From Rebirth to Independence, Together
מתוקמה לעצמאות, בידך

Resource Material to Celebrate Israel's National Holidays with Israeli and Reform Prayers, Reflections, and Insights
אסופת מקורות: תפילות, שירים וקטעי השראה לרגל הימים הלאומיים של ישראל

Shabbat Tekumah
Yom HaAtzmaut
April 2023 | אירי תשפ"ג

The Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism
IRAC
We are pleased to share this resource collection specially created for the celebration of Shabbat Tekumah, April 21-22 and 30 Nissan-1 Iyyar, and Yom HaAtzmaut, Israel’s 75th Independence Day, April 26 and 5 Iyyar, with our members and partners in Israel and around the world.

We assembled a variety of texts that enable you to celebrate Israel and the IMPJ with your congregations through Torah, prayer, or song.

We hope that you join us for these milestone occasions and bring Israel and the IMPJ into your hearts and prayers, this year more than ever.

Thank you to all the rabbis who contributed to this collection, including Rabbi Simcha Daniel Burstyn for the Hebrew - English translations. All (c) copyright reserved for prayer excerpts from Tefillat HaAdam, the new Israeli Reform Siddur.
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Dear Friends,

Shabbat Tekumah, meaning a Shabbat of Rebirth, refers to the Shabbat that occurs between Yom HaZikaron laShoah ve-laG’vurah, known colloquially in Israel and abroad as Yom HaShoah and in English as Holocaust Remembrance Day, and Yom HaAtzmaut, Israel's Independence Day.

We use this special Shabbat to reflect on our past, and to envision our future and through this collection of prayer, reflection and insight, that we are pleased to share with you, we hope you spend this special Shabbat, “wrestling with Israel” and exploring what Israel is to you. This is more than a Shabbat of Tekumah, it is a Shabbat of Tikvah, of hope that Reform Jews around the world can celebrate this Shabbat together.

Shabbat Tekumah combines the joy we express as we celebrate the establishment of the State with the profound weight of our collective Jewish history. It is dedicated to weaving a delicate tapestry that portrays the excitement of renewal, the sorrow of loss, the hope of our revival, or tekumah, and the possibilities for new visions of how Israel and its people will persevere.

We approach Israel's 75th with the awe that this amazing country deserves. Yet at the same time, our hearts are heavy, as we, together with hundreds of thousands of Israelis, have taken to the streets to defend democracy, which is now under a grave threat. We continue to vigorously advocate in the courts and in the Knesset, and to mobilize our congregations to protest and secure a democratic and Jewish State we are proud of and that reflects our values, raising a unique liberal voice, defending democracy in the name of Judaism.

The threat is real and imminent. As we prepare this resource material, the Israeli Government threatens to undo and override the very principles of democracy and justice that have strengthened and guided Israel over the past 75 years of peace and war, struggle and growth.
The current government wishes to reverse many of our own legal achievements of the past 20 years and to promote values which contradict our basic beliefs.

As Israeli Reform Jews in our 54 congregations across the country spend this Shabbat in prayer and reflection, thinking about how we can keep the dream of building our Jewish and democratic State alive, we are strengthened by knowing know that you will be sharing the drashot in this pamphlet with your communities; singing some of the songs that we chant during the protests; and praying for the wellbeing of the State and its people, not only today but in the days and years ahead.

We thank you for your partnership and solidarity with Israel in both times of joy and hardship, and we look forward to hearing about your experiences of Shabbat Tekumah.

Sincerely,

Yair Lootsteen  
Chair, IMPJ

Anna Kislanski  
CEO, IMPJ

Orly Erez-Likhovski  
ED, IRAC
Dear Friends,

It is my pleasure to share my blessings with all of you coming up to Shabbat Tekumah and the 75th Yom HaAtmzaut of our beloved State of Israel.

As I write this, we are fighting tooth and nail against the dramatic changes being proposed by the new government; changes that threaten the checks and balances that are a vital part of all democracies.

We turn to you today, and on this very special occasion, knowing that you are among our strongest, most ardent supporters and donors, to look ahead with Israel and the IMPJ. Right now, we face a deterioration of all that we hold dear in Israel and, perhaps more pertinently, the funding that supports our communities, rabbis, educational and civil action efforts through the IMPJ and IRAC - which is now under direct threat.

Due to the anti-Reform views of the new government and its ministers, the Israel Reform Movement stands to lose more than $1.5 million US in government funding. These programs provide critical financial support for rabbis and congregational activities, educational and humanitarian programs, and assistance to new immigrants, including many from Ukraine and Russia – as well as the legal and public advocacy work of IRAC.

I do not believe I am overstating this situation when I say: we need your support now more than ever.

This is not just about saving Israeli democracy, it is about saving Israeli Judaism.

In my years leading the IMPJ and now serving in the Knesset, I always felt that I was working not only for change in Israel but representing the Jews of the diaspora and reflecting your voice both in Israel's civil society and in our parliament. Israel is the nation of the whole Jewish people and must have room for all attitudes and streams of Judaism.

I think you would agree with me in saying that our values, our Judaism and our heritage drive me to do what I do. We share the same vision for Israel. So, now, I am asking you to do what you do: support the IMPJ and IRAC at this critical time. Spread the word, advocate, stand up for Israel in any way that you can, and join us in observing Shabbat Tekumah and Yom HaAtzmaut celebrations wherever you are.

We have challenging days facing us ahead. But together, I fully believe that we can turn the changing tides back to a democratic, Zionist and open Jewish homeland for all its citizens and all Jews.

I thank you for always supporting Israel and standing up for what's right for all of us in the Jewish homeland.

MK Rabbi Gilad Kariv
I have no country other,
Though she’s burning, torn asunder.
Just a word in my native tongue delves
In my veins, and in my soul...
Half torn apart, with a hungry heart
Here is my home.
Can’t keep silent in light of
How my country’s changed her guise.
Won’t quit trying to remind her
In her ears I’ll sing my cries,
Until she opens her eyes.
I have no country other
’Til her olden days reprise,
Until she opens her eyes.

 אין לי ארץ أخرى
钅 lov 4  外  a  火  车
I have no country other,
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About Shabbat Tekumah

Those who sow in tears shall reap with songs of joy.
Though he goes along weeping,
carrying the seed-bag, he shall come back with songs of joy,
carrying his sheaves.

(Psalms תהלים)

In the heart of these days, between Holocaust Remembrance Day, Memorial Day and Independence Day, the Israel Reform Movement celebrates Shabbat Tekumah, meaning Shabbat of Rebirth, similar to Shabbat Tshuva or Shabbat of Repentance during the High Holy Days).

Shabbat Tekumah brings together the joys of beginning with the heaviness of history, in the awe of memory and reconciliation with what has passed. On Shabbat Tekumah, through prayer and song, we come together to look behind and ahead at what we can restore and reset in our vision for the Land, for the country, and to society.
The Seven Days Between Yom HaShoah and Yom HaAtzmaut

Rabbi Mordechai Rotem

In the process of renewing the Hebrew calendar in the State of Israel, we should especially keep in mind the seven days between Yom HaShoah and Yom HaAtzmaut.

Just as we have ten days – the ten days of repentance – between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, we should call the days between Yom HaShoah and Yom HaAtzmaut “the seven days of attestation”.

Just as between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur each of us needs to do an individual soul accounting (heshbon hanefesh), to examine our own actions vis a vis both God and other people; just as the individual is commanded to repent, apologize, and to atone and repair our ways; and just as “Prayer, Repentance, and Tzedaka (charity) avert the severe decree,” similarly, in these seven days of attestation between Yom HaShoah and Yom HaAtzmaut, the nation of Israel – publicly – needs to examine itself, to study each year how well we have succeeded in realizing our collective goals, as stated in the Declaration of Independence.

How well have we embodied the aspirations of the myriad dead of the Shoah? How well have we embodied the goals of life for which our parents and grandparents fought in the War of Independence? During these seven days, the people of Israel should do such an accounting. The nation should examine internally how it deals with the future that lays before it: planning and building its own future. These seven days should be dedicated to the individual as well, but especially to Israeli society and its public institutions. Different public systems need to examine themselves and their actions in these days between Yom HaShoah and Yom HaAtzmaut.

The Knesset and the government need to take account during these seven days: to ask if their actions are fulfilling the obligations bequeathed to us by the legacy of the Shoah: to sustain the People of Israel, not only physically, but ethically and spiritually. Have they fought correctly and stood guard effectively to protect Jewish spiritual and intellectual independence? Have they only given thought to the security of the borders of Israel? Is the legacy of the Shoah to protect the life of the Jewish people and its uniqueness being embodied by the independent State of Israel?

The political parties in the state of Israel also need to examine themselves. They must ask if they have done enough. Have they acted as true leaders of the people, so that the state will really be felt and seen to be the flourishing of the redemption after the Shoah?

The Zionist movement worldwide needs to examine its actions and to do true Teshuvah – has it really learned the lessons of the Shoah? Has it succeeded in being a meaningful factor in the establishment of independent life in Israel? It must examine how it impacts world Jewry and how it might better cope with contemporary dangers to the continued existence of the Jewish people, the dangers of apathy and assimilation.
The Israeli education system must also examine its ways during these seven days. What answers can the education system bring, if any, to the hardest questions of all that were raised by the Shoah? Questions that must find answers in the State of Israel. Questions about Jewish identity and Israeli identity, questions about the connection of the people to its land, and questions about the rights of minorities living within a majority population, questions of radical nationalism and blind hatred – must all be discussed.

These seven days of attestation should be focused on the Chief Rabbinate, too. As long as it exists as a public institution, it must also examine its path during these days. It is not enough for it to lead the memorial prayers of “Yizkor” and “Kaddish” and “El Maleh Rachamim” (sometimes half-heartedly and without the proper blessings) on Memorial Day and Yom HaAtzmaut. The Chief Rabbinate and its emissaries need to check their own tzitziot and to ask themselves during these seven days – are the religious and spiritual leadership of the State of Israel helping to achieve the religious and spiritual goals of the Jewish people in its own land? If not, why not?

Each one of these public systems needs at least a week like this, a week of self-examination and accounting, every year. To check themselves, their actions and their stagnation, their goals, their successes and their failures, between the smoke of the memorial fires of Yom HaShoah and the fireworks of Yom HaAtzmaut. The question that we all need to ask ourselves is this: Are we fulfilling our purpose as the People of Israel? As a people that survived the Shoah together, that are a brand plucked from the fire – are we fulfilling our purpose here in the independent State of Israel?

Days of heshbon nefesh, of national self-examination, are very demanding. Were we able to do it honestly, we would surely discover that such a process could motivate us to use the memory of the Shoah as a catalyst to better improve our ways, and truly feeling our independence, increase our feelings of responsibility.

Even though we can’t declare such a seven day period between Yom HaShoah and Yom HaAtzmaut alone, and expect that the entire population adopt it in spirit, at least we could, on our own, as the Reform Movement, dedicate this week to such questions of attestation and purpose. What is our task here? What is our part in the creation of the national future? Do we have the strength – spiritual, moral, and ethical – to turn the heavy sediment that the Shoah left upon our people into a motivational force that can impact – spiritually, morally, and ethically – our national independence?

Memory, identity, and faith – these can be the beginning of hope, for us and for the entire nation of Israel.
Prayers from Tfilat HaAdam
On Shabbat Tekumah (rebirth), the Shabbat between Holocaust Remembrance Day and Israel Memorial Day and Independence Day, we give thanks for the restoration of Jewish sovereignty.

Thus said the Eternal: I have returned to Zion, and I will dwell in Yerushalayim. Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mount of Adonai Tzeva’ot the Holy Mount.

Thus said Adonai of Hosts: There shall yet be old men and women in the squares of Yerushalayim, each with staff in hand because of their great age. And the streets of the city shall be crowded with boys and girls playing in the squares. Thus said Adonai of Hosts, “though it seemed impossible to the remnant of this people in those days, shall it also be impossible for Me?” declares Adonai Tzeva’ot. Thus said Adonai of Hosts: I will rescue My people from the lands of the east and from the lands of the west, and I will bring them home to dwell in Yerushalayim. They shall be My people, and I will be their God—in truth and righteousness.

Zechariah 8
Prayer for the State of Israel

Rock and Redeemer of Israel, bless the State of Israel, the dawning of our redemption.

Shield it with Your compassion and spread over it the sukkah of Your shalom.

May a spark of Your spirit inspire the actions of its elected leaders and officials, judges and advisors that they may follow the path of justice, liberty and righteousness.

Strengthen the spirit and the hands of those who build and protect our holy land and grant them salvation and life.

Bring shalom to this land and everlasting joy to its inhabitants.

Be with all the people of Israel wherever they are.

Plant within their hearts the love of Zion, and may those of our people who are so inspired, come to Jerusalem, Your city,
Blessing for Those Service in the Israel Defense Forces

May the One who blessed our ancestors Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Leah and Rachel, bless the soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces, and all who stand guard protecting our people. May the Holy Blessed One protect them and save them from all trouble and affliction, from all sickness and injury and may God grant blessing and wisdom to their actions. May the words of the prophets be fulfilled through them: they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. And all shall sit under their vine and under their fig tree and none shall make them afraid. and let us say: Amen.
The entire Hallel is recited on the first night and on the morning of the first day of Passover, on Shavuot, on all the days of Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret, on Chanukah, Yom Ha-Atzmaut and Jerusalem Day.

Partial Hallel is recited on Rosh Chodesh and on all of Passover except for the first day.

Blessing Before Hallel
Barukh are You Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who sanctifies us with mitzvot, commanding us to recite Hallel.

Halelu-Yah. O servants of Adonai, give praise; praise the name of the Eternal. Let the name of Adonai be blessed now and forever. From East to West, the name of the Eternal is praised, Adonai is exalted above all nations; God's glory is above the heavens. Who is like the Eternal our God, who, enthroned on high, sees what is below, in heaven and on earth? God raises the poor from the dust, lifts up the needy from the refuse heap to set them with the great, with the great of God's people. The woman with no children will rejoice like a happy mother. Halelu-Yah.

Psalm 113
A Prayer for Democracy by Rabbi Oded Mazor

God of our ancestors
Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob, Rachel, Leah, Bilha, and Zilpah,
Bless those who stand in defense of democracy, equality, and peace,
From among our people and those all over the world who work to repair society in the face of the threat to the justice system and the rule of law
May the Holy One protect them and save them from all trouble and distress, and from every plague and illness,
From all harassment and injury and any attempt to humiliate them and undermine their commitment
In the fight against indifference, inaction, and noninvolvement.
May their efforts be successful, and may they have:
A good eye (to see wrongs done)
A good heart (so as not to stand idly by)
And the strength to act
To protect the rights of all
To do justice and bring peace to every person made in the image of God in the world.
May the words of the Torah be fulfilled: “For because of this thing God will bless you in all of your efforts and in all of your undertakings” (Deut. 15:10)
And let us say: Amen
A Prayer for Israel at 75 by Rabbi Ayala Ronen Samuels

Rock and Redeemer of Israel, bless the State of Israel at this moment when its foundations are shaking, and the splendor of its skies are darkening.

Protect it with Your loving kindness from those working to undermine its institutions and from its enemies who are just waiting to attack her while she in distress.

Bestow your light and truth upon its leaders, judges, and elected representatives, those struggling to defend its institutions, its citizens crying out to protect it, filling its streets in a struggle for its soul.

Strengthen the defenders of our holy land.

Be mindful of our brothers and sisters in all the lands of the Diaspora, that they may join us in our outcry and participate in safeguarding the State of the Jewish People.

Open our hearts that we might hear our neighbors’ pain and hopes.

Teach us to always renew the inherent goodness in the creation of the state.
Remove from among us hatred and enmity, zealotry and malice, and plant in our hearts love and companionship, shalom and friendship.

Grant shalom in the land and infinite happiness for all of its inhabitants. which bears Your name. Spread Your spirit over all the inhabitants of our land. Uproot hatred and animosity, jealousy and evil.

Plant in our hearts love and kinship, peace and friendship. And speedily fulfill the vision of Your prophet: Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. And let us say: Amen.
Reflections and Inspirational Divrei Torah from Reform Rabbis from Israel and the Diaspora
Decades ago, the Israeli Reform Movement designated the Shabbat between Holocaust Memorial Day (27th of Nisan) and Israeli Independence Day (5th of Iyar) as Shabbat Tekumah.

The Israeli-Zionist discussion - which has been going on for nearly eight decades - has attributed the rise of the State of Israel to the Zionist activity that began in the 19th century and which led to the establishment of the State in 1948.

The phrase "From Holocaust to Restoration" (משואת לתקומה) highlights the period between 1933 and 1945 as a tragic and catastrophic, and important and dramatic stage towards the establishment of the State of Israel. This period is but one of many during the long era that began around the year 1860 with the precursors of Modern Zionism such as Judah Alkalai and Zvi Kalischer, Moses Hess, and Moses Montefiore, and continued until the end of the Israel's War of Independence in 1949.

In the 1980's, as Reform Judaism began to solidify its place in the State of Israel with its message of the importance of Jewish renewal based on liberal values and modern relevance, the rabbis of the Movement added special Shabbatot to those that were accepted in the traditional Jewish world - among them Shabbat Tekumah.

With the addition of this special Shabbat, the Movement recognized the importance of adding a grass-roots commemoration of a critical milestone of the Jewish people's transition from freedom to independence. Thus, Shabbat Tekumah joins an intensive period of special days each with evocative liturgy, poetry, and songs – beginning with Passover and culminating with Independence Day – symbolically marking the milestones of this important historical journey.

- **Passover** is the festival of freedom. Its traditional liturgy - "We were Slaves..." (עבדים היינו) and others - marks this as the holiday of our liberation from slavery and as the harbinger of spring.

- **Holocaust Memorial Day** (יומ השואה) Marked by poems and songs of the victims, survivors, and heroes, such as: "Song of the Partisans" (שיר הפרטיזנים), "Ash and Dust" (אפר ואבק) and others, Yom HaShoah is a solemn expression of Zionism's responsibility to this dark chapter in the nation's modern history.
**Memorial Day** (יום הזיכרון). The memorial songs for Israel’s Memorial Day for Fallen Soldiers - for example: “They Say There is a Land” (אומרים ישנה ארץ), “I Have No Other Land” (אין לי ארץ أخرى), “Here, In Our Fathers’ Land” (פה בארץ חמדת אבות), “Bear your Banner to Zion” (שאו ציונה ודודגל) and of course “HaTikvah” – were the closing notes for these intensive three weeks in the Israeli calendar.

**Independence Day.** The modern, massive immigration to the Land of Israel is honored with such songs as: “Sharlia” (שרליה), “Home, home...” (הביתה) and others.

Ariel Hirschfeld wrote that “…the selection of HaTikvah as the national anthem was not an ideological gesture so much as a response to the hosts of singers that identified so deeply with it and valued it so dearly” – decades before the establishment of the State. His writing offers an insight to the selection of Israel’s national anthem – chosen by the people and not for them.

The origins of *HaTikvah* may teach us about the significant connection of *Shabbat Tekumah* to the updated calendar of the Reform Movement. On the one hand, it is an emotional, nostalgic expression of the longing and yearning for the traditional spirit of the Jewish people, but on the other hand, it is an expression of a progressive movement – one that views the values of Israel’s Declaration of Independence as iron-clad prerequisites for the existence of the State, for its continued prosperity, development, relevance, and national strength.
In the last few weeks I have found myself quite often on the verge of tears. The current situation in Israel is very worrying. It seems that the ground is shaking, and the future looks challenging and even frightening.

I read the news and my eyes are filled with tears of frustration, with tears of worry, with tears of sadness. I look at the growing gaps, the hatred and the possible loss of democracy and I want to cry.

I also find myself with tears in my eyes in very different situations. When I see so many people who were indifferent take action; when I see hundreds and hundreds of Israeli flags in the streets; when we are invited (for the first time) to join a demonstration for “Zionist, democratic and religious Jews” together with our Orthodox brothers and sisters; when I stand in Haifa surrounded by 50,000 people of all ages, singing our national hymn – "עוד לא אבדה תקווהה" – our hope will not be lost.

These are moments when the tears roll down my cheeks, and when the words of Psalms 126 comes to mind: “Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy”.

You can call my generation “accidental Israelis”. Our grandparents founded this country, our parents defended its existence. We were born here, almost taking the State of Israel for granted. Now, we have a deep sense of meaning to being Israeli and Zionist. It is our role to make sure Israel remains a Jewish and democratic state.

May the challenges we face now create new meaning, build new bridges, and infuse new significance and commitment to our special and unique Israel.

As we approach Israel’s 75th anniversary don’t cry over us, cry out with us. We will eventually reap with joy.
One of the most basic and historically significant values of Judaism is “all of Israel are responsible one for the other” (Safra, Behokothai, 7, 5), a principle that assumes a shared destiny and mutual reliance are the basis of relations in the collective. Much of the impressive survivability of Jewish individuals and Jewish communities stems from this rule. If a Jew can go almost anywhere in the world, find the local Jewish community, whether large or small, and be welcomed there, receive help and immediately participate in its rituals and community life, there is no doubt that this mutual guarantee works.

For me, as a queer lesbian, this ability to go anywhere in the world, find the local community and immediately feel some sense of belonging, is very familiar. Identifying as a Jew, and identifying as a sexual and gender minority, creates beautiful worlds that are not necessarily familiar to those who belong to the majority. Just as historically this Jewish superpower of mutual guarantee got twisted into conspiracy theories about the global power of the Jews, LGBTQAI communities around the world are being attributed to have enormous global power to change the “natural order”. These fantasies, of course, have nothing to do with the daily life of the minority.

The strength of the sexual, gender, and religious minority lies in the definite knowledge that community is valuable, and that the network of connections that bind us to each other often give meaning to our lives, provide support and inner strength, and celebrates who we are, whether as Jews or as LGBTQAI.

The State of Israel, however, is not a Jewish collective. It is a modern country where Jews and members of other religions and other nationalities live. The unifying force in the country cannot be based only on “all of Israel are responsible one for the other”, first of all because this beautiful sentence itself excludes women (in Hebrew) and can even be harmful if interpreted as referring only to the shared destiny of Jews in the Israeli context.

Because of this, I offer we use the value of solidarity at the state level. Solidarity results from choice and is not based only on similarities or on belonging to the same community. In Israel, we need solidarity everywhere: standing in line at the supermarket, on the roads, in the schools, and on the streets. Solidarity transcends communities and identifications. It is similar to the way Rabbi Ben Azzai adds to Rabbi Akiva’s statement that “love your neighbor as yourself” is a great rule in the Torah the statement that “this is a book of human history” is a bigger rule (Safra Kdoshim 2, 4).

I wish us all solidarity that will stem from love for ourselves and grow into love for others.
These words by Naftali Herz Imber are best known for their inclusion in HaTikvah, the national anthem of the State of Israel. Throughout Jewish history, hope has been a driving force that has sustained the Jewish people through difficult times — whether it was the hope to return to the land of Israel, as expressed in HaTikvah, the hope of our Israelite ancestors to be liberated from slavery in Egypt, or the simple hope that things would get better. But hope is not the same thing as optimism. Hope is a state of mind, not a state of the world. As the Czech playwright, revolutionary, and ex-president Václav Havel put it: “Hope is not a prognostication — it’s an orientation of the spirit.”

Zionists around the world have been looking forward to celebrating Israel at 75 with light-hearted joy and pride. Yet, the past few months have seen our hopes for our Jewish homeland trampled by those in government. But as the words of HaTikvah remind us — our hope is not yet lost. Even when we experience setbacks, as Jews we know that we must translate our hope into action, even when it looks like we might fail. And so, as we support our Israeli siblings in their struggle to defend Israel as envisaged by her founders, this Yom HaAtzmaut especially, we pray in the words of the great Israeli poet Leah Goldberg that hope shall always remain our orientation of the spirit:

*Lamdeini Elohay* - Teach me, my God, to pray

For freedom to see, to feel, to breathe

To know, to hope—and to fail.

Instruct my lips in blessing, song and praise

When time renews itself each dawn and night

That my today be not as yesterday.

Rabbi Mühlstein is the International Chair of ARZENU, the political voice of Reform, Progressive and Liberal Religious Zionists, and one of the senior rabbis of The Ark Synagogue (NPLS) in London.
Two That Are One / Rabbi Josh Weinberg

The State of Israel has been an unparalleled tremendous success story, and continues to be a source of inspiration for Jewish life around the world. Despite the current political crisis, and the years of war and conflict that continue to plague us, the establishment of a Jewish State in our ancestral homeland has dramatically changed Judaism and Jewish life – for both Israelis and Diaspora Jews in a way that cannot be sufficiently measured. Jewish life for the millions of Jews living around the world would be simply unimaginable if it were not for the contributions of Israeli Judaism from the revival of the Hebrew language, the life and relevance breathed into the Hebrew bible, and evolved into modern Jewish and Hebrew poetry, literature, and song. At the onset of the Zionist Movement Ahad Ha’am, the great visionary of spiritual/cultural Zionism wrote that:

“This Jewish settlement will become in course of time the center of the nation, wherein its spirit will find pure expression and develop in all its aspects to the highest degree of perfection of which it is capable.”

125 years later, his vision has been magnificently manifested. And yet, as we celebrate Israel reaching its miraculous milestone, this moment in time calls for a reassessment of the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora. The now old model which Ahad Ha’am offered must evolve. The “center which will radiate to the great circumference, to all the communities of the Diaspora, to inspire them with new life and to preserve the overall unity of our people,” is still true, but today, the inspiration goes both ways. Simon Rawidowicz, a disciple of Ahad Ha’am offers a different model. He saw the people of Israel as a whole, as an ellipse with two foci (rather than a circle with one center), the State of Israel and the Diaspora of Israel. This model should be given the symbolic title of “Israel is One: the State and the Diaspora of Israel - Two that are One.”

As we work together to forge the future of the State of Israel and the Jewish people, may we see ourselves as co-creators of Jewish life, learn from one another’s shared experience and together shape the Jewish future - לתקן עולם במלכות שדי – to create a better world under God for the Jewish people and all of humanity.

"חג עצמאות שמח!"
Israel’s Declaration of Independence

Translated excerpts from the Declaration of Independence:

ERETZ-ISRAEL (the Land of Israel) was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books. After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom.

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.

To hear the Declaration of Independence read with Hebrew cantillation of the Torah, visit:
https://www.megila.org/hamegila

For the full text of the Declaration of Independence, visit:
Pirkei Tikvah - Phrases of Hope

Citizens of Israel, an Israel that is both Jewish and Democratic, both Democratic and Jewish; today requires a wake up call. The Israel of the Scroll of Independence, of the vision of the Prophets of Israel, of compassion and loving kindness – it needs a wake up call.

We cannot be zealots. We cannot be bullies. What does this mean? We cannot be anarchists maybe? The State of Israel has been, and must continue to be, a state of law and order. It cannot be anarchy. The State of Israel has been, and must continue to be, a state of liberty, of tolerance, and of justice. It cannot be anarchy. The State of Israel has been, and must continue to be, our home, a home to all of us. “Only then may you be called City of Righteousness, a Faithful City”. (Isaiah 1:26)

(From a speech by President Reuven Rivlin, 2015)

איני מאמין (שמטי שחק) / שאול טשרניחובסקי

I Believe/ Shaul Tchernichovsky

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A Song for the Eve of Sabbath / Yehuda Amichai

Will you come to me tonight?
Laundry that has already dried in the yard,
A war that was never enough
It is now somewhere else.
And roads are constantly returning
Alone as a horse without its rider,
And the house closes in the evening
About its good and evil.
And we knew well that the border
Is close and we’re not allowed there,
My father prayed: and could
The land and all their armies.
The army and the land darkened
Soon the light will go out,
The commandment in which Heaven began
Again the two have to end.
From the Songs of My Beloved Land / Leah Goldberg

My homeland - land of beauty and poverty.
The queen has no home, the king has no crown.
There are seven spring days in the year
And cold and rain all the rest.

But for seven days the roses bloom,
And for seven days the dew drops shine,
And for seven days, windows are open.
And all your poor folk stand in the street
And lift their pale faces toward the good light,
And all your poor folk are happy.

My homeland, land of beauty and poverty,
The queen has no home, the king has no crown.
There are seven holy days in the year
And hunger and toil all the rest.

But for seven days the candles are blessed,
And for seven days the tables are set,
And for seven days, hearts are open.
And all your poor folk stand in prayer,
Your sons and daughters are grooms and brides,
And all your poor folk are brethren.
My miserable land, impoverished and bitter,
The king has no home, the queen has no crown.
Only one in the world your praises has spoken;
Your infamy and shame all the rest.
And therefore I’ll visit every street and corner,
Every market and courtyard and alley and garden.
From the rubble of your ruins I’ll gather little stones
To keep for souvenirs.

As from town to town, from country to country,
I’ll wander with a song and a music box
To relate your glorious penury.
"The State of Israel will prove itself not by material wealth, not by military might or technical achievement, but by its moral character and human values."

David Ben-Gurion

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