be if, for example, on Independence Day, the prime minister of Israel were to inaugurate the resettlement of the Arab villages of Biram and Ikrit by Israeli Arabs. There is no basis to the sense of threat in Israel from the rehabilitation of such Arab sites or from their resettlement by Arab citizens of Israel. The right of return of Palestinians who are not citizens of Israel has nothing to do with this.

If Israel were to behave toward the Arabs the way it expects other countries, in which Jewish property remains, to behave toward the Jews, then it would see to it that the government Custodian General of Absentee Property would truly act like a trustee for the owners of such property, and would set in motion a process of returning property to Arab citizens of Israel whenever possible, or of compensating the

owners of such property, when returning it is not possible.

Israel's 60th Independence Day is a suitable time and a realistic target date for steps that will lead to strengthening the solidarity between Jews and Arabs in Israel, and a government that advances the steps described here would be making a significant contribution to this.

## **Don't sing, but show respect**

**By Shlomo Avineri**

April 30, 2007

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/853684.html>

It is not every day that a publisher decides to print his positions in his newspaper, and therefore great importance should be attached to what Amos Schocken wrote in his article, "Toward the next 60 years" (April 19). Many of the points he raises are correct and logical, especially regarding the imperviousness of the government and Israeli society to many material and social aspects of the Arab public's life in Israel.

It is difficult, however, to agree with him on one point - the issue of the national anthem. It is certainly possible to understand the feelings of Israel's Arab citizens who find it difficult to identify with "the Jewish soul's yearning," but making this the starting point for a proposal to replace "Hatikva" with what Schocken calls a democratic and egalitarian anthem is a far cry. If the anthem is nothing but the lowest common denominator acceptable to all groups in Israel, then one must take into account the ultra-Orthodox Jewish public, for whom "Hatikva" is not acceptable due to its Zionist nature. Furthermore, for the Jewish national-religious public, "Hatikva" is defective because it does not mention the Lord.

A serious look at national anthems around the world - and I am sure Mr. Schocken will not object to going beyond the provincial Israeli confines - finds the large majority to be problematic. It is enough to cite as examples two strictly democratic countries - Britain and France. The British national anthem entreats the Lord to watch over the country's monarch, who is also the head of the Anglican Church. Millions of Catholics, non-Anglican Protestants, Muslims and Jews, among others, live in Britain today. There is also no small number of republicans there who would like to do away with the institution of the monarchy completely. Did Jews or Muslims ever suggest changing the British national anthem? Did any British liberal ever claim that the anthem's words affect his rights or status?

The French national anthem, "La Marseillaise," is a revolutionary song full of violence and threats against those who oppose the Republic. It is no secret that to this day, there are many millions in France who consider the execution of Louis XVI a historic crime, and one could imagine that they disagree with the words of the anthem. However, they do not propose changing it.

For better or for worse, a national anthem symbolizes the dominant historical trend - which sometimes (as in France) was born of blood and fire. I understand the difficulty of Israeli Arabs, just like that of Jews or Muslims in Britain, or royalists or Muslims in France - but the latter are not suggesting their national anthems be changed. Citizens may decline to sing the anthem, but they should be expected to respect the symbols of the majority.

In neither Britain nor France does the minority question the legitimacy of the body politic that represents the beliefs, the symbols and the narrative of the majority. In Israel, the Arab proposal to change "Hatikva" stems not from the difficulty of singing the words of the anthem, but rather from the desire to question the State of Israel as the national state of the Jews. It is preferable to say these things openly.

The Schocken family, like tens of thousands of other Jewish families in Germany, enjoyed equal rights and unprecedented economic prosperity during the period of the German emperors, Kaiser Wilhelm I and

Kaiser Wilhelm II. Did any one of them consider demanding that the German national anthem be changed because it was an anthem of emperors and Christians?

## Perhaps we'll cancel the flag?

By [Nadav Shragai](#)

April 29, 2007

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/851869.html>

Why should only "Hatikva" be canceled? Why should we not also cancel the blue and white flag, in the colors of the prayer shawl with the Magen David in the center? And the symbol of the state with the menorah of the Temple? What connection do the Arabs of Israel have to David? To the talit? And the menorah of the Temple? Even "Israel," the name of the state, is taken from the Jewish past to which the Arab citizens of the country have no connection whatsoever.

Those who are bothered by "Hatikva" because the Arab citizens of Israel are not able to identify with it ("Toward the next 60 years", by Amos Schocken, Haaretz, April 19), are actually seeking a much deeper change, not merely something symbolic. They do not accept Zionism as a super-ideology and the definition of the State of Israel as a Jewish state and the state of the Jewish people.

In a reality in which the Arabs of Israel hold processions of return to towns and villages where three generations of Jews have lived, and where many of the Arab Israelis who are alienated from the state define themselves as part of the Palestinian people, and some of them even consider an armed struggle and terror against Israeli citizens "a legitimate struggle," contests of equality such as changing the national anthem have one significance only: a preference for a multinational togetherness (a binational state) over the Jewish togetherness. From here the way to assimilation and mixed marriages - to which Amos Schocken has in the past made clear he is not averse - is short.

"Hatikva," which is supposed to be old-fashioned and archaic, is today more relevant than ever. Naftali Herz Imber, who was not a religious person, defined in the nine verses of the song "Tikvatenu" ("Our Hope," as the original was called) the notion of "know where you come from and where you are going" of all of us as a people. We come from the land of Zion and Jerusalem (in Imber's original text, "the city in which David stayed") and we are going there. That is the essence of the history of the Jewish people since it went into exile and returned to its land, whose basis is Zion - Jerusalem.

The two verses of "Hatikva" that were adopted as the national anthem are our historical memory. In 1966, the writer Shai Agnon gave expression to this inner truth when he said in his speech on receiving the Nobel Prize that because of a historical accident - the destruction of Jerusalem - he was born in one of the towns of the Diaspora.

Together with "Jerusalem of Gold," but a long time before it, "Hatikva" was the best known Hebrew song in the Jewish world. It was sung for generations by Jews who did not know a word of Hebrew - one common Hebrew song whose words are not taken from either the siddur prayer book or the Bible. It is still relevant because its lines manage to include even today a broad common denominator of the Jewish public, or as Natan Alterman put it, the Jewish point.

"The land of Zion and Jerusalem," in whose presence a Jewish soul still yearns and is stirred, reminds us that the State of Israel is not a "normal" state like all other states, it is not merely a country of refuge for those suffering from pogroms and anti-Semitism (as Herzl thought) or a center for Jewish culture in the public domain (as Ahad Ha'Am said), but rather a state whose "vitality is in the present, which has a right in the present but for which everything stems from the past" (as Dr. Yaakov Herzog defined it).

The past and the future are our joint Jewish memory. Without them it would have been possible also to

establish a Jewish homeland in Uganda. Why here expressly? Because we were born here? The Arabs were also born here. Jerusalem is one of the central factors that still prevents boiling down national consciousness exclusively to what is self-evident - the place of birth - and "Hatikva" gives this expression.

Rabbi Kook, who composed the Song of Belief, "Shir ha'emunah," a counter-anthem to "Hatikva", mentioned once that the Jews do not have "hope," but rather "belief." Despite this, "Hatikva" made it possible for years for even those Jews who are not religious to "believe," in a somewhat different way, in a Jewish secular way, because it gave expression to Jewish memory and continuity. If there is the slightest chance that the Arabs of Israel, to say nothing of our neighbors, will one day recognize that our presence here is a presence that will continue and not that of a passing guest, we are the ones who must first recognize this. No one will respect our Jewish roots and our unique position here if we ourselves do not respect them.

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## Handout 6.3 – Reactions to HaTikvah<sup>14</sup>

| HaTikvah – The Hope   |
|---|
| <i>As long as deep in the heart<br/>The soul of a Jew yearns,<br/>And forward to the East<br/>To Zion, an eye looks<br/>Our hope will not be lost,<br/>The hope of two thousand years,<br/>To be a free nation in our land,<br/>The land of Zion and Jerusalem.</i> |

Israeli Minister of Culture, Science, and Sports Raleb Majadele, the first Israeli Arab to serve as a government minister, said the following in an interview with YNET:

"Of course I would not sing the anthem in its current form. But before we talk about symbols, I want to talk about equal education for my children. It's more important that my son would be able to buy a house, live with dignity... the Arabs are not in a mood to sing right now. . . .

As a government minister, I swore allegiance to the laws of the State of Israel, and I intend to honor them....

To the best of my knowledge, the law does not require me to sing the anthem, but to honor it. I fail to understand how an enlightened, sane Jew allows himself to ask a Muslim person with a different language and culture, to sing an anthem that was written for Jews only...."

Quotes above from <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0.7340.L-3377681.00.html>

Minister Majadele added that during the HaTikvah, he expresses his respect by standing, but cannot express identification with the anthem by singing.

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<sup>14</sup> See further background on HaTikvah at <http://www.science.co.il/Israel-Anthem.asp> or <http://www.jafi.org.il/education/festivals/zkatz/atztikva.html>

One day, a few years ago, the historian Adel Manna attended the graduation ceremony of his son, who had just obtained a law degree. The event was held at the Sultan's Pool in Jerusalem. Toward the end of the ceremony, the Manna family decided to leave, before the singing of "Hatikva," the national anthem. They did not want to remain seated while everyone stood and sang, nor did they want to stand. Embarrassingly, they had not managed to reach the exit when the singing began, and people shouted at them, "What's going on here? What kind of behavior is this? You want equality, but you're not ready to respect the state?!" Manna, who is generally a model of composure, lost his patience and responded, "Shut up, already! You go on singing your Hatikva. It's not mine. What do you want from me?" Manna afterward described the incident to his colleagues in a working group that was convened by the Israel Democracy Institute, with the aim of formulating a charter to define and regularize the essence of the relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel.

Tom Segev, "Breakdown", *Haaretz* (22-11-06). [http://www.spme.net/cgi\\_bin/printerfriendly/pf.cgi](http://www.spme.net/cgi_bin/printerfriendly/pf.cgi)

It was Abbas Suan who electrified an entire nation when, with Israel a goal down and staring elimination in the face, he powered in a 22-yard strike in the 90th minute of the home game against Ireland. With one in three of all Israelis watching the game on television, his team-mates - all but one of whom were Jewish - enveloped him in an ecstatic embrace. In the Arab town of Sakhnin in the Galilee, where Suan was born and raised and still lives (and which had a year earlier joyously celebrated its team's first ever victory in Israel's equivalent of the FA Cup under Suan's captancy), residents poured into the streets amid a wild honking of car horns and used every firework they could find to mark their local hero's triumph. . .

But then Suan, 31, is very comfortable in his skin, and at ease whether speaking unashamedly about how, as a Muslim, he still shares the dream of "every footballer in Israel" to play in the national team, or conversely about the discrimination of which Israel's Arab citizens repeatedly complain. . .

Suan probably has more experience of the latter than any other footballer, not least at the hands of the supporters of Beitar Jerusalem, which has long been linked to the political right and whose fans have the reputation of being the most racist in Israel. Playing Beitar at Jerusalem's Teddy Kollek Stadium, Suan has been confronted with banners saying "Death to Arabs" and "Abbas Suan: you don't represent us." Even during Israel's ultimately unsuccessful World Cup campaign in 2005, Beitar fans chanted during one of their games with Sakhnin: "No Arabs, no terrorism" - though the Sakhnin fans accurately turned this round to: "No Arabs, no World Cup...."

This inevitably raises the oft-asked question of whether Suan is prepared to sing along to the words of "Hatikvah" (the Israeli national anthem) when it is played - as it will be tomorrow at Ramat Gan. "No," he says. "I stand and I respect it. I respect everyone who sings it. But I don't sing 'Hatikvah'. The words do not belong to the Arabs."

"Israel United: Can Football Heal A Divided Nation?" *The Independent* (23-3-07)



★ Israel

## Session #7

# L'Dor va-Dor, From Generation to Generation: Presence of the Conflict in Israeli Society

makōm מקום  
Israel. In Real Life



The talkspace: Israel curriculum is a collaboration of Scott Copeland, Clare Goldwater, Seth Goren, Doron Rubin, and Robin Weber and a co-production of Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Student Life and the Jewish Agency for Israel's Makom Israel Engagement Network. © February, 2008



## Session #7

# L'Dor va-Dor, From Generation to Generation: Presence of the Conflict in Israeli Society

### Introduction:

No single set of factors and events has influenced Israeli life like the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Arabs has. Well before the outbreak of Israel's Independence War in November 1947, armed conflict was unfortunately common, to varying degrees, between the Zionist *Yishuv* and the local Arab population. After Israel declared independence in 1948, the conflict expanded to include the Arab states neighboring Israel and beyond. In more recent years, some analysts point to a further expansion of the conflict to include not only the Arab World, but the rest of the Islamic world as well. Since 1948, the State of Israel has fought numerous wars and campaigns, and marks of the conflict can be seen in the most common aspects of Israeli life.

How have different generations of Israelis thought about the conflict and its impact on Israeli life? How has Israeli culture and society dealt with the pressure that near-constant conflict places on daily existence? And how do Israelis think about the future? This session will explore these questions, and help participants imagine the experiences of their Israeli peers.

### Session Outline:

| Segment                         | Suggested Time     | Description  |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| <i>Israel Update</i>            | <i>5 minutes</i>   | Designated student shares report on Israel's current events.   |
| <i>Opening Discussion</i>       | <i>10 minutes</i>  | Review pieces assigned at the end of the prior session.  |
| <i>Digging Deeper (Options)</i> | <i>Time varies</i> | Consider effects of ongoing conflict on Israeli society through PowerPoint presentation OR movie screening                                   |
| <i>Wrap Up</i>                  | <i>10 minutes</i>  | Summarize conclusions drawn in the course of discussions.  |
| <i>Looking Ahead</i>            | <i>5 minutes</i>   | Ask participants to reflect on differences between Israeli and North American Jews' Jewishness and Judaism as discussed in earlier sessions. |

### Success Checklist

At the end of the session, affirmative answers to these questions will help you know you've been successful:

- Did participants appreciate the effect that the Arab-Israeli conflict has on Israeli society?
- Did participants absorb and digest the personal narratives shared in the materials?
- Did participants draw on their own experiences with Israelis and Israel in the course of the discussion?



## **Pre-Session Assignment:**

Participants were asked to read one of two choices – "A People's Army" from Donna Rosenthal, *The Israelis: Ordinary People in an Extraordinary Land* or "Living Dangerously" in Amos Elon's *The Israelis: Founders and Sons*—and to reflect on them using Handout 7.1.

Elon's and Rosenthal's chapters deal with the presence and impact of the conflict on Israeli life at two very different points in Israel's history. Elon writes after the 1973 Yom Kippur War and Rosenthal during the Second Intifada. With that said, there are a number of overlapping observations regarding the role of the conflict and the military in Israeli life. Handout 7.1 asks participants:

- How does the author of your article describe the influence of the conflict on Israeli life?
- How does the author of your article describe the ways in which the conflict and military service impact Israeli young people?
- How does the author of your article describe the ways that the immediacy of violence and the threat of personal loss impact Israeli young people?

## **Preparation:**

### ***Facilitation***

Read the texts assigned as pre-session reading as well as the passages included in the PowerPoint presentation (if you are choosing that implementation option). Read through this facilitation guide, and be prepared to elicit conversation about the texts.

### ***Materials***

- Movie and necessary A/V equipment for screening  
OR
- PowerPoint presentation (Document 7.4) and A/V equipment necessary for screening
- Copies of Handout 7.2 (texts from PowerPoint presentation)
- Copies of Handout 7.3, one per participant, prepared with Hebrew letters at the top—2 sheets per letter, so the two people with the same letter can pair up for a discussion (Suggestion: in addition to including the Hebrew character, also spell out the letter's name in English; e.g., Aleph or Gimel)
- Pens or pencils
- Hat or similar
- Poster board with questions for wrap-up discussion (optional)
- Copies of Handouts 8.1 & 8.2 to distribute in preparation of the next session

## **Session Implementation/Description:**

### ***Israel Update – 5 minutes***

Before launching into the talkspace: Israel content for the session, make time for the participant(s) signed up for the week to present an update on Israeli current events. Including this segment in each session will help talkspace: Israel participants connect the content of the program to the facts of Israel's present-day existence.

### ***Opening Discussion – 10 minutes***

Share with participants that while we have touched upon tensions between Jewish and Arab Israelis, today's session will explore on a deeper level the ways in which ongoing conflict affect Israeli life. The

pre-session reading assignments introduced this topic by portraying the experiences of Israelis at two different points in history at which the conflict was especially salient.

Ask students who read each piece to summarize it for the rest of the group. If you asked designated students to prepare responses to the framing questions, have them share their reflections. Otherwise (or in addition), open the questions to the whole group:

- How does the author of your article describe the influence of the conflict on Israeli life?
- How does the author of your article describe the ways in which the conflict and military service impact Israeli young people?
- How does the author of your article describe the ways that the immediacy of violence and the threat of personal loss impact Israeli young people?

### **Digging Deeper – Time Varies**

#### **Option #1 – Movie Screening**

Show one of the great movies available that examine ways in which ongoing conflict impacts the lives of individual Israelis. Suggested options, in order of preference:

1. *Mechina*, a film by Mital Guttman, a student raised in the U.S. who visited her cousin in Israel as and his friends were preparing to leave home for their army service. Contact Robin Weber, 202-449-6591 or [rweber@hillel.org](mailto:rweber@hillel.org), if interested and she can help you make arrangements to bring this film to your group.
2. *West Bank Story*, a musical comedy by Ari Sandel. The love story between an Israeli soldier and a Palestinian restaurant cashier is set in the fast-paced, fast-food world of competing falafel stands in the West Bank. Get more info and order the DVD at [www.westbankstory.com](http://www.westbankstory.com).
3. *Beaufort*, 2007 Academy-Award nominated foreign language film by Joseph Cedar, based on a book by Ron Leshem. The film is about an IDF unit stationed at the Beaufort post in Southern Lebanon during the South Lebanon conflict, just prior to Israel's withdrawal from that country in 2000. Israel's sudden withdrawal from Beaufort and Lebanon after 18 years of occupation is the backdrop for Cedar's film, which outlines the daily routine of a group of soldiers, their feelings and their fears, and explores their moral dilemmas in the days preceding the withdrawal. Not yet available in the U.S., but I expect it will be available soon.

After the movie, discuss it as a group using the following questions as a guide, adding questions you determine based on the film you select:

- In what ways did the conflict impact the different individuals in the movie?
- How do Israelis in the movie view the obligation to serve in the military?
- What were the similarities and differences between the views expressed in the movie and the perspectives shared in your pre-session reading assignments?
- In what ways are your own experiences here in the U.S. similar to the experiences of your Israeli peers? In what ways are they different?

#### **Option #2 – PowerPoint and Reflection – 45 minutes**

After looking at the two different viewpoints represented in the pre-session reading, screen the PowerPoint presentation prepared for this session. The PowerPoint uses a combination of music,

text, and photos to highlight a broad range of individuals' feelings about the impact of the conflict on their lives. (Handout 7.2 compiles those texts for participants' reference.)

Distribute pens and Handout 7.3 to participants, using the sheets you prepared with Hebrew letters on top. Participants can make notes as they watch the presentation, but at the end should make sure they have answers to the questions on the handouts:

- Which of the texts and/or pictures struck you the most? Why?
- If you could ask a question to one of the characters depicted in the presentation through words or images, what would you ask?

Then, ask people to fold their written responses and place them in a hat in the center of the room. After all the papers are in the hat, pass the hat around the circle. Each participant should take a slip from the hat and read it to the rest of the group.

After going around the circle, each person holds on to the note that they pulled from the hat. On each note is a Hebrew letter (see above). Ask each participant to find the other person in the group who is holding a note with the same Hebrew letter as their own.

Once people have found their identical letter pair, each pair should find a place to sit where they can speak quietly. On each note is a response to the question, "If you could ask a question to one of the characters displayed in the presentation, what would you ask?" Each person should read the question written on their note. Their partner must take on the role of the character being asked and try to answer. Each pair has 10 minutes to read and imagine themselves in the shoes of the characters from the presentation.

After each pair has had a chance to take part in their role-play and discussion as a pair, invite pairs to return to the group to share their experience. The following questions can help guide the discussion:

- How easy or hard was it to assume the roles of people represented in the presentation? Why? How did you get into character?
- Did anyone take on a character with views that clashed with your own personal perspective? What went through your mind?
- What additional questions are on your minds about the lives of these characters? Can we come up with any possible answers?

### **Wrap-Up – 10 minutes**

Whether your group reflected on the PowerPoint presentation or watched a movie, between that media and the pre-session reading you have encountered a variety of perspectives on life in Israel in the face of the conflict. To conclude today's discussion, reflect on that collection of perspectives as a whole, using the questions from the pre-session reading as a guide. (You may want to prepare a poster board before hand that displays the questions). Ask people to think about the reading, the presentation, the role-play exercise and their own experiences in Israel as they answer:

- How would you describe the influences of the conflict on Israeli life?
- How would you describe the ways in which the conflict and military service impact young people?
- How would you describe the ways that the immediacy of violence and the threat of personal loss impact Israeli young people?

Additional questions can help make a personal connection to the ideas discussed:

- Are there ways in which the conflict impacts your daily life as a Jew living outside of Israel?
- How do you imagine you would react if you lived in Israel and faced the conflict, and military service, as a part of daily life?

Living so far from Israel, it can be hard for us to relate to the experiences of Israelis in the face of the ever-present conflict. Hopefully today's session has helped to make the Israeli mindset somewhat more accessible. In the next session, we will further explore the differences in the experiences of Jews in Israel and Jews in the Diaspora.

### ***Looking Ahead to Session #8 – 5 minutes***

Session #8 focuses on the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora, and gives participants the chance to explore differences between Jewish life inside and outside the Land of Israel. In preparation for Session #8, ask participants to think about the following (printed on Handout 8.1):

- Looking back at the sessions we've gone through so far, what are some of the differences between Jewish life in Israel and in North America? What are some of the similarities?
- What connects you, as a North American Jew, to Israeli Jews? To the State of Israel? To the Land of Israel?

In preparation for the next session, also ask participants to read Handout 8.2 and answer the following:

- How would you summarize Yehoshua's basic argument?
- In your reading, what is the most provocative phrase or sentence from "The Meaning of Homeland"?

## **Reading Suggestions**

### ***On the Web:***

**The Changing Paradigm of Israeli-Palestinian Relations in the Shadow of Iran and the War against Hizballah**, Moshe Yaalon (Seventh Annual Herzliya Conference 22/1/ 2007) Washington Institute for Near East Policy. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/print.php?template=C07&CID=326>

**Public Opinion in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**, Jacob Shamir, United States Institute for Peace (June 2007). <http://www.usip.org/pubs/peaceworks/pwks60.pdf>

**The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research**, <http://www.tau.ac.il/peace/>.

### ***On the Shelf:***

**Rubber Bullets – Power and Conscience in Modern Israel**. Yaron Ezrahi (University of California Press, 1998).

**The Israelis – Founders and Sons**. Amos Elon (Penguin Books, 1983).

**The Israelis – Ordinary People in an Extraordinary Land**. Donna Rosenthal (Free Press, 2005).

**The People on The Street**. Linda Grant (Virago Press, 2006).

**The Seventh Day: Soldiers Talk About the Six Days War**. Avraham Shapira, (Simon & Schuster, 1971).



## Session #7

# From Generation to Generation: Israeli Society and the Presence of the Conflict

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### Handout 7.1 – Pre-Session Reading Questions

Based on the article you are asked to read for session #7, prepare answers to the following questions:

- How does the author of your article describe the influence of the conflict on Israeli life?
- How does the author describe the ways in which the conflict and military service impacts young people?
- How does the author describe the ways that the immediacy of violence and the threat of personal loss impact Israeli young people?

When we come back together, we will discuss the ways in which these two author's perspectives differ and overlap.



## Session #7

# From Generation to Generation: Israeli Society and the Presence of the Conflict

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### Handout 7.1 – Pre-Session Reading Questions

Based on the article you are asked to read for session #7, prepare answers to the following questions:

- How does the author of your article describe the influence of the conflict on Israeli life?
- How does the author describe the ways in which the conflict and military service impacts young people?
- How does the author describe the ways that the immediacy of violence and the threat of personal loss impact Israeli young people?

When we come back together, we will discuss the ways in which these two author's perspectives differ and overlap.





## Session #7

# From Generation to Generation: Israeli Society and the Presence of the Conflict

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### Handout 7.2 – Texts from PowerPoint Presentation

My son is named after my brother who fell in the War of Independence. This was exactly twenty years ago when the almonds of 1948 were in full bloom. I am named after my father's brother, who fell in the ranks of the Red Army at the gates of Warsaw. This happened in 1920.

My father was named after the brother of his father who was murdered in the Ukraine during a pogrom by rampaging peasants. This was in 1891....

Are we now still at the beginning of the road? At the middle? At the end? I only know this: In this half century in which I live and breathe, fear of death has never left our homes.

Moshe Shamir  
(*Amos Elon. The Israelis: Founders and Sons, 224-5*)

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In 1982 I was again mobilized. The war in Lebanon was my fourth war. This time my elder son joined me. We came to bid my parents farewell. Around the coffee table we counted the wars we share among us. My father fought for the liberation of Palestine from the Turks in 1917-1918 under a British flag. He fought the Arabs in 1920, 1929, and 1936, and was wounded in his last war, in 1948. Then I took over: 1956, 1967, 1973, 1982. Now came my son's turn, and very soon my second son will be drafted. Almost a century of warfare was discussed and shared around a coffee table by three generations of an ordinary, peace loving family....

When the hundred years war enters its second century, questions raised cannot be dismissed as mere battle fatigue: What is our share in that endless cycle of bloodshed? Is it really predetermined by the Zionist program and is it still necessary to realize its objectives? Is it preprogrammed in our genes as Jews to be forever a nation apart? If our lives are bound to revolve around the next call up, how can we possibly strive to attain other cherished goals, such as the creation of a better society? Are we entitled to make a choice – are we not compelled to formulate a new national agenda to replace the century old Zionist program?

Meron Benvenisti, *Conflicts and Contradictions*. ix.

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I know that one's got to be strong. That one's got to know how to get over it. But no one shows me how to do all this...

Be strong!!!...

I saw a boy, the only soldier left in his platoon. All dazed, his eyes red and empty. He didn't smile. Just asked and hoped that someone else might have been saved. No, no... there wasn't anyone else left.

Your throat chokes, your eyes cloud over and you run outside, to get over it. But the wind that's usually so good, so refreshing, only brings in great gusts of stench from the dead and clouds of heavy black flies....

Someone passed by and said "Shalom!" He smiled and asked, "How're things?" I got out a dry choked "shalom" and walked on. I am not strong. I can't smile today... maybe tomorrow.

Rivka Niedt on El Arish 7 June 1967  
(*Avraham Shapira, ed. The Seventh Day. 96*)

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I never wanted to be in the army but after three years you want to puke of the army. It gives a lot to the soldiers but enough is enough. I'm going home and I'm going to have a hot shower and sleep in my own bed. Then I'll get up and play soccer, see my girlfriend and start to live....

I don't think that there is one of us who doesn't know someone who was killed or injured. We're in a very bad cycle. There are many who think that this chain of events is leading us nowhere and we have to stop it, and someone else will say, no, we should hit them harder, in their neighborhoods and houses.... But I am not a politician, I am only the one who is saying you can pass, you can't.

Udi, at the end of his three year IDF service.  
(*Linda Grant, The People on the Street. 128-9.*)

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They asked Eli to write the eulogy.... "I was numb. I forgot how to write. There are no words to say goodbye to a brother." Hours later, Eli and his unit were back at the front. "No psychologist. No counseling. They expect us to be tough even though we're falling apart...."

"My parents say I went in a boy and came out a man. That being a soldier made me serious, mature. We'll I'd rather be immature and happy. I've lost three years of my life. I envy the eighteen year olds in America who are worrying about college instead of remaining alive."

Eli, towards the end of his three year IDF service.  
(*Donna Rosenthal, The Israelis. 61.*)

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Isn't it a relief to be on a two-day leave? Liron pauses before answering. "It's not like I'm going home to another world. You can't get away from this war.... Sometimes the front is minutes from home."

Liron, an IDF soldier.  
(*Donna Rosenthal, The Israelis. 48.*)

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We know that without the army, there wouldn't be an Israel. "We can't afford to lose even one war or we'd lose the country," avows Tamir. "For me, being an Israeli means defending the country. But how many more call-ups can we have?"

Tamir, Liron's older brother, an infantry reservist.  
(*Donna Rosenthal, The Israelis. 49.*)

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## **Heritage / Haim Guri**

The ram came last  
and Abraham did not know that he  
came in answer to the boy's request  
His first strength at the time of the waning day.

The old man raised his head.  
When he saw that he was not dreaming  
and the angel stood —  
with the knife falling from its hand.

The child, freed of his bonds  
saw his father's back.

Yitzhak, it is said, was not offered as a sacrifice.  
He lived a very long time,  
Seeing the good, until the light of his eyes dimmed.

But he bequeathed that hour to his descendants.  
They were born

With a knife in their heart.

### ירוג מייח / ירשה

האיל בא אחרון.  
ול' א ידע אברהם כי הוא  
משיב לשאלת הילד  
ת יומו ערבאוונו בע-ראשית

נשא ראשו השב.  
בראותו כי ל' א חלם חלום  
- והמלאך נצב  
נשרה המאכלת מידו

הילד שהתר מאסוריו  
רצה את גב אביו

ל' א ה' עלה קרבן, כמספר, יצחק  
הוא חי ימים רבים,  
עד אור עיניו כהה, רצה בטוב

אבל את השעה ההיא הוריש לצאצאיו  
הם נולדים  
ומאכלת בלבם

חשבון עובר, הקיבוץ המאוחד, 8891  
השירים, מוסד ביאליק והקיבוץ המאוחד,



## Session #7

# From Generation to Generation: Israeli Society and the Presence of the Conflict

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### Handout 7.3 – Reflection on PowerPoint

As you watch the PowerPoint presentation, think about the following questions. Take any notes on the back of the page. After the presentation, make sure you have clear answers written to each question written here.

**1. Which of the texts and/or pictures struck you the most? Why?**

**2. If you could ask a question to one of the characters depicted (through words or images) in the presentation, what would you ask?**





★ Israel

## Session #8

# Israel and the Diaspora: Centers and Peripheries of Jewish Life and Thought

makōm מקום  
Israel. In Real Life



The talkspace: Israel curriculum is a collaboration of Scott Copeland, Clare Goldwater, Seth Goren, Doron Rubin, and Robin Weber and a co-production of Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Student Life and the Jewish Agency for Israel's Makom Israel Engagement Network. © February, 2008



## Session #8

# Israel and the Diasporas: Centers and Peripheries in Jewish Life and Thought

### Introduction:

Part of the driving force that contributed to the Zionist movement's ability to move from its marginal status in Jewish life to the creation of the State of Israel was a deeply held sense that a Jewish majority living under conditions of political sovereignty would best guarantee the Jewish future. Taken to its fullest extension, this line of thought entailed the idea of “the negation of the exile” (הליגה תלילת - shlilat hagolah), under which a new, Zionist society would be established in opposition to Jewish life in the Diaspora. Eventually, so the thinking went, this new Jewish society would strengthen to the point that Diaspora life would become irrelevant, with life in the Jewish state supplanting all meaningful Jewish endeavors elsewhere.

In the contemporary scene, the negation of the exile has lost much of the potency that it may have possessed in the late 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. Nonetheless, the debate over the ideal relationship between the State of Israel and the communities of the Diaspora continues today.

In the Spring of 2006, the American Jewish Congress held a symposium titled, “What will Become of the Jewish People?” featuring a wide range of prominent Jewish personalities. A.B. Yehoshua, one of Israel's premier authors, and a figure long known for his outspoken commitments on issues of public concern to Israel and the Jewish people, shared with the audience his views on Israel-Diaspora relations. The symposium, as A.B. Yehoshua pointed out, took place on the evening of Israel's Memorial Day to Fallen Soldiers (Yom Ha-Zikaron). Israelis were taking part in 24 hours of memorial services and soul searching as the public mourned the Fallen. However, although Israel's Independence Day (Yom Ha-Atzmaut) was briefly mentioned in the proceedings, this Memorial Day for Israel's Fallen Soldiers was not noted throughout the symposium evening. The most striking of Yehoshua's comments included the following:

“If ... in 100 years Israel will exist and ... I will come to the Diaspora [and] there will not be [any] Jews ... I will not cry ... I don't say I want it... But if ... Israel will disintegrate ... for me personally ... there is no alternative to be a post-Zionist Jew.... [Being] Israeli is my skin; it's not my jacket.”

Yehoshua's comments sparked the latest fervent iteration of debate over the relationship between the Jewish community of Israel and the Jewish communities of the Diaspora. Today, by retracing and reflecting on the dialogue sparked by Yehoshua's speech, we will explore this debate ourselves. In the contemporary scene, where Jews around the world are bound together by existential questions about the Jewish future, to what extent can the State of Israel and the Jewish communities of the Diaspora share a unified model of Jewish peoplehood? And how can that model of unified peoplehood take into account both the shared concerns and the legitimate differences of the communities involved?

This debate has roots that take us back to Session #2, in which we explored Jewish connections to the Land of Israel. From that session onward, we've considered the situation of Jews in Israel, always drawing connections to participants' personal lives in the Diaspora. Now, we turn not only to the relationship between Diaspora Jews and the land of Israel itself, but Diaspora Jews' relationship with the Jews who actually live on that land.



## **Session Outline:**

| <b>Segment</b>            | <b>Suggested Time</b> | <b>Description</b>   |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| <i>Israel Update</i>      | <i>5 minutes</i>      | Designated student shares report on Israel's current events  |
| <i>Opening Discussion</i> | <i>10 minutes</i>     | Reflect on A.B. Yehoshua's position using questions presented in Session #7  |
| <i>Gallery of Ideas</i>   | <i>50 minutes</i>     | Examine other scholars' reactions to Yehoshua's article<br><i>Either</i> discuss participants' responses to those reactions <i>OR</i> create and consider art pieces representing the scholars' points of view |
| <i>Wrap Up</i>            | <i>10 minutes</i>     | Consider what Israelis and Diaspora Jews have to learn from each other   |
| <i>Looking Ahead</i>      | <i>5 minutes</i>      | Consider the ongoing importance of historical documents as a segue to Session #9   |

## **Success Checklist**

At the end of the session, affirmative answers to these questions will help you know you've been successful:

- Did participants grasp Yehoshua's argument? Did they articulate their reactions?
- Did participants actively process and articulate their responses to the posted quotations?
- Did participants express their thoughts on the relationships between Israelis and Diaspora Jews?

## **Pre-Session Assignment:**

In preparation for the session, participants were asked to answer questions on Handout 8.1, and to read related excerpts from "The A. B. Yehoshua Controversy: An Israel-Diaspora Dialogue on Jewishness, Israeliness, and Identity" from Handout 8.2.

## **Preparation:**

### ***Facilitation***

Read over this facilitation guide and make sure you are comfortable with all of the material, including each text for the Gallery of Ideas. Also familiarize yourself with the controversy surrounding A.B. Yehoshua's comments on Israeli and Diaspora Jewry, starting by carefully reviewing the "Foreword" of the document excerpted in Handout 8.2 and found in full at [http://www.ajc.org/atf/cf/%7B42D75369-D582-4380-8395-D25925B85EAF%7D/Yehoshua\\_Controversy\\_2006.pdf](http://www.ajc.org/atf/cf/%7B42D75369-D582-4380-8395-D25925B85EAF%7D/Yehoshua_Controversy_2006.pdf).

### ***Materials***

- Print quotes from Handout 8.3. You may want to blow up each quote on 11x17-sized paper. Post the individual 11x17 posters around the room as a 'Gallery of Ideas.'
- Copy Handout 8.4 – the Gallery of Ideas worksheet – for all participants.
- Have pens or pencils for each participant.

- If you choose to implement Option #2: Art as Response, you will need to provide art supplies, possibly including clay, play-doh, paper, pens, markers, pencils, pipe cleaners, old magazines, scissors, tape, glue, balloons, etc.
- Copy Handout 9.1, and also Handout 9.4 if you choose, for participants to read in preparation for Session #9.

## **Session Implementation/Description:**

### ***Israel Update – 5 minutes***

Before launching into the talkspace: Israel content for the session, make time for the participant(s) signed up for the week to present an update on Israeli current events.

### ***Opening Discussion – 10 minutes***

Open the session by raising the reflective questions that were posed at the end of the last session:

- Looking back at the sessions we've gone through so far, what are some of the differences between Jewish life in Israel and in North America? What are some of the similarities?
- What connects you, as a North American Jew, to Israeli Jews? To the State of Israel? To the Land of Israel?

Then, move into a discussion of A.B. Yehoshua's ideas:

- How would you summarize A.B. Yehoshua's basic argument?
- In your reading, what is the most provocative phrase or sentence from "The Meaning of Homeland"?
- What was your own immediate reaction to Yehoshua?

After participants have had the opportunity to share their thoughts, share with them that a range of prominent thinkers with Israel expertise articulated their own reactions to Yehoshua. We will explore those reactions now.

### ***Gallery of Ideas – 50 minutes***

Give out copies of Handout 8.4 and a pencil/pen for each participant. The names of each of the figures portrayed in the quotations gallery appears on the sheet, along side a number of brief questions.

Give people 20 minutes to stroll through the gallery, reading the excerpts, jotting down their responses, and reacting amongst themselves. (If appropriate for your participants, add to the gallery atmosphere by serving wine and cheese, and by playing the music of your choice for ambience.) Circulate the room yourself to ensure that any conversations stay on topic, and that all participants see all quotes.

From here, this session has two suggested options. You can either convene a discussion of participants' reactions to the ideas in the gallery, or you can have participants turn the Gallery of Ideas into a Gallery of Art by creating art pieces that reflect their thoughts on Israel-Diaspora relations.

#### **Option #1: Gallery Review Discussion**

When people have had the opportunity to do a round of the gallery and record their impressions, reconvene the group for discussion, using the following questions as a guide:

- Yehoshua implies that his Jewish identity as an Israeli is a "skin" as opposed to the Jewish identity of the non-Israeli Jew whose Jewishness is more like a "jacket." What does this metaphor mean? Is this a compelling metaphor? Are there parts of our identities that are more skin-like or jacket-like?

- What were the most and least convincing of the responses that you read in the quotations gallery? Why?
- Were there positions represented either by Yehoshua or by any of the respondents which reminded you of a particular experience/conversation from your time in Israel or with Israelis?
- Many of the excerpts stress the differences between Jewish life in Israel and Jewish life in the Diaspora. What are the things that bind us together—the shared areas of celebration and of concern?
- Think about your experience in Israel. What were your moments of celebration and concern as you traveled Israel and met Israelis? What were the moments where you felt the sense of difference between the Jewish experiences in Israel and in America? When did you have a sense of shared peoplehood?

### **Option #2: Art as Response**

If you are using Option Two, you may want to cut back on the time participants have in the gallery from 20 minutes to 10 or 15 minutes.

After people have had the opportunity to do a round of the gallery and record their impressions, ask participants to choose the quotation with which they most closely identify and to stand by that posting. Inform each group that they will have the next fifteen minutes to use the materials provided to produce a piece of art that reflects the sentiments of the quotation they have chosen. Group members should feel free to be as creative as they choose. (If there are quotations chosen by only one student, you may give those individual students the option to group together. You might want to help them group themselves based upon quotations with similar sentiments.)

Once the groups have had the chance to complete their art pieces, take a short tour of your newly refurbished gallery. Ask each group to explain what their piece reflects and how it is connected to the relevant quotation. Invite other participants to ask questions of the presenters.

### **Wrap Up – 10 minutes**

If you have used Option #2, you may want to incorporate some of the discussion questions listed in Option #1 into your wrap up, in place of or in addition to the questions listed below.

To close out the session, you can ask participants to reflect on the following:

- What is the most significant thing Diaspora Jews have to learn from Israelis?
- What is the most significant thing Israelis have to learn from Diaspora Jews?
- What are some ways in which those exchanges can take place?
- What are some of the biggest obstacles to each group learning from the other?
- Are there ways in which you want to incorporate elements of the answers to the above questions into your own Jewish experience?

### **Looking Ahead – 5 minutes**

In Session #9, we'll take a look back at the challenges the State of Israel has faced since it became independent 60 years ago and the challenges it faces going forward.

In anticipation of this session, participants should read Israel's Scroll of Independence before the session. It can be found in Handout 9.2 or online at one of the following sites:

- Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs - <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace%20Process/Guide%20to%20the%20Peace%20Process/Declaration%20of%20Establishment%20of%20State%20of%20Israel>

- The Avalon Project at Yale Law School - <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/israel.htm>

In addition, ask participants to think about the following from Handout 9.1:

- Certain documents or speeches continue to have an influence on society even decades, centuries or millennia after they are written, even though the words themselves do not change. Examples include Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, the Constitution and the Torah. What gives certain documents an ongoing sense of relevance?
- What historical documents do you have a particular emotional connection to?
- How do we deal with portions of the documents we find out-of-date?
- How do we incorporate important new ideas and concepts that the documents fail to address?

## **Reading Suggestions**

### ***On the Web:***

**Exodus and Exile: The Spaces of Diaspora.** (Osher Map Library, University of Southern Maine, 2002) <http://www.usm.maine.edu/maps/exhibit10/>

**The Jewish People as the Classic Diaspora: A Political Analysis,** Daniel Elazar (The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs). <http://www.jcpa.org/dje/articles2/classicdias.htm>

**The Jewish People Policy Planning Institute (JPPPI)** is an independent think tank incorporated in Israel as a non-profit corporation. The mission of the Institute is to promote the thriving of the Jewish people via professional strategic thinking and planning on issues of primary concern to world Jewry. JPPPI's work is based on deep commitment to the future of the Jewish people with Israel as its core state. <http://www.jpppi.org.il/>

**Second Thoughts about the Promised Land,** *The Economist* (11-1-2007) [http://www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=8516489](http://www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story_id=8516489)

### ***On the Shelf***

**Booking Passage: Exile & Homecoming in the Modern Jewish Imagination.** Sidra Ezrahi (Berkeley, 2000).

**Divergent Jewish Cultures : Israel And America.** Deborah Dash Moore & S. Ilan Troen, eds. (New Haven, 2001).

**Galut: Modern Jewish Reflections on Homelessness.** Arnold Eisen (Indianapolis, 1986).

**Irreconcilable Differences: The Waning of the American Jewish Love Affair with Israel.** Steven T. Rosenthal (Hanover, N.H., 2001).

**Powers Of Diaspora: Two Essays On The Relevance Of Jewish Culture.** Jonathan Boyarin & Daniel Boyarin (Minneapolis, 2002).



## Session #8

# Israel and the Diasporas: Centers and Peripheries in Jewish Life and Thought

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### Handout 8.1 – Pre-Session Questions

Our next session focuses on the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora. In preparation for our discussion, think about the following questions:

- Looking back at the sessions we've gone through so far, what are some of the differences between Jewish life in Israel and in North America? What are some of the similarities?
- What connects you, as a North American Jew, to Israeli Jews? To the State of Israel? To the Land of Israel?

Also, read Handout 8.2 and answer the following:

- How would you summarize A.B Yehoshua's basic argument?
- In your reading, what is the most provocative phrase or sentence from "The Meaning of Homeland"?



## Session #8

# Israel and the Diasporas: Centers and Peripheries in Jewish Life and Thought

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### Handout 8.1 – Prep Questions

Our next session focuses on the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora. In preparation for our discussion, think about the following questions:

- Looking back at the sessions we've gone through so far, what are some of the differences between Jewish life in Israel and in North America? What are some of the similarities?
- What connects you, as a North American Jew, to Israeli Jews? To the State of Israel? To the Land of Israel?

Also, read Handout 8.2 and answer the following:

- How would you summarize Yehoshua's basic argument?
- In your reading, what is the most provocative phrase or sentence from "The Meaning of Homeland"?





## Session #8

# Israel and the Diasporas: Centers and Peripheries in Jewish Life and Thought

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## Handout 8.2 – “Foreword” & “The Meaning of Homeland” Excerpts from: The A. B. Yehoshua Controversy

From the Dorothy And Julius Koppelman Institute On American Jewish-Israeli Relations American Jewish Committee - An Israel-Diaspora Dialogue On Jewishness, Israeliness, And Identity (*American Jewish Committee's Centennial Symposium, May 1-2, 2006*) [http://www.ajc.org/atf/cf/%7B42D75369-D582-4380-8395D25925B85EAF%7D/Yehoshua\\_Controversy\\_2006.pdf](http://www.ajc.org/atf/cf/%7B42D75369-D582-4380-8395D25925B85EAF%7D/Yehoshua_Controversy_2006.pdf).

### Foreword

AJC's Centennial Annual Meeting in Washington opened with a four-part symposium in which prominent Jewish intellectuals addressed the challenges of the Jewish future as well as the meaning of Jewish spirituality, community, and continuity.

The first panel was held at the Library of Congress on the evening of May 1, 2006, moderated by Ted Koppel, with discussants Cynthia Ozick, Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, Leon Wieseltier, and A.B. Yehoshua addressing the question, “What Will Become of the Jewish People?” The lion's share of the publicity centered on Yehoshua's highly emotional negation of the importance of the Diaspora and his prediction of its eventual disappearance.

*If ... in 100 years Israel will exist and ... I will come to the Diaspora [and] there will not be [any] Jews ... I will not cry ... I don't say I want it... But if ... Israel will disintegrate ... for me personally ... there is no alternative to be a post-Zionist Jew.... [Being] Israeli is my skin; it's not my jacket.*

He went further, accusing Diaspora Jews of “playing with Jewishness” because their decisions as Jews were made in American terms. He characterized this phenomenon as “plug and play” Judaism.

Yehoshua's remarks were met with an immediate outcry in Israeli newspapers and on the airwaves. Political leaders, journalists, academics, commentators, and others all took issue with Yehoshua. This discussion continues largely unabated. The intensity and depth of feeling in Israel is captured in this publication.

Yehoshua's statements drew an equally negative reaction in Washington. In ignoring the remarkable efforts of the American Jewish community to strengthen Jewish education and its connectedness to Israel, as well as the essential role of American Jews in reinforcing the America-Israel relationship, he failed to recognize that American Jewry is serious about its Jewish future and that the security and well-being of Israel depend on the vitality of American Jews.

Yehoshua's statements were not unexpected. He had said the same thing before. They reflect classic Zionism. In 1950 David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, in his exchange with AJC's president, Jacob Blaustein, declared that the “ingathering of exiles” pertained only to countries in which Jews were oppressed, not to Jews free to practice their religion and live openly as Jews in democratic nations. In a sense, then, Yehoshua was harking back to an earlier Zionist era and an ethos that was rejected in Israel virtually from its founding.

In fairness to Yehoshua, his Zion-centered views are very much a part of Jewish liturgy, not that this was foremost in his mind. After every meal at which bread is eaten, observant Jews say, “May the All Merciful break the yoke from off our neck and lead us upright to our land.” And the Amida, the foundation of the Jewish prayer service, includes among its benedictions the plea to the Almighty “to gather us from the



four corners of the earth.”

In response to the firestorm that his remarks produced, Yehoshua called Alfred Moses, AJC’s Centennial Celebration Chair, in Israel to apologize for the tone of his remarks. He had not intended to be vituperative, he said. He went further, explaining that the distinction he sought to make between Jews living in Israel and their fellow Jews in America was that actions by the Israeli government on such issues as the Disengagement, the treatment of Palestinians, and the location of Israel’s security fence become Jewish values, whereas the ways in which American Jews influence American policy on such issues as the Vietnam War, immigration, and even the war in Iraq become American, not Jewish, values.

Whether one agrees or disagrees with Yehoshua, we are grateful to him for challenging us to think more deeply about what it means to be living as a Jew in Israel and how this differs from the Jewish experience in America. In pondering this issue, we are ever mindful of the challenge for Jews in America to preserve Jewish content in our lives, to make the relevant absolute and the absolute relevant.

The essays that follow reveal the depth and intensity of what it is that binds and separates the two largest Jewish communities in the world, a topic that until now has not been seriously and widely considered in Israel.

*Leon Wieseltier  
Literary Editor  
The New Republic*

*Ambassador Alfred H. Moses  
Chair, Centennial Committee  
American Jewish Committee*

*Dr. Steven Bayme  
National Director  
Contemporary Jewish Life  
American Jewish Committee*

## The Meaning of Homeland

By A.B. Yehoshua

Just before I entered the hall for the symposium in Washington that inaugurated two days of discussions on the future of the Jewish people in light of the century that has passed since the founding of the host organization (American Jewish Committee), my youngest son phoned from Israel and told me about how moved he was by the memorial ceremony, in which he and his wife and toddler daughter had just taken part, for the fallen of Israel's wars. I made a brief comment to the panel's moderator about the fact that the symposium was taking place on the eve of Yom Hazikaron, Israel's Memorial Day, and I hoped that, amid the many congratulatory speeches at the start of the evening, this would be noted and that we might also all be asked to honor the Israeli Memorial Day, as customary, with a minute of silence. But this didn't happen. And Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israel's Independence Day, due to be marked the following day, received only faint and brief mention from the speakers.

I do not cite this as a grievance, but rather as a symptomatic example that may also explain my gloomy state of mind at that symposium, given that the deep and natural identification that a large portion of American Jewry once felt with Israeli life has been steadily and seriously weakening in recent years. All of the participants in the subsequent discussions agreed that, for some years now, a slow process of disengagement of American Jewry from Israel has been intensifying. The reasons are numerous and complex, and related both to the fact that the "Israeli drama" has lost many of its attractive features for American Jews, and to the accelerated processes of assimilation occurring to varying degrees within America itself.

### Missed opportunity

Even though the title of the symposium was "The Future of the Past: What Will Become of the Jewish People?" I may have been the only one to begin by talking about the failure of most of the Jewish people to foresee in the twentieth century the depth and vehemence of the hostility toward it, which eventually led to an annihilation unprecedented in human history. "The Jewish texts," which many Jews today consider to be the core of their identity, did not help us to understand better the processes of the reality around us. The Jews were too busy with mythology and theology instead of history, and therefore the straightforward warnings voiced by [Ze'ev] Jabotinsky and his colleagues in the early twentieth century—"Eliminate the Diaspora, or the Diaspora will surely eliminate you"—fell on deaf ears.

After Palestine was taken over by the British, the Balfour Declaration of 1917 promised a national home for the Jews, and if during the 1920s, when the country's gates were open wide, just a half million Jews had come (less than 5 percent of the Jewish people at that time) instead of the tiny number that actually did come, it certainly would have been possible to establish a Jewish state before the Holocaust on part of the Land of Israel. This state not only would have ended the Israeli-Arab conflict at an earlier stage and with less bloodshed—it also could have provided refuge in the 1930s to hundreds of thousands of Eastern European Jews who sensed the gathering storm, and thus would have significantly reduced the number of victims in the Holocaust.

The Zionist solution, which was proven as the best solution to the Jewish problem before the Holocaust—when the Communist revolution cut off Soviet Jewry, the gates of America were closed because of the Depression, and European democracies were destroyed by fascism and Nazism—was tragically missed by the Jewish people. And if it weren't for those few (less than half of 1 percent of world Jewry) people who, a hundred years ago, believed and actually sought the fulfillment of the need for the sovereign normalization of the Jewish people in its ancient homeland, the Jewish people could have found itself after the horrors of World War II just wandering among Holocaust museums, without even that piece of sovereign homeland that still offers some solace for the disaster that occurred.

But such a tough and piercing reckoning, coming from such an old-fashioned Zionist premise about our painful and tragic missed opportunity in the past century, is not welcome at the festive opening of a convention of a Jewish organization that, like many other Jewish organizations at the start of the twentieth century, shunned, if not actively opposed, the Zionist solution. Better to talk about all the Nobel Prizes and prestige garnered by Jews in the past century, about the intellectual achievements of Freud and Einstein, and about the tremendous contribution that Jews have made to Western culture. Therefore, right from the start, I felt like I was spoiling the nice, pleasant atmosphere with my anger. And instead of joining in the celebration of the wonderful spirituality of the Jewish identity, and

of the cultural renaissance in America, and instead of extolling the texts that we must learn and the Jewish values that we must inculcate, I tried nevertheless to outline at least a fundamental boundary between Jewish identity in Israel and Jewish identity in the Diaspora.

This is no easy task nowadays. Many Israelis would disagree with me as well. The basic concepts of Zionism have either been pulverized beyond recognition within the normality of sovereign life, or usurped in a distorted and grotesque way by fascist rightist ideologies or radical postmodernism.

And this is where the conflict between myself and my listeners arose. (Not with all of my listeners, actually. Some, mainly Jews who had some Israeli experience, came up to me after the discussion was over to express deep solidarity with what I'd said.)

I did not talk about “the negation of the Diaspora.” The Jewish Diaspora has existed ever since the Babylonian exile, about 2,500 years ago, and it will continue to exist for thousands more years. I have no doubt that in the future when outposts will be established in outer space, there will be Jews among them who will pray “Next year in Jerusalem” while electronically orienting their space synagogue toward Jerusalem on the globe of the earth. The Jew has a wonderful virtual ability to express his identity with consciousness alone. The lone Iraqi Jew in Baghdad after the American conquest or the two Jews sitting in Afghanistan are no more or less Jewish in their foundational identity than the chief rabbi of Israel or the president of the Jewish community in America. The Diaspora is the most solid fact in Jewish history; we know its cost, and we are aware of its accomplishments and failures in terms of Jewish continuity. In fact, the most harshly worded statements concerning its theological negation are to be found scattered in the “core” religious texts; there is no need for an Israeli writer to come to Washington to talk about the negation of the Diaspora.

All of the reports suggesting that I said that there can be no Jewishness except in Israel are utterly preposterous. No one would ever think of saying such an absurd thing. It is Israel and not the Diaspora that could be a passing episode in Jewish history, and this is the source of my compulsion to reiterate the old and plain truths that apparently need to be repeated again and again. Not just to Diaspora Jews, but to Israelis, too.

Jewish identity in Israel, which we call Israeli identity (as distinct from Israeli citizenship, which is shared by Arab citizens who also live in the shared homeland, though their national identity is Palestinian)—this Jewish-Israeli identity has to contend with all the elements of life via the binding and sovereign framework of a territorially defined state. And therefore the extent of its reach into life is immeasurably fuller and broader and more meaningful than the Jewishness of an American Jew, whose important and meaningful life decisions are made within the framework of his American nationality or citizenship. His Jewishness is voluntary and deliberate, and he may calibrate its pitch in accordance with his needs.

We in Israel live in a binding and inescapable relationship with one another, just as all members of a sovereign nation live together, for better or worse, in a binding relationship. We are governed by Jews. We pay taxes to Jews, are judged in Jewish courts, are called up to serve in the Jewish army, and compelled by Jews to defend settlements we didn't want or, alternatively, are forcibly expelled from settlements by Jews. Our economy is determined by Jews. Our social conditions are determined by Jews. And all the political, economic, cultural, and social decisions craft and shape our identity, which, although it contains some primary elements, is always in a dynamic process of changes and corrections. While this entails pain and frustration, there is also the pleasure of the freedom of being in your own home.

Homeland and national language and a binding framework are fundamental components of any person's national identity. Thus, I cannot point to a single Israeli who is assimilated, just as there is no Frenchman in France who is an assimilated Frenchman—even if he has never heard of Molière and has never been to the Louvre, and prefers soccer matches and horse races. I am sure, for example, that some of the British pilots who risked their lives in defense of London during World War II knew the names of the Manchester United players better than Shakespeare's plays, and yet no one would dare call them assimilated Britons.

### **Identity as a garment**

What I sought to explain to my American hosts, in overly blunt and harsh language perhaps, is that, for me, Jewish values are not located in a fancy spice box that is only opened to release its pleasing fragrance on Shabbat and holidays, but in the daily reality of dozens of problems through which Jewish values are shaped and defined, for better or worse. A religious Israeli Jew also deals with a

depth and breadth of life issues that is incomparably larger and more substantial than those with which his religious counterpart in New York or Antwerp must contend.

Am I denouncing their incomplete identity? I am neither denouncing nor praising. It's just a fact that requires no legitimating from me, just as my identity requires no legitimating from them. But since we see ourselves as belonging to one people, and since the two identities are interconnected, and flow into one another, the relation between them must be well clarified.

As long as it is clear to all of us that Israeli Jewish identity deals, for better or worse, with the full spectrum of the reality and that Diaspora Jewry deals only with parts of it, then at least the difference between whole and part is acknowledged. But the moment that Jews insist that involvement in the study and interpretation of texts, or in the organized activity of Jewish institutions, are equal to the totality of the social and political and economic reality that we in Israel are contending with—not only does the moral significance of the historic Jewish grappling with a total reality lose its validity, there is also the easy and convenient option of a constant flow from the whole to the partial.

Not by chance do more than half a million Israelis now live outside of Israel. If Jewish identity can feed itself on the study of texts and the mining of memories, and some occasional communal involvement—and as long as all those capable Chabad emissaries are supplying instant Jewish and religious services everywhere on the planet—what's the problem, in the global age, with taking the Israeli kids and exiling the whole family to some foreign high-tech mecca? After all, the core of the identity is eternal and accessible anywhere.

This is how Israeliness in the homeland will also become a garment that is removed and replaced with another garment in times of trouble, just as Romanian-ness and Polishness were replaced by Englishness and American-ness, and Tunisian-ness and Moroccan-ness were replaced by Frenchness and Canadian-ness. And in the future, in another century or two, when China is the leading superpower, why shouldn't some Jews exchange their American-ness or Canadian-ness for Chinese-ness or Singaporean-ness? Just think about it: Who would have believed in the sixteenth century that within 200 or 300 years, the Jews would be concentrated in an unknown land called America?

The Jews have proven their ability to live anywhere for thousands of years without losing their identity. And as long as the *goyim* don't cause too many problems, Jewish perseverance will not falter. If Israeliness is just a garment, and not a daily test of moral responsibility, for better or worse, of Jewish values, then it's no wonder that poverty is spreading, that the social gaps are widening, and that cruelty toward an occupied people is perpetrated easily and without pangs of conscience. Since it will always be possible to escape from the reality to the old texts, and to interpret them in such a way that will imbue us with greatness, hope, and consolation.

The national minority among us of the Palestinian Israelis, who share Israeli citizenship with us, could also make a contribution to this identity, just as American Jews contribute to the general American identity, and the Basques to the Spanish identity and the Romanian minority in Hungary to the Hungarian identity, and the Corsicans to the French, and so on. The more Israeli we are, the better the partnership we have with them. The more we concentrate solely on Jewish spirituality and texts, believing this to be of chief importance, the more the alienation between us grows.

### **The simple truth**

I keep bringing up the matter of texts, because in liberal Jewish circles this has recently become the most important anchor of identity, as evidenced by the return of manifestly secular people to the synagogue—not in order to find God, but to clutch onto identity. The struggle for Soviet Jewry is over; the Security Council will deal with Iran; there is nothing left but to return to the familiar and the known. As someone who has spent his whole life dealing with texts—writing, reading, and analyzing—I am incensed by the increasingly dangerous and irresponsible disconnection between the glorification of the texts and the mundane matters of daily life. Instead, I propose that we continue to nurture the concrete and living value of “the homeland,” rather than the dull and worn-out value of Jewish spirituality.

In all the Bible, the word *moledet* (homeland) is mentioned just twenty-two times, and many of these times in reference to other nations. The first sentence spoken to the first Jew is, “Go for yourself from your land, from your *moledet*, and from your father's house to the land that I will show you.” And throughout their long history, the Jews obeyed the first part of this imperative with great devotion, moving from one *moledet* to another with surprising ease. And the terrible end to these wanderings

needs no further mention.

If we don't want this kind of Jewish mindset (with the help of our Palestinian rivals for the homeland) to pull the rug out from under our feet, we ought to reiterate the basic, old concepts to Israelis just as much as to American Jews who, though they were offended by me, treated me with exemplary courtesy, perhaps because deep down, they felt that I was speaking the simple truth.

May 13, 2006

*Ha'aretz Magazine*

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### **An apology to those who attended the symposium**

Reverberations from the first evening of the conference have made me realize to my distress that a not insignificant portion of the audience was offended by the tone of my remarks, as well as by part of their content. I wish, therefore, to express to them my deepest apologies. Everything I said about the partial nature of Jewish life in the Diaspora as opposed to the all-inclusive nature of Jewish life in Israel has been said by me over the course of many years in the past, both in print and in addressing numerous Diaspora Jews. Never before did this lead to such an angry reaction as it did this time. Presumably, there was something in my tone and imprecise formulation that insulted part of the audience. I say "part," because there were also those who came up afterward to thank me— which does not, of course, compensate for the feelings of the others.

The debate between us is a basic one that goes to the root of things. But we are one people, and I have never ceased to stress this cardinal principle. Nor was there anything in what I said at the conference that called it into question. I am appending an article [see above] that I have written for the weekly magazine of the Hebrew newspaper *Ha'aretz*, in which I deal with my opinions on the matter in greater detail. And once gain, permit me to apologize to anyone whose feelings I have hurt.

A.B. Yehoshua

May 2006

### **A brief epilogue**

The storm that arose in the wake of my comments—scores of articles that were published, for and against, in the Diaspora and in Israel—testifies truthfully that my words roused (albeit without particular intention) a raw and dormant nerve. Everyone—those who objected and those who agreed with my comments—repeatedly asserted that: a) What I expressed was not new. I have repeated and publicized these views for many years in many places and have expressed them scores of times to the Jews of the Diaspora and Israel. (As Alfred Moses, the past president of the American Jewish Committee and Centennial chair, said, "I heard A.B. Yehoshua say the same things thirty years ago, and so I invited him... because I wanted a debate.") b) There was complete agreement among supporters and detractors of my views that it was very good that the debate on this age-old subject was rekindled.

Why the debate reignited with such force now calls out for a sociological and an ideological study both of the changes that have occurred in the concept of national identity in the world and how the importance and meaning of Zionism have lessened among the Jewish people. And here I wish to make one observation:

Two events of world importance took place during the twentieth century, only three years apart: A) the Holocaust, an event that has no parallel in human history, and B) the return of the Jewish people to its homeland after 2,000 years, also an unparalleled event in human history. In my estimation, the Jewish people have not yet fully digested the deep meaning of the failure of the Diaspora outlook as it was experienced during the Holocaust. And the Jewish people, including many Israelis, have not grasped the qualitative change that has occurred in Jewish identity with the return to complete sovereignty. Since the Diaspora mode of Jewish identity existed for more than 2,000 years, the qualitative change that has occurred within this identity with the establishment of the State of Israel has not yet been fully internalized.

Nevertheless, the fact that during the last seventy years the Jewish community in Israel has been transformed from less than 2.5 percent of world Jewry to almost 50 percent of that whole proves that,

despite all, the trend from partial Jewishness to complete Jewishness is natural and true.

A.B. Yehoshua  
August 2006

**A.B. Yehoshua is a prize-winning author of novels, short stories, plays, and essays, and a professor of literature at Haifa University.**



## Session #8

# Israel and the Diasporas: Centers and Peripheries in Jewish Life and Thought

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### Handout 8.3 – Gallery of Ideas

#### Assorted Excerpts From *The A. B. Yehoshua Controversy*

From the Dorothy And Julius Koppelman Institute On American Jewish-Israeli Relations American Jewish Committee - An Israel-Diaspora Dialogue On Jewishness, Israeliness, And Identity (*American Jewish Committee's Centennial Symposium, May 1-2, 2006.*)

[http://www.ajc.org/atf/cf/%7B42D75369-D582-4380-8395-D25925B85EAF%7D/Yehoushua\\_Controversy\\_2006.pdf](http://www.ajc.org/atf/cf/%7B42D75369-D582-4380-8395-D25925B85EAF%7D/Yehoushua_Controversy_2006.pdf)

**Quotations begin  
on the next page.**



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**However, there is a big difference between them and us.**

We are living a sovereign life as Jews not through voluntary organizations but rather as full citizens: the Hebrew language, the culture here, the knowledge of the Bible in its original language, and the celebration of the Jewish holidays as holidays of citizens in their own country and in the proper season. When we pray for rain, this is a prayer of need; we have no huge rivers and no Niagara Falls. There, they pray for rain for reasons of tradition and religion and perhaps, since the establishment of the state, for us.

As a conscious atheist, I would not willingly take upon myself rabbinic rule over my life as a citizen, and certainly not as a woman. However, I am glad that the rhythm of my life is determined by the Sabbath and Jewish holidays—determined by the country's laws, historical and cultural meaning, and solidarity with generations past and with all Jews, and not by religious coercion.... (p. 14)

**Shulamit Aloni** is a former member of Knesset from the Meretz Party, Israeli cabinet minister, and Israel Prize recipient.

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**Yet, sadly,** Yehoshua is correct in charging American Jews with failure. First, as AJC research on young American Jews recently demonstrated, in pronounced contrast to the narrative of the Holocaust, the narrative of Israel has not penetrated the consciousness of young Jews today. The very same young people for whom Holocaust memory is critical to their Jewish identity know astonishingly little of modern Israeli history and culture. Courses on the Holocaust have proliferated on American campuses while Israel studies have remained very much in incipient stages....

Yet Yehoshua erred in trivializing American Judaism. The resurgence of Orthodoxy, contrary to so many predictions of its demise, constitutes a remarkable statement of the viability of Judaism in the Diaspora if Jews are indeed committed to its preservation. The presence of diverse and pluralist options in defining one's Judaism in America constitutes a statement of Jewish vitality and strength rather than strictly a tribute to American democracy and separation of religion from state. Full-time Jewish education in a broad network of Jewish day schools is now available to more American Jews than ever before. Jews who avail themselves of these opportunities receive a strong Jewish education precisely at a time when leading Israelis are concerned about the weakness of Jewish education within Israel's school system.... (pp. 19-20)

**Steven Bayme** serves as director of the Dorothy and Julius Koppelman Institute on American Jewish- Israeli Relations at the American Jewish Committee.

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**Like Yehoshua**, I am a secular person, and like him, I believe that the true fulfillment of Zionism is normality—a normal life in the State of Israel, in the framework of which Jews can live like human beings able to fulfill themselves. Unlike Yehoshua, I see myself as first and foremost a Jew, and only afterward as an Israeli, though I must admit that this distinction is only intellectual: It does not have any practical significance in my private life because I have never been required, and I assume by now that I will never be required, to choose between the two.

My Judaism is my extended family, which I love and of which I am proud because I was born into it. I am always glad to meet a distant cousin, happy to listen to Hebrew, Ladino or Yiddish in unexpected places, and am moved to tears to hear someone recite “Hear, O Israel” in the furthest corner of the globe, because this is the slogan of my extended family. Religion, tradition, the many Jewish texts—all these are part of our self-definition, and even if they are not the be-all and end-all, dealing with them is important, and deepens Jewish identity.

**Yossi Beilin** is a member of Knesset and chairman of the Meretz-Yachad Party. (p. 22)

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**In a technological, mobile and accessible world**, in the global village of our day, a Jew living in New Jersey can hold a bar mitzvah for his son at the Western Wall, send his daughter to the Hebrew University for an education, use Skype to talk with friends in Tel Aviv, host in his home young Israelis who are going to be counselors at a Jewish summer camp, contribute to the establishment of student residences in Afula, take part in a project to advance youth in Dimona, and be involved in life in Israel through repeated visits to the country.

If we do not recognize this reality and the challenges it poses to the Jewish people, we might lose the entire campaign. Or give up in advance on our continued existence as a people, for which Israel is the experiential center and the source of identity.

**Ze'ev Bielski** is chairman of the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organization.

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**Yehoshua misleads his readers.** What makes our deeds Jewish is not the fact that they are done by Jews in the State of Israel. Our deeds are Jewish because they stem from a basic Jewish vision about the proper conduct of society and mankind. This is the vision that the Zionist movement sought to revivify through the “exemplary society” it set out to establish in the Land of Israel. Before we can go to the Jews of the Dispersion and offer them Israeli Judaism as the perfect ideal, there is a great deal of work to be done.

**Yair Caspi** directs the Psychology in Judaism program at Tel Aviv University.

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**The argument about Zionism** comes down to an argument about Judaism. If there is substance to Judaism, then the lack of Jewish selfconsciousness that Yehoshua appears to recommend is a defect; if there is no substance to Judaism that deserves recognition, if Judaism amounts to no more than Israeliness, then we here are meaningless as Jews (and doubly so as “Zionists”).

The late Ben Halpern once wrote of a distinction between “Exile” and “exile.” The lower-case “exile” is a geographic allusion. It comes to distinguish between Jews inside the Land and those outside it. That exile is anywhere that is not Israel. The upper case “Exile” is an existential description. So long as the world remains unrepaired, all of us are in that Exile, whether we live in Boston or in Jerusalem.

**Leonard Fein** is a writer and teacher who founded Moment magazine, Mazon: The Jewish Response to Hunger, and the National Jewish Coalition for Literacy. (p.34)

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**Instead the debate rages between two groups:** those who believe that Israel has afforded a renewed opportunity to the sons and daughters of the Jewish people to reenter history not just as individuals, but rather as a significant collective with a common cultural vision; and those who do not at all grasp the significance of renewed Jewish entry into history as a collective with a vision, and content themselves with passive Jewish continuity outside of history. The latter choose to believe that there is no far-reaching existential difference between the Jews who are citizens of the State of Israel and the Jews who are citizens of the various countries of the Diaspora; in both cases it is a matter of individuals who have certain preferences and nothing more. In their view, then, the Diaspora solution of Babylonia is as satisfactory and as existentially adequate with respect to Judaism as is the Israeli solution. Indeed, perhaps it even has a moral advantage in that it does not entail the complications of Israel as having harmed and as still harming the Palestinians' existence.

**Tzvia Greenfield** is the head of the Mifne (Turning Point) Institute for Democracy and Judaism. (p.39)

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**Israel is the only place in the world** in which one can live a Jewish life that is total—in which, that is, there is no compartmentalization between the inner and the outer, between what is Jewish and what is not. It is the only place in the world in which Jews are totally responsible for the society they live in, for the environment that surrounds them, for the government that rules them. It is the only place in the world where Jewish culture is not a subculture in a greater culture but is rather that greater culture itself. It is the real thing and by comparison, Jewish life in America, or anywhere else in the Diaspora, as dedicated and committed as it may be, indeed seems like a kind of play-acting. Why would a truly dedicated and committed Jew want to live anywhere but in a Jewish state?

**Hillel Halkin** is an author and translator whose most recent book is *Across the Sabbath River: In Search of a Lost Tribe of Israel*. (p.42)

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**The grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the pioneers** who settled Israel as well as the hundreds of thousands of Russian and Ethiopian olim are receiving no basic understanding of what being a Jew—not an Israeli—means.

At the same time, the religious control of Israel cannot be left entirely in the hands of a religious establishment that is basically intolerant, insensitive, and uncompromising in its attitude toward religious pluralism as practiced in America as well as among many portions of European Jewry. The Israeli rabbinate must become far more willing to work with nonobservant Jews than it is today. The specific modalities to be developed must reflect not only a commitment to halakha but also religious creativity and boldness. Israeli rabbis must pledge themselves to a far greater sensitivity to those not like themselves. The Israeli rabbinical establishment is still viewed by large portions of Diaspora Jews as well as by secular Israelis as controlling their lives (kashrut and Shabbat closures), extorting funds (for yeshivot and institutions in repayment for political favors), and monopolizing life-cycle events.

Recognizing this, Israel must become much more hospitable and open to the Diaspora's forms of Judaism: a more religious one than most Israelis, a more religiously knowledgeable one than most Israelis, but also a less nationalistic one than Israel's.

**Gilbert N. Kahn** is a professor of political science at Kean University in Union, New Jersey. (p.44)

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**If we concede A.B. Yehoshua’s claim that Israel is the source** of Jewish identity in today’s world, we reduce Jewish identity to a conversation between anti-Semitism and a blood-and-soil nationalism that is Jewish only in the sense that anti-Semites use the term, i.e., racial. But if, instead, we define “Jewish” on the basis of the universal ethical challenges at the core of Judaism, then not only is the Diaspora an essential condition of Jewishness, but Israel’s own claim to a Jewish identity is open to question.

The idea that the modern State of Israel expresses some ageless desire among Jews across the Diaspora to live in a Jewish nation state is wishful thinking. Before the Holocaust, Zionism had been a minority tendency among Western Jews, and scarcely existed among those living in the Muslim world. And a half century after Israel’s emergence, most of us choose freely to live, as Jews have for centuries, among the nations. That choice is becoming increasingly popular among Israeli Jews, too:

750,000 at last count—hardly surprising in an age of accelerated globalization that feeds dozens of diasporas and scorns national boundaries.

**Tony Karon** is a senior editor at TIME.com. (p.45)

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**What significance is there to the fact the taxi driver in Israel is Jewish or Arab**, and in New York he is from Bangladesh? This has no effect on my life! Is an Israeli Jew who goes to the beach on the first day of Passover more Jewish than a Jew from New York who goes to the synagogue on that day?

Hebrew is certainly a significant factor. It is definitely easier to understand the traditional sources and Jewish thinking overall in Hebrew. But if a person has no connection to the sources, that is of no significance because the language is only a means of getting closer to the sources.

**Alfred H. Moses**, a past president of the American Jewish Committee and chair of its Centennial Committee, is a partner in the Covington and Burling law firm and a former U.S. ambassador to Romania. (p.48)

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But American Jewry, with all of its problems of assimilation, is not yet ready to disappear. Its political clout, wealth, stature and Jewish renaissance among a significant minority assure it a key role in the decades ahead. And Israel, though robust in many ways, is raising a younger generation that is largely unaware of, uninterested in and uneducated about its Jewish history, heritage and culture, and its connections to the Jewish people around the world.

The disturbing fact is that Israelis are not immune from Jewish assimilation.

**Gary Rosenblatt** is the editor and publisher of the New York Jewish Week. (p.52)

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**Does everyone in Israel think that way?** And my answer is: No, I don't think like my friend. If in his wrathful sermon he was trying to ask, "What is a Jew?" a far more important question than "Who is a Jew?"—then there is nothing in this tirade but vain arrogance. In many respects, the Jewish community in the United States is more Jewish than the Jewish "community" in Israel, and there is no reason for it to suffer from an inferiority complex.

Look, during just this past month Jews tried to awaken and stimulate American and international public opinion, which has been drowsily ignoring the genocide in Darfur, whereas here, in the land of the survivor and the remnants, not a peep has been heard. Here, before we deport them, we lock up 150 Sudanese refugees from the sword, who are fleeing from their slaughterers. From Nicholas Kristof in the *International Herald Tribune*, I learned of a girl in Philadelphia, Rachel Kuretsky, who instead of a bat mitzvah party, organized a large rally in her city and has already, with the help of her peers, raised \$14,000 for the victims in Darfur. Where are there other children like this girl?

And many good Jews showed up last week in support of the illegal workers in America—11 million people who can be expected to be used and then thrown away. But what happens in Israel? The Jewish Immigration Authority traps foreign workers as though they were animals, making life a misery for entire families, and no one says a word. So what is more Jewish, what happens there or what happens here?

**Yossi Sarid** writes a weekly column for Ha'aretz and is a former member of Knesset from the Meretz-Yachad Party. (p.53)

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**The difference between Israeli identity according to Yehoshua** and Jewish identity is exactly the difference between the fact of existence and the right to exist. The difference is between a group of people that lives on a piece of land and speaks the Hebrew language, and the descendants of a people that is scattered throughout the world, who have returned to their historic homeland.

If, heaven forbid, we cut ourselves off from the chain that links us to the Jewish people, if we cut ourselves off from 3,000 years of Judaism, if we cut ourselves off from being the realization of 2,000 years of Jewish hope—for next year in Jerusalem—then we will lose the right to our existence. And in losing that right, we will be lost.

Perhaps the Jews of the Diaspora were insulted by Yehoshua's blunt remarks, but we, the Jews of the Land of Israel, we must rise up against them, for this is a matter of the very fact of our existence.

**Natan Sharansky** is a member of Knesset from the Likud Party and a distinguished fellow at the Shalem Institute in Jerusalem. (p.56)

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**The decision not to immigrate** also casts doubt on whether Diaspora Jewry is truly willing to deal with what it ostensibly defines as its existential problem: assimilation. After all, for all the problems with Israelis' relationship to Jewish tradition, immigration to Israel is still surely the simplest and most effective way to cope with the problem of assimilation.

Nevertheless, most Diaspora Jews choose not to immigrate, and thereby testify that even if they are genuinely troubled by assimilation, their personal comfort is more important to them. This choice affects not only the question of immigration to Israel, but also internal Jewish issues. It is reflected, for example, in the reluctance of many Jewish leaders worldwide to speak openly against intermarriage, out of fear that this will generate tension with their non-Jewish environment.

Historically, Jewish existence was based on the clear decision that for all the Jews' (positive) desire to integrate into their environment, such integration would be only up to the point where it began to endanger Jewish identity.

Today, the pyramid has been inverted: Even most Jews who are interested in a Jewish identity are willing to invest in it only to the degree that it does not endanger—or even raise the specter of doing so in the future—their integration into society. Without a strategic re-inversion of this hierarchy of values, it is doubtful that all the projects, resources, and energy of many good people will be of any avail—and Jewish identity is liable, in the best case, to become a pleasant ethnic folkway, if it does not disappear entirely.

**Yair Sheleg**, an Israeli journalist, is a member of the editorial board of Ha'aretz and a researcher at the Israel Democracy Institute. (P. 57)

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## Session #8

# Israel and the Diasporas: Centers and Peripheries in Jewish Life and Thought

### Handout 8.4 – Reactions to A.B. Yehoshua – Gallery of Ideas

From the List below, choose **the three points of view that you most agree with** and **the three points of view that you most disagree with**:

| Author           | Most Agree With... | Most Disagree With... |
|------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Shulamit Aloni   |                    |                       |
| Steven Bayme     |                    |                       |
| Yossi Beilin     |                    |                       |
| Ze'ev Bielski    |                    |                       |
| Yair Caspi       |                    |                       |
| Leonard Fein     |                    |                       |
| Tzvia Greenfield |                    |                       |
| Hillel Halkin    |                    |                       |
| Gilbert N. Kahn  |                    |                       |
| Tony Karon       |                    |                       |
| Alfred H. Moses  |                    |                       |
| Gary Rosenblatt  |                    |                       |
| Yossi Sarid      |                    |                       |
| Natan Sharansky  |                    |                       |
| Yair Sheleg      |                    |                       |



**Write down the sentence or phrase from the above authors that...**

...I most agree with: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

...I most disagree with: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

...most surprised or shocked me: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

...reminds me of someone who I know personally: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

...I can connect with an experience from my own experience with Israel: \_\_\_\_\_

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★ Israel

**Session #9**

# **Israel Towards the Next Sixty: Old and New Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

**makōm מקום**  
Israel. In Real Life



The talkspace: Israel curriculum is a collaboration of Scott Copeland, Clare Goldwater, Seth Goren, Doron Rubin, and Robin Weber and a co-production of Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Student Life and the Jewish Agency for Israel's Makom Israel Engagement Network. © February, 2008





## Session #9

# Israel Towards the Next 60: Old and New Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

### Introduction:

As we near the end of talkspace: Israel, we have explored and learned about a wide variety of topics. We have covered some of the history and theory behind Zionism and Israel's relationship to Jewish identity. We have also examined specific issues of immigration, Arab-Israeli co-existence, and the presence of violent conflict in Israeli society. In this session, we will take a step back from individual issues and again look at Israel's big picture. What was the vision of Israel's Founders? How well have we achieved that vision? And what concerns and ideals should guide Israel in the future?

Israel's Scroll of Independence articulates a vision of Israel based on certain fundamental values: the State of Israel as both a "Jewish State" ("תִּירוּהֵי הַיְהוּדִים" – "Medinah Yehudit") and as a democracy that guarantees equality of individual citizens and basic freedoms of religion, conscience, and culture. It is a document both inspirational and aspirational; a source of historic communal meaning as well as a measure of Israel's attempts and abilities to meet ongoing challenges.

Today we will explore the vision embodied in the text, and consider how the Scroll of Independence might be a litmus test for Israel today. What current challenges could the Scroll, as a text composed in a specific historic context, not have foreseen? What issues does Israel need to grapple with looking back over the last 60 years and towards the next 60? And what is our own role in this process?

### Session Outline:

| Segment   | Suggested Time     | Description  |
|---|--------------------|--|
| <i>Israel Update</i>  | <i>5 minutes</i>   | Designated student reports on Israeli current events   |
| <i>Opening Discussion</i>                                   | <i>10 minutes</i>  | Introduce the session with a discussion of the questions on Handout 9.1 that participants thought about in preparation for the session |
| <i>Editing Israel's Scroll of Independence – Group Work</i> | <i>25 minutes</i>  | Groups rank the importance of ideas in Israel's Scroll of Independence   |
| <i>Editing Israel's Scroll of Independence - Discussion</i> | <i>25 minutes</i>  | Discuss groups' rankings<br>Reflect on the differences between the circumstances facing the Founders in 1948 and those facing us now   |
| <i>Towards the Next 60</i>                                  | <i>Time Varies</i> | Reflect on Ruth Gavison's article about priorities for Israel's future<br>OR<br>Discuss your group's plans for celebrating Israel@60   |
| <i>Looking Ahead</i>  | <i>5 minutes</i>   | Ask participants to bring the essays they wrote for Session #1 entitled "What Israel Means to Me"                                      |



## **Success Checklist**

At the end of the session, affirmative answers to these questions will help you know you've been successful:

- Did participants consider the vision and intentions of Israel's Founders upon the writing of the Scroll of Independence? Did they identify the ways in which circumstances facing Israel have changed since the original writing of the Scroll?
- Did participants articulate the values and priorities that they themselves think should shape Israeli society?
- Did participants recognize the tensions inherent in maintaining a truly democratic society that nonetheless reflects and honors Jewish history and peoplehood?
- Did participants debate different perspectives on Israel's priorities?
- Did participants consider their own role in working toward their personal vision for Israel?

## **Pre-Session Assignment:**

Before this session, participants were asked to consider the questions on Handout 9.1, and to read over the text of Israel's Scroll of Independence on Handout 9.2. If you intend to follow Option #1 in the Towards the Next 60 section at the end of this session, you may have also asked them to read Handout 9.4, an excerpt from an article by Ruth Gavison.

## **Preparation:**

### ***Facilitation***

Read over this facilitation guide and make sure you are comfortable with all of the material. Acquaint yourself with the ideas in the Scroll of Independence, and with Ruth Gavison's article.

If you want to know more about the themes of this session, check out the suggestions for further reading listed at the end of the facilitation guide for this session.

### ***Materials***

- For the session, prepare envelopes (enough for groups of 3 to share) with slips of paper identifying 10 separate ideas/values central to the Scroll of Independence. Photocopy Handout 9.3 and cut apart the ideas there. Or, alternatively, you can make your own list. (A third option is for each participant or group to make their own list of the central ideas that they saw embodied in the document; this option requires you to bring paper, pens and scissors to the session.)
- Make sure you have your own un-cut copy of Handouts 9.3 on hand to reference during discussion.
- If you plan to use it (see options below) and if you haven't already distributed it before the session, photocopy Handout 9.4 for each participant
- You may want a flip chart or similar to record ideas that small groups report to the larger group, or to streamline planning for your Israel @ 60 celebration (Option #2 at the end of the session).

## **Session Implementation/Description:**

### ***Israel Update – 5 minutes***

Before launching into the talkspace: Israel content for the session, make time for the participant(s) signed up for the week to present an update on Israeli current events. Including this segment in each session will help talkspace: Israel participants connect the content of the program to the facts of Israel's present-day existence.

### **Opening Discussion – 10 minutes**

Open the session by looking at the questions on Handout 9.1 that participants considered before gathering today. That handout said:

Certain documents or speeches continue to have an influence on society even decades, centuries or millennia after they are written, even though the words themselves do not change. Examples include Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, the Constitution and the Torah.

- What gives certain documents, like those mentioned above, an ongoing sense of relevance?
- What historical documents do you have a particular emotional connection to?
- How do we deal with portions of the documents we find out-of-date?
- How do we incorporate important new ideas and concepts that the documents fail to address?

Share with participants that Israel’s Scroll of Independence is a document like the ones you’ve been discussing. It serves as a foundation for Israeli society and is often implicated in conversations about Israel’s values. However, there are elements of its contents (or lack thereof) that some people might find problematic. The rest of the session will be spent engaging the text of the Scroll, and participants’ ideas about the values and concepts most important to Israel’s identity as a state.

### **Editing Israel’s Scroll of Independence – Group Work – 25 minutes**

To grapple with the text of the Scroll, divide participants into small groups (3-4 members per group). Each group receives one of the envelopes you prepared ahead of time with slips of paper articulating main points of Israel’s Scroll of Independence.

*Facilitator’s Option: Instead of handing out envelopes you can ask groups to create their own list of the 10 main ideas from the Scroll of Independence, then list their own ten points on slips of paper. Note that creating this list may take a significant amount of time.*

Instruct each group to read through the slips of paper and place them in order from most important to least important with regard to their own vision for the State of Israel. If participants ask, you can let them remove ideas represented on the slips they were given—but any item removed should be replaced by another idea that the group identifies as important to their vision of Israel. Similarly, if a group asks about adding something to the list of ideas they can do so, but they must take away one of the pre-written slips.

As groups tackle this challenge, they will inevitably get into interesting conversations among themselves. Leave ample time for each group to grapple with the ideas and attempt to resolve their disagreements.

*Trouble-shooting: If two groups finish particularly quickly, you can have them get together and attempt to merge their lists.*

### **Editing Israel’s Scroll of Independence – Discussion – 25 minutes**

After each group discusses and ranks the ideas in front of them, come back together as a big group. Ask one representative from each group to share the top idea on their list, and to share one challenge they faced or idea they had trouble with during the process.

*Facilitator’s Note: Make sure you have your own copy of Handout 9.3 on hand to reference as participants talk about ideas on their lists.*

As groups present, highlight similarities and differences that you see among their reports.

Then, shift into one large group discussion about the ideas represented in the Scroll and their relevance today. Allow for a chunk of time for participants simply to debate among themselves which ideas were most and least important.

Here are some additional questions to propel the discussion. As you ask them, ensure that you encourage participants to respond to each other’s comments:

- Was there an over-arching principle that structured the order in which your group ranked these ideas?

- How did you tackle the task of ranking the concepts in the Scroll of Independence?
- Were there ideas from the Scroll that you completely disagreed with?
- Were there ideas missing from the list you were given originally? Did you want to add anything?
- You all read the original Scroll of Independence before this session. Do you think your priorities differ from those of the Founders?
- Based on our readings of the Scroll and your familiarity with Israel, what have been the areas where Israel has best fulfilled the values declared in the Scroll? And where are the places where Israel still needs to work towards fulfilling the Scroll?
- The original Scroll was written at a very different time in history. In 1948, the Founders could not have anticipated all of the issues that might arise during Israel's first six decades of existence. How have circumstances changed over the intervening 60 years? What major areas of concern have arisen for the State of Israel, for world Jewry, for the Middle East, and for humanity?
- How do you think the State of Israel could and should address some of these issues?
- Does today's climate require that the leaders of Israel have priorities different from those of the Founders? In what ways?
- If the Scroll of Independence were re-written today to articulate a vision for Israel, what new ideas do you think would be included?

We have spent the bulk of today looking at the Founders' vision for Israel 60 years ago, and considering it in light of today's circumstances. We now turn to the future, and think about participants' roles in advancing the values of Israel as we head toward the next 60 years of Israel's future.

### ***Towards the Next 60 – Time Varies (Options)***

If the above discussion has left time for this forward-thinking portion of the session you have two options. The first is more intellectual, and the second more practical:

#### **Option #1: Discussion of Ruth Gavison Article – 10 minutes**

There is no doubt that the State of Israel has faced, and continues to face profound challenges. On Handout 9.4, you will find the writings of Ruth Gavison, one of Israel's leading public intellectuals, legal figures, and past chairperson and president of the Israel Association for Civil Rights. Gavison is sober, yet at the same time hopeful about Israel's future. If you have not assigned the article as a pre-session reading assignment, distribute it now, and have participants read it on their own, in pairs, or as a large group. Then discuss the following (also listed in Handout 9.4):

- What is Gavison's general outlook on Israel's future? On what does she base her hopefulness?
- What are Gavison's priorities for Israel?
- What does she say is the job of "our generation" with regard to Israel's future? How can we be successful in accomplishing this?
- Do you agree with Gavison's assessment of Israel's priorities? Do you agree with the charge she gives to "our generation"?
- What else can you, personally, do to work toward your own vision for Israel?

#### ***Option #2: Planning Your Campus Israel @ 60 Celebration – Flexible time***

As a part of the talkspace: Israel program, your group will be implementing a concluding project. For many groups, this project will take the shape of a large-scale Israel@60 celebration. The end of this session offers a smooth segue to the planning of your event. Although you probably will have started preparations in advance of this session, now might be a good time to check in about the goals and content of your event. Questions that can frame the conversation include:

- As you think about your own vision for Israel's next 60 years, what messages are important to communicate to the greater community?
- What picture of Israel do we want to paint for the community?
- In what ways can our event reinforce our vision for Israel's future?
- Can our celebration include elements that will directly contribute to Israel's wellbeing and betterment?
- What concrete steps will we take to put our plan into action?

### ***Looking Ahead to Session #10 – 5 minutes***

Today, we took a step back to look at Israel as a whole. Given what we have learned about Israel, we asked whether the past 60 years have live up to the Founders' vision, and we asked what our vision is for the 60 years to come. The next session will be the final gathering for the talkspace: Israel group (aside from any planning meetings necessary for your culminating project). In that session, we will turn our reflection inward to identify what participants learned over the course of the program, and take stock of how the program has affected them (so far).

Ask participants to bring to the next session the essays that they wrote for the first session entitled "What Israel Means to Me."

### **Reading Suggestions**

#### ***On the Web:***

**Text Study 1998 Megillat Ha'atsma'ut --Israel's Declaration of Independence after 50 Years**, *The Journal of Textual Reasoning* (Volume 7/1998)  
<http://etext.virginia.edu/journals/tr/archive/volume7/index.html>.

**The 2006 Israeli Democracy Index**. Asher Arian, Nir Atmor, Yael Hadar, The Israel Democracy Institute.  
<http://www.idi.org.il/english/catalog.asp?pdid=564&did=50>

**The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel**. Prof. E. Gutmann, *The Jewish Virtual Library*. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/decind.html>

**The State of Israel Declares Independence**. Shelley Kleiman *The Israel Review of Arts and Letters* (1998/107-8) [http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/1990\\_1999/1999/4/Shelley%20Kleiman%20-%20The%20State%20of%20Israel%20Declares%20Ind](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/1990_1999/1999/4/Shelley%20Kleiman%20-%20The%20State%20of%20Israel%20Declares%20Ind).

#### ***On the Shelf:***

**To Be A Free People: The Saga of Israel**. Michael Bar Zohar (Magal Books, 2005).



## Session #9

# Israel Towards the Next 60: Old and New Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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## Handout 9.1 – Pre-Session Questions

In preparation for Session #9, consider the following:

Certain documents or speeches continue to have an influence on society even decades, centuries or millennia after they are written, even though the words themselves do not change. Examples include Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, the Constitution and the Torah.

- What gives certain documents an ongoing sense of relevance?
- What historical documents do you have a particular emotional connection to?
- How do we deal with portions of the documents we find out-of-date?
- How do we incorporate important new ideas and concepts that the documents fail to address?



## Session #9

# Israel Towards the Next 60: Old and New Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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- How do we incorporate important new ideas and concepts that the documents fail to address?



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**Handout 9.2****Scroll of Israel's Independence**

Issued at Tel Aviv on May 14, 1948 (5<sup>th</sup> of Iyar, 5708)

אֶרֶץ-יִשְׂרָאֵל [ - rieht ereH .elpoep hsiweJ eht fo ecalphtrib eht saw [learsl fo dnaL ehT ארץ ישראל] spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books. After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people remained faithful to it throughout their Dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom.

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

In the year 5657 (1897), at the summons of the spiritual father of the Jewish State, Theodore Herzl, the First Zionist Congress convened and proclaimed the right of the Jewish people to national rebirth in its own country.

This right was recognized in the **Balfour Declaration** of the 2nd November, 1917, and re-affirmed in the Mandate of the League of Nations which, in particular, gave international sanction to the historic connection between the Jewish people and Eretz-Israel and to the right of the Jewish people to rebuild its National Home.

The catastrophe which recently befell the Jewish people - the massacre of millions of Jews in Europe - was another clear demonstration of the urgency of solving the problem of its homelessness by re-establishing in Eretz-Israel the Jewish State, which would open the gates of the homeland wide to every Jew and confer upon the Jewish people the status of a fully privileged member of the comity of nations.

Survivors of the Nazi holocaust in Europe, as well as Jews from other parts of the world, continued to migrate to Eretz-Israel, undaunted by difficulties, restrictions and dangers, and never ceased to assert their right to a life of dignity, freedom and honest toil in their national homeland.

In the Second World War, the Jewish community of this country contributed its full share to the struggle of the freedom- and peace-loving nations against the forces of Nazi wickedness and, by the blood of its soldiers and its war effort, gained the right to be reckoned among the peoples who founded the United Nations.

On the 29th November, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly passed a **resolution** calling for the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz-Israel; the General Assembly required the inhabitants of Eretz-Israel to take such steps as were necessary on their part for the implementation of that resolution. This recognition by the United Nations of the right of the Jewish people to establish their State is irrevocable.

This right is the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State.

Accordingly we, members of the people's council, representatives of the Jewish community of Eretz-Israel and of the Zionist movement, are here assembled on the day of the termination of the British mandate over Eretz-Israel and, by virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the united nations general assembly, hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the state of Israel.

WE DECLARE that, with effect from the moment of the termination of the Mandate being tonight, the eve of Sabbath, the 6th Iyar, 5708 (15th May, 1948), until the establishment of the elected, regular authorities of the State in accordance with the Constitution which shall be adopted by the Elected Constituent Assembly not later than the 1st October 1948, the People's Council shall act as a Provisional Council of State, and its executive organ, the People's Administration, shall be the Provisional Government of the Jewish State, to be called "Israel".

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

THE STATE OF ISRAEL is prepared to cooperate with the agencies and representatives of the United Nations in implementing the **resolution** of the General Assembly of the 29th November, 1947, and will take steps to bring about the economic union of the whole of Eretz-Israel.

WE APPEAL to the United Nations to assist the Jewish people in the building-up of its State and to receive the State of Israel into the comity of nations.

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

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

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

Placing our trust in the almighty, we affix our signatures to this proclamation at this session of the provisional council of state, on the soil of the homeland, in the city of Tel Aviv, on this Sabbath eve, the 5th day of Iyar, 5708 (14th May, 1948).

David Ben  
Gurion  
Daniel Auster  
Mordekhai  
Bentov  
Yitzchak Ben Zvi  
Eliyahu Berligne  
Fritz Bernstein  
Rabbi Wolf Gold  
Meir Grabovsky  
Yitzchak  
Gruenbaum  
Dr. Abraham  
Granovsky  
Eliyahu Dobkin  
Meir Wilner-  
Kovner  
Zerach  
Wahrhaftig  
Herzl Vardi  
Rachel Cohen  
Rabbi Kalman

Kahana  
Saadia  
Kobashi  
Rabbi Yitzchak  
Meir Levin  
Meir David  
Loewenstein  
Zvi Luria  
Golda  
Myerson  
Nachum Nir  
Zvi Segal  
Rabbi Yehuda  
Leib Hacohen  
Fishman  
David Zvi  
Pinkas  
Aharon Zisling  
Moshe  
Kolodny  
Eliezer Kaplan  
Abraham  
Katznelson  
Felix

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David  
Remez  
Berl  
Repetur  
Mordekh  
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Shattner  
Ben Zion  
Sternber  
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Bekhor  
Shitreet  
Moshe  
Shapira  
Moshe  
Shertok

Text taken from The Avalon Project at Yale Law School,  
<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/israel.htm>.



## Session #9

# Israel Towards the Next 60: Old and New Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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## Handout 9.3 – Central Ideas of Israel’s Scroll of Independence

The Land of Israel is a central element of Jewish memory, identification, and solidarity.

Any and all Jews possess the right to make the State of Israel their home.

The State of Israel is the fulfillment of the Jewish longing to return home after thousands of years of Exile.

Basic freedoms – of religion, of conscience, of culture, etc. – will be equally protected for all citizens of the State of Israel; Israel will safeguard the holy places of all religions.

The right of the Jewish people to a state of their own is a combination of particular historic rights and of the universal human right of national self determination.

The State of Israel will act as a responsible member of the international community; in accordance with international law, and with all the rights and obligations of a member state of the United Nations.

The Holocaust was a central factor in establishing the State of Israel.

The State of Israel will strive for peaceful relations and cooperation with its' neighbors.

All Israeli citizens will enjoy full and equal citizenship and due representation in all state institutions, and all Israeli citizens will benefit equally from the development of the country; in return, all citizens should work to preserve peace and to build up the State.

The Jews of the Diaspora are expected to assist the State of Israel in strengthening and enriching the life of Israeli society; including through immigration.





## Session #9

# Israel Towards the Next 60: Old and New Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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## Handout 9.4

### Excerpt, *The Jews' Right to Statehood: A Defense*

By Ruth Gavison<sup>15</sup>

Azure, Summer 5763 / 2003, No. 15

<http://www.azure.org.il/magazine/magazine.asp?id=188>

If we are to dispel the fog of pessimism that has recently settled over the Zionist enterprise, then, we will have to begin with a clearheaded approach. There is no point in denying that the State of Israel faces profound internal and external challenges. Israeli society is increasingly divided by economic disparity and conflicts between Jew and non-Jew, secular and religious, Left and Right. Yet the Jewish state is, in many respects, a major success, particularly when one considers the circumstances with which it must contend. In terms of democracy, Israel is far ahead of its neighbors, and far ahead of where it was in its early years. Israel's economy and its scientific achievements place it among the world's most developed countries. It boasts an open, self-critical society with considerable political freedom, and its rule of law and judicial independence rival those of the healthiest democracies. And these successes have come without the benefit of the rich natural resources found in other countries, including Israel's Arab neighbors. True, Israel has not yet achieved a stable peace with many of its neighbors. We should continue to make such an agreement our goal, while remembering that its achievement does not depend on Israel alone. In the meantime, we can look back with pride and forward with hope. Israel has a great deal to offer its citizens, both Jews and Arabs.

For now, Israel is the state of the Jewish people. In the present circumstances it is justified in being so, and I hope that it will take the necessary steps to preserve this status in the future. This is no small aspiration: The history of the land of Israel is strewn with the remains of many peoples and cultures. Israel's Jewish majority need not apologize for seeking to retain the Jewish identity of the state, but it must recognize the rights of Palestinians living between the Mediterranean and the Jordan. This includes their right to express their own unique identity both through an independent state of their own alongside Israel, and as a minority within the Jewish state. This issue cannot be wished away; it must be addressed in a way that is both effective and moral.

The hope that the Jews of Israel will become more culturally homogeneous is also pure fantasy. Israel will never be either wholly secular or wholly religious, wholly East or wholly West. Israel will never be a Western European country, nor will it be a typical Levantine one. But the tensions that arise from these various dualities are hardly to Israel's detriment: The strength of Israeli society is derived from the combination of its elements, and this carries an important lesson for the state's future. Israel must struggle to protect the unique combination of cultures, traditions, and identities that make up the Jewish state. Every group should feel at home, and no one group should be capable of imposing its ways on others. If we are wise enough to uphold this principle, it will not only serve the ends of the majority, but also safeguard the uniqueness of the minorities.

"It is not for us to finish the job," we are told by the rabbis of the Talmud.<sup>33</sup> Our generation is not responsible for establishing a Jewish state; rather, we are responsible for preserving it for future generations, and for ensuring that it is passed on to our children as a worthy inheritance. This requires that we give them solid grounds for believing in the justice of our common enterprise—and this, in turn, means recognizing the diversity of Israel's citizenry and the complexity of our life together. Our generation

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<sup>15</sup> See Ruth Gavison's biographical sketch at - <http://www.vanleer.org.il/Eng/content.asp?Id=325>



needs to channel this diversity to good ends, even when different groups disagree, or when one group's aspirations do not line up perfectly with those of the state as a whole. The key to our success, then, will be our ability to preserve the delicate balance between what unites us and what makes us different.

If we will it, this too will be no dream.

**After reading the article above, consider the following:**

- What is Gavison's general outlook on Israel's future? On what does she base her hopefulness?
- What are Gavison's priorities for Israel?
- What does she say is the job of "our generation" with regard to Israel's future? How can we be successful in accomplishing this?
- Do you agree with Gavison's assessment of Israel's priorities? Do you agree with the charge she gives to "our generation"?
- What else can you, personally, do to work toward your own vision for Israel?



★ Israel

## Session #10

# Wrapping Up & Moving On: Israel In Our Lives

makōm מקום

Israel. In Real Life



The talkspace: Israel curriculum is a collaboration of Scott Copeland, Clare Goldwater, Seth Goren, Doron Rubin, and Robin Weber and a co-production of Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Student Life and the Jewish Agency for Israel's Makom Israel Engagement Network. © February, 2008



## Session #10

### Wrapping Up & Moving On: Israel In Our Lives

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#### **Introduction:**

The concluding session of the talkspace: Israel learning journey brings us back to some of the questions that began our exploration:

- What does Israel mean to me?
- How do I understand Israel's place in relation to other aspects of my identifications, including my Jewish commitments?

An additional aspect of the concluding session is about evaluation:

- What do I know today about Israel that I did not know before my participation in talkspace: Israel?
- Has my participation in talkspace: Israel impacted how I understand and/or relate to Israel?

#### **Session Outline:**

| <b>Segment</b>             | <b>Suggested Time</b> | <b>Description</b>  |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| <i>Israel Update</i>       | <i>10 minutes</i>     | Designated student reports on Israeli current events<br>Reflect on the course of events over the past 10 weeks  |
| <i>Personal Reflection</i> | <i>15 minutes</i>     | Participants individually reflect on the evolution of their personal relationships with Israel over the course of talkspace: Israel, using Handout 10.1 as a guide and composing a new statement entitled, "What Israel Means to Me Now." |
| <i>A Look at Our Texts</i> | <i>Time Varies</i>    | Either in pairs OR in a big group, participants share their new statements about their relationships with Israel and ask each other challenging questions to gain further insight.  |
| <i>What We Learned</i>     | <i>10 minutes</i>     | Hear a parting thought from each person, based on answers to questions on Handout 10.1.   |
| <i>Closing Words</i>       | <i>5 minutes</i>      | Share A.D. Gordon quote and the idea that talkspace: Israel has been all about asking questions.  |
| <i>Evaluation</i>          | <i>Open-ended</i>     | Collect written feedback from students.   |

#### **Success Checklist**

At the end of the session, affirmative answers to these questions will help you know you've been successful:

- Did participants reflect back on the full range of content from the whole talkspace: Israel series?



- Did participants identify ways in which talkspace: Israel has impacted them personally? Did they identify ways in which their relationships with Israel have evolved over the course of talkspace: Israel?
- Did participants contemplate the nature of their continuing involvement with Israel upon the conclusion of this program?
- Did participants fill out an evaluation form to help improve future rounds of talkspace: Israel?

### **Pre-Session Assignment:**

Participants were asked to bring along copies of the essays they wrote for the first session, “What Israel Means to Me.”

### **Preparation:**

#### ***Facilitation***

Read through this facilitation guide and decide which implementation option will work best for your group for “A Look At Our Texts.”

#### ***Materials***

- Copies of Handout 10.1
- Copies of evaluation forms
- Pens

### **Session Implementation/Description:**

#### ***Israel Update – 10 minutes***

Before launching into the talkspace: Israel content for the session, make time for the participant(s) signed up for the week to present an update on Israeli current events. For this last session, you may also want to take a look back at what has happened in Israel over the course of the program. If there are major issues facing Israel as you end the session, the group may also want to hypothesize about the likely course of events over the coming weeks.

#### ***Personal Reflection – 15 minutes***

For the first session of talkspace: Israel, participants were asked to write a one-page essay entitled “What Israel Means to Me.” Participants should have brought these essays with them to this session. Begin the session by distributing copies of Handout 10.1. Ask participants to take at least 15 minutes to themselves, during which there will be no talking in the room. Participants should re-read their essays from Session #1. Then, they should fill out Handout 10.1. Finally, on the back of the handout, they should write a new paragraph titled, “What Israel Means to Me *Now*.”

#### ***A Look at Our Texts – Time varies by option***

After participants have had time for their personal reflection and writing, take time to process what people have written as the final texts for the program. To do this, you have two options:

##### **Option #1 – Chevruta (Paired activity) – 15 minutes**

This option takes the traditional form of *chevruta*, learning pairs. Just as you did in looking at personal essays for Session #1, ask participants to split up into pairs to read what they’ve written. Pairs may choose to read their essays from Session #1; they should definitely read aloud their “What Israel Means to Me *Now*” reflections.

After the first person reads, the other person should ask clarifying questions about the reader's current perspective on Israel, how the reader's relationship with Israel has changed over the past 10 weeks, and how Israel fits into the reader's Jewish identity. Then, partners should switch roles. If there is time remaining, pairs can discuss what they share in common and what differs in their personal approaches to thinking about Israel.

In *chevruta*, the idea is for pairs to look very carefully at each part of a text and to challenge each other's interpretations and understanding in order to help each person gain a deeper understanding of the text at hand. Through this process today, hopefully participants will gain even more clarity and insight into their own Jewish identities and relationships with Israel.

### **Option #2 – Fishbowl (Big group activity) – 25+ minutes**

The second option may work best for groups that are on the small side or for groups in which participants may not be productive in *chevruta*. Bring the whole group back together to sit in one circle. Place one chair in the middle of the circle. Invite participants to take turns sitting in the center seat and reading their "What Israel Means to Me Now" reflections. After the individual in the center reads his/her piece, give the rest of the group a chance to ask that person questions about how his/her perspective has changed over the 10 weeks, what his/her current relationship with Israel looks like, and how Israel fits into the bigger picture of that person's Jewish identity. Try to ensure that everyone who wants to read aloud has the chance to do so.

### **What We Learned – 10 minutes**

After looking at participants' texts on their relationships with Israel, continue the session as a large group. On the front of Handout 10.1 participants completed 5 sentences about their experience in talkspace: Israel. These five sentences began:

- Something about Israel that I did not know before my participation in talkspace: Israel...
- Something that I learned from someone else in the group during talkspace: Israel...
- A question that I wanted to ask but did not have the opportunity...
- Something that I want to do to continue my Israel engagement...
- I also want to say...

Now, as a way of hearing parting words from each voice in the room, ask each person to share one of their completed sentences aloud.

### **Closing Words – 5 minutes**

To end the program, consider sharing the following with participants:

A.D. Gordon was one of the great teachers of the Jewish people in the last one hundred years. A pioneer and thinker, an author and teacher, he reminds us that learning is not about answers, but like all journeys, about questions. He said:

"I know that my outlook is impractical and some of my words will be seen as odd. It doesn't matter. Thinking should inspire the impractical to the point that the same thinking challenges ever so slightly the most seemingly practical things. This was my intention. If someone will think – truly think – even if it is only to call into question my own words – then I will have achieved my aims. What is apparent is not essential. What is critical is that which is still not yet understood." (An Irrational Solution, 1909)

Talkspace: Israel has been all about asking hard questions: What does it mean to get to know Israel as both a physical reality and as an ideal? What does it mean for Jews to take responsibility for a sovereign space, to embody Jewish values not only on holidays and Shabbat, but also in how we build our economy, our foreign policy, our health services, our schools, and

our military? And for Jews who do not live in Israel, what does it mean when we say, "next year in Jerusalem?" How should we ground and realize our long-distance relationships with Israel?

Hopefully, our talkspace: Israel journey made some things clearer, and left other issues more complicated and ripe for further exploration as each one of us continues along our own paths of discovery.

***Evaluations – Open-ended time***

Finally, we ask that each participant complete an evaluation of talkspace: Israel. They should take as long as they need to share all of their feedback. We will truly listen to their feedback, and it will help make the program better for future participants across the continent.

Thank you!