



# 1 Traditional text of the Prayer for the Welfare of the State of Israel

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, trans.

Heavenly Father, Israel's Rock and Redeemer, bless the State of Israel, the first flowering of our redemption. Shield it under the wings of Your loving-kindness and spread over it the Tabernacle of Your peace. Send Your light and truth to its leaders, ministers and counselors, and direct them with good counsel before You.

Strengthen the hands of the defenders of our Holy Land; grant them deliverance, our God, and crown them with the crown of victory. Grant peace in the land and everlasting joy to its inhabitants.

As for our brothers, the whole house of Israel, remember them in all the lands of their dispersion, and swiftly lead them upright to Zion Your city, and Jerusalem Your dwelling place, as is written in the Torah of Moses Your servant: "Even if you are scattered to the furthestmost lands under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and take you back. The LORD your God will bring you to the land your ancestors possessed and you will possess it; and He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors" (Deut. 30:4-5).

Unite our hearts to love and revere Your name and observe all the words of Your Torah, and swiftly send us Your righteous anointed one of the house of David, to redeem those who long for Your salvation.

Appear in Your glorious majesty over all the dwellers on earth, and let all who breathe declare: The LORD God of Israel is King and His kingship has dominion over all. Amen, Selah.

**What are the fundamental values that underlie each of these texts? Do you agree with these values? What do you appreciate about each of these prayers, and what makes you uncomfortable (religiously, ideologically, and communally)?**

# Prayers for the Welfare of the State of Israel

Rabbi Hanina, an assistant of the High Priest, said: Pray for the welfare of the government, since but for fear of it men would swallow each other alive. (M Avot 3:2)

## 2 A revised Prayer for the State of Israel for the Sixtieth Anniversary

Uri Orbach

Our Father in Heaven, Rock and Redeemer of Israel, bless the State of Israel, the first manifestation of the approach of our redemption. Shield it from its own ministers, leaders, advisors, contractors, merchants, celebrities, beggars, journalists, and bureaucrats, and bestow Your light and truth upon its statesmen, rabbis, judges, and intellectuals, and grace them with Your good counsel.

Strengthen the hands of those who defend our holy land, grant them deliverance from indifference, grumbling, draft-dodging, and insubordination, save them from blatantly illegal orders and elusive legal orders, fill their hearts with dedication, responsibility, and perseverance, and adorn them in a mantle of victory.

Salvage your nation, the people of Israel, from any kind of pettiness, self-pity, exaggerated satisfaction, folly, and apathy, and from any harm, slander, and needless hatred.

Defend the State of Israel against those who rise up against it from the outside and from those who rise up against it from within, and safeguard it against its exploiters, manipulators, and defamers. Call on our brethren, the entire nation of Israel, on all its parties, and sects, and views, bless them with the understanding that the State of Israel is the carrier of your mercy, light, and salvation, grant its inhabitants love and dignity, and bless them with its fruit.

Our Father in Heaven, prevent uprooting from your estate and needless hatred from your sons, grant wisdom to your leftists and responsibility to your settlers (in some synagogues this shall be recited the other way around,) as well as dignity, and fraternity, and consideration, and understanding among all Your believers and heretics, as is written in the Torah: "Even if your outcasts are at the ends of the world, from there the Lord your God will gather you, from there He will fetch you."

Manifest yourself in the splendor of Your boldness before the eyes of all inhabitants of Your world, and may everyone endowed with a soul affirm: What a state! What a state! What a state, special and unique. Amen forevermore.

## 7 Changes to the traditional prayer

The former chief rabbi of the United Kingdom, Rabbi Immanuel Jacobowitz, publicized the version of the prayer which says: "Bless the State of Israel **that she should be** the first flowering of our redemption." He read this line as a hope that the State would function thus [as redemption], rather than stating that the State is already thus.

Rabbi Moshe-Zvi Neriah suggested that they change the prayer's language to "guard her **against** her leaders, ministers, and advisors."

After the Disengagement from Gaza, factions from this same group paraphrased the famous line from the traditional version of the prayer to show the change in their relationship to the country: "the first **collapse** [tsenih<sup>at</sup>] of the redemption."

## 3 A Prayer for the Welfare of the State of Israel from the Humanist Tradition

Rabbi Nardy Grün

Let the State of Israel continue to exist, in this, her sixtieth year of independence, as a fitting vessel for the good lives of all her citizens. Love, friendship, and brotherhood shall prevail in her; hatred, animosity, and jealousy shall remain far away. May she be filled with calm, peace, tranquility, and prosperity. May she always be a light to the nations. Thus may we come to fulfill the vision of the founders, as was written in the Declaration of Independence:

"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."

Blessed are those who persevere in the defense of the State. May the hands of the State's protectors be strengthened in valor and heroism, and may the prisoners and the lost soon be returned to her. Blessed are you, residents of the State, who shelter the state under the wings of your mercy and strengthen it by the sweat of your hands. Send your light and your wisdom to the heads of state, to the judges and the representatives, and give them your good counsel to govern the state with justness, fairness, and love. Blessed are you, the work of our hands, who gives us life and sustains us and enables us to reach this day, to live in your land, amen selah.

## 6 Prayer for our Nation and for our Land

Aharon Loewenschuss

Kehillat Mevakshei Derekh, Jerusalem

Master of the world, accept now with grace our prayer for the State of Israel and its nation. Pour your blessings out onto this land and onto all its inhabitants. Help us to comprehend your righteous laws, and instill in our hearts the wisdom of your prophets—"Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 8:1). Awaken your spirit in all the residents of your land; plant within us patience and mutual respect; uproot hatred, violence, oppression, and exploitation from within us.

Spread the shelter of your peace over the house of Israel, spread throughout the Diaspora. Please place strength in their souls to come to our land: return the children to their boundaries. Teach us to accept with an open heart those who are returning to your land. And for those who are coming to you: strengthen them to stand tall amid the difficulties of acculturation. Help us settle here, all brothers settling together.

Strengthen the hearts of our soldiers, the protectors of our land; give them boldness of strength and make their weapons pure. Guard them beneath the shade of your wings, and gift them with salvation and victory over our enemies. But above all, please give peace to this land and bless all who dwell within it, establishing the vision of your prophets: "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they experience war anymore" (Isa. 2:4).

## 4 Prayer for Israel

Professor Aryeh Cohen

Shtibl Minyan, Los Angeles

My heart, my heart goes out to you Zion, Tears, jubilation, celebration, grieving Did we not dream a dream that came to be? And here it is — both song and lament.

We are mere matter, and our prayer is to the Creator, Toward the Good and Just, direct the people seeking refuge in Zion. For all the world is Yours, and we have but one land, Which we inherited together with the sons and daughters of Hagar.

Favor us with knowledge with which to understand The wisdom of Avraham, "If you will go left, I will go right." Overflow with mercy on a great and troubled land For "Zion will be redeemed in judgment and its inhabitants in righteousness."

## 5 A Prayer for the Welfare of the State of Israel

Rabbi Ofer Shabbat Beit HaLahmi

Kehillat Tzur Hadassah

Our God and God of our fathers and mothers, God of Isaac's fear, God of Yael, God of Saul's righteous spirit, God of Israel.

Please, with the power of your great right hand, for your sake, if not for ours, bind for us the corners of our land—west, east, north, south—and cover our world with the wings of your Shekhinah.

Give us wisdom and understanding in our elders and in our flesh, and remove from them all sinful work. Be merciful with them, in the ways of goodness and righteousness, for we have entrusted our lives in their hands. Give our judges the thrones of justice and illuminate their hearts with your Torah, that they might walk before you and be pure.

Please, with the power of your great right hand, spread your *sukkah* of peace over the defenders of our land. Pass your hand over them and save them from all enemies, from ambush, from any shot that seeks their life. Give them valor, and hearts to discern between enemies and friends, between the children of *Biliya'al* and the children of Abraham.

Please, with the power of your great right hand, Protect the State of Israel, your chosen daughter, in order to make your name great among all the inhabitants of the world. Please—with your power. Please—without power.