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May 1, 1998  
5 Iyar 5758

## Inside...

**W**e are the chosen, the generations who gave birth to, grew up with and have been shaped by the miracle that is the State of Israel. No matter where we are in the world, the presence of Israel has fashioned our confidence, security and identity. The white flag with the blue Magen David flies high for all of us. It is our shield and our tallit, the banner of our people.

So, despite the very real problems that press upon us, on this, Israel's 50th anniversary, we can still step back, gaze upon the wonder that is ours, and say, "Praised are you God, worker of miracles."

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# Sh'ma

A JOURNAL OF JEWISH RESPONSIBILITY

## Declaration of the establishment of the state of israel

*FROM THE EDITOR: I tell you nothing new when I say we are the people of the text. But perhaps I offer a modest insight when I say that we are the people of the text read out loud. We sing the Torah three days a week in shul; we chant bits of the prophets at least once a week; we speak the Passover haggadah gathered around the table. Beruriah, one of the few named women in the Talmud, admonished a student for studying silently. Even the Amidah, our silent prayer, is to be said with our lips moving, as if we were speaking it aloud.*

*Every one of our holidays has its own special out-loud text. What do we have for Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israel's Independence Day? True, we are encouraged to say Hallel, the classic set of psalms of celebration, and many prayer books have newly-minted prayers for the State of Israel and its founders and defenders. But we should consider adding another text to our Independence Day liturgy: Israel's Declaration of Independence. This text is more than a legal document. It is the haggadah of the founding of the state, the telling of our sacred story, a vision for our future.*

*So on this 50th anniversary of the State of Israel, and every anniversary hereafter, we can gather our family and friends around the dinner table, eat from the seven foods that represent the land of Israel—wheat, barley, grapes, figs, dates, pomegranate, and olives—and then, out loud, read the haggadah of the founding of the State of Israel. To that end, we have reprinted it below for you.*

**E**RETZ-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 Jewish 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.

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*, 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, Theodor 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 caused 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, THE MEMBERS OF THE PEOPLE'S NATIONAL 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 of Iyar 5708 (15th of 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 of 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 inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure

### Sh'ma

A JOURNAL OF JEWISH RESPONSIBILITY

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complete equality of social and political rights of 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 common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East.

WE APPEAL to the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora to rally around 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 DAY OF MAY 1948).

David Ben-Gurion

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## It's time to hope for a new jewish national anthem

■ Gershon Schwartz

With the approach of Yom HaAtzmaut 5758 and the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the modern Jewish state, our thoughts naturally turn to Israel. As one who cares for the State of Israel, for the Jewish people, and for the Hebrew language, I have come to the conclusion that it is time to change the national anthem of the Jewish people. It is time to set aside *Hatikvah* for *Yerushalayim shel Zahav*.

These words are written not without some trepidation. A traditionalist at heart, I usually prefer the old and the time-honored to the new, improved, and relevant. Despite all of this, I must acknowledge two conclusions—*Hatikvah* is replete with weaknesses and flaws, while *Yerushalayim shel Zahav* reflects the needs, the mood and the vision of our day. To understand why *Hatikvah* can no longer serve as our national anthem, it's important that we go beyond the emotions of the song to understand some of the history and baggage which this poem carries.

### The Role Of Hatikvah

*Hatikvah* was written in 1878 by Naphtali Hertz Imber, a struggling poet and Zionist. Imber originally entitled the poem *Tikvatenu*, "our hope," borrowing the metaphor from Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones. In this prophecy (chapter 37), Ezekiel sees dry, lifeless bones which God promises to bring to life again:

And He said to me: "O mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, our hope [*tikvatenu*] is gone; we are doomed.'"

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Imber took the prophetic phrase and reversed it to read "our hope is not yet gone."

*Hatikvah* conveys a beautiful message but, as our anthem, it is problematic. It is difficult to sing in the cadence and stress of modern Israeli Hebrew. We break our teeth over the Hebrew—singing *HaTIKvah*, rather than *HatikVAH*, as we've been taught it should be. And this difficulty serves to dramatize the problems of *Hatikvah* in general.

Imber wrote a sentimentalist Zionist theme song, not the national anthem of a people with its own land. Imber stood outside of Israel, looking eastward (*Mizrah*), writing while in Jassy, a town in northeast Rumania. The song was sung at the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basle in 1901. When it was repeated four years later at the Seventh Zionist Congress in Basle, *Tikvatenu* became the unofficial anthem of the Zionist movement. (This status was formally confirmed in 1933, though the State of Israel itself has never formally adopted *Hatikvah* as its official anthem.) Much of the energy of the early Zionist movement came from Europe and America, and a call to look eastward was appropriate.

### We Need A Song For Today

Today, the Jewish people has a state! And a majority of its Jewish residents hail from non-European countries. Their ancestry is from Yemen and Ethiopia, from South Africa and Isbakestan. More Jews than not look, or have looked, to Israel from directions other than the east. *Hatikvah* reflects a time of hope and yearning which was, of a hope that has been fulfilled. The words were changed once, earlier this century, to make them more palatable. Imber's call "to return to the land of our ancestors (or fathers), to the city where David dwelled" was emended after the establishment of the State in 1948 to the current summons, "to be a free people in our land, the land of Zion and Jerusalem." It's time that the idea was updated again, this time to a new song, reflecting today's ideals, today's needs and today's Hebrew.

Today, as in the past, when Jews speak or sing of Israel—whether in our prayers or in our songs—it is usually to speak of how a return to Israel will brighten the lives of Jews everywhere. In the first paragraph before the morning *Sh'ma*, we pray (in a line which the Vilna Gaon objected to, but which was ultimately accepted by our tradition):

"Cause a new light to illumine Zion. May we all soon share a portion of its radiance."

We look towards Israel but more importantly, we anticipate the light which reflects outward from Zion/Jerusa-

lem. *Hatikvah* focuses on Diaspora Jewry, on our looking to Zion.

Naomi Shemer's *Yerushalayim shel Zahav* is written from an Israel perspective, by an Israeli author. Thus, the beauty of the Golden City radiates outward, as in the prayers. An instant classic, this song deserves to be our national anthem. Its Hebrew is beautiful, flawless. Its images are classical: Ms. Shemer—herself a *Sabra*, with the ability to speak of a native love of the land—draws on biblical and talmudic language and concepts. "Jerusalem of Gold" not only depicts the city we know and love. A "Jerusalem of Gold" was a gold pendant (probably a tiara) described in the Talmud. Thus, this song bridges the ancient and the modern.

### A Song Of Arrival

Naomi Shemer recalls the medieval master Yehuda Halevi ("I am less than your most minor poet") in her aching for Jerusalem. That medieval great wrote beautiful words of longing for Zion, the city. The same love and thirsting for the holy city fills Naomi Shemer's song. The humility expressed by Yehuda Halevi is also reflected in Naomi Shemer: Who are we to sing the praises of the city that has been lauded by poets and kings, and by poets who were kings? Her words remind us never to forget Jerusalem, even though the city is ours. What a privilege we have in our day and age, just to be able to travel to Jerusalem and see the golden city.

Most important, *Yerushalayim shel Zahav* serves as a constant reminder of that moment in 1967 when Jerusalem was reunited under Jewish sovereignty, an event many of us remember so well. Several years ago, I heard Naomi Shemer in concert as she described the history of this unique song and its connection with the capture of Jerusalem. She wrote it in 1967, just weeks before the Six-Day War. It was already on people's lips as the war began. The second stanza was a mournful one, drawing on the doleful opening word of Lamentations, *Eikha!* "Alas! Lonely sits the city." Naomi Shemer wrote: "Alas! The wells of water have dried up." On June 10, 1967, minutes before she was to entertain troops stationed in Bethlehem, the news came in: Jerusalem had been captured! After so many centuries, the Old City was in Jewish hands again!

How could a poet-songwriter announce this news to the weary *Tzahal* (Israel Defense Forces) troops? Her announcement came by way of a new stanza, penned only moments before that concert: "We have returned to the wells of water..." As she sang these words, the troops' reaction at first was shock, then utter jubilation as they realized what she had just done. In a live concert to

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war-weary troops, Naomi Shemer had announced what no one could say in prose. We have returned to Jerusalem. The city, all of it, is once again ours. The troops immediately broke into applause. Naomi answered them, in her beautiful Hebrew: "It is I who should applaud you, for to change a song is much easier than to change a city."

### A Golden Song

Changing a song is easier. Naomi Shemer changed her own song to reflect the need and mood of the day. Changing songs and making *Yerushalayim shel Zahav* our "national anthem" would not only reflect our love of Israel. It would also send the world a message: Jerusalem is our capital. We face her when we pray not always to the east, but always towards Jerusalem. We cite her in almost every worship service. And we celebrate her in prayer and song.

*Hatikvah* reflected the position and hopes of the early Zionists. We have an historical allegiance to that song. That allegiance can, and should, be transferred to another song, one which more fully, and in many ways, more beautifully, reflects the hopes and aspirations of our people, as well as the Zionist dream of today. *Yerushalayim shel Zahav* deserves to be our people's national anthem, for it is truly a golden song. ✦

## Is there hope for *hatikvah*?

■ Zvia Ginor

The recent debate in Israel regarding the present-day relevancy of *Hatikvah* as the national anthem seems to signal, if not to symbolize, the changing self-image of Israeli society. The shift from peoplehood to nationhood, from a "tribal" self-definition to a politically-based definition might be a natural progression as the Jews who live in Israel prepare for peace, and as the energy is redirected from prayer to practice. It might also indicate a shift away from the fundamental concept of *K'lal Yisrael*.

The call for changing the anthem is not very loud, nor new. Indeed, both the poem and the music of *Hatikvah*

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have been scorned and chastised many times in the past, a phenomenon not unique to our anthem. The British anthem has been challenged for its focus on the royalty rather than the people; the French *Marseillaise* was attacked for plagiarism. *The Star-Spangled Banner* was criticized for reflecting times of war, not wishes for peace and friendship. Past claims against *Hatikvah* included its borrowed music, its derivative content, its lack of religious emotion (since God is mentioned only once, in the eighth stanza, and even then as *el zoem*, an angry God), its tentative premise (*Kol Od*, so long as) and most of all for its diasporic origins and historical anachronism.

More specifically, some Israelis feel that the anthem does not express the present reality and misrepresents the national ideals. For one, it precludes the Israeli-Arab population by insisting on the Jewish soul of the singer. Secondly, it views Zion from afar and from the outside, since Naphtali Herz Imber composed the poem in Jassy, Rumania in 1878, voicing a yearning for what is now a fulfilled dream.

### Objections and Attractions

The issue of *Hatikvah*'s birthplace was raised in the Israeli press as early as 1953, when eyewitnesses and historians set out to prove that it was actually composed in Jerusalem, or alternately, in Rishon Lezion. Already then, the underlying motivation was a reclamation of the anthem from its *galuti* (diaspora) origins and appropriate to it a native, *sabra*, heritage. More poignantly, the claim has been made that those Jews whose eye was turned to Zion have already settled there, and for the others it must be just a lip-homage. Thirdly, the hope for "being free in our land" (which was not part of the original poem but a later addition), is irrelevant in light of national independence while the present hopes for peace and tranquility are not addressed at all.

Some Israelis object to the minor musical key of the melody, which is associated with the lament and the wail of the diaspora. This change of key from minor to major is symptomatic to the Zionist narrative. The New Jew is identified by heroic action, self-determination and self-defense, which are contrasted with Jewish passivity in the diaspora. The renaming of the Wall as the Western, rather than Wailing Wall is yet another example of this basic sentiment. The national obsession with the present and the future, with the new and with the concrete seems to have effected a state of amnesia.

So much so, because all of the above-mentioned claims ignore the biography of *Hatikvah*, its accumulated value gained during a century of a turbulent and precari-

ous yet persistent existence. Indeed, *Hatikvah* was never formally declared a national anthem. Its historical march from being the local hymn of Rehovot in 1890 to the song that competed with *Ani Ma'amin* on the lips of Holocaust victims is legendary in itself. Its appeal was instantaneous: not *On the Rivers of Babylon* nor *Jerusalem of Gold*, which were just two of the better known potential hymns, managed to displace it in spite of such attempts in the past. Whereas *Ani Ma'amin* seemed to focus on the religious, *Jerusalem of God* is totally oblivious to the Arab and non-Jewish population of Israel, especially in claiming, "There is no one on the road to Jericho." Many Israelis find this a politically offensive exclusion and a blind-spot in the self-image of Israeli society. Although *Hatikvah* has been translated into English, German, Russian, Yiddish and Spanish, more Jews sing it without understanding the words than those who do. And even then, only two of the verses are commonly known.

For the founders of the State of Israel, the first few notes of the melody will forever be associated with the signal of the underground radio transmissions under the British mandate. For those who wish to remember the declaration of the state, in Tel Aviv of 1948, the sound of the anthem is etched in their mind. For the Jews of Homel it will always be the silent humming in the theater, under the surveillance of the Tzar's police. Similarly under the Bolsheviks, the communists and the Pheronists. The echoes are too sonorous to be forgotten or erased.

### On Amnesia And Memory

However, it is not the anthem itself which is the concern at this point. It stands to reason that *Hatikvah* will take care of itself in the same magical manner with which it persevered to date. Rather, the concern is over the perils of amnesia in general and Jewish amnesia in particular. Of all the components which contribute to the formation of a person or a people, the most fundamental is its roots, its past, its origins. We define ourselves first by where we come from, and only thereafter we also know where we are going. Whether one adheres to Freudian theories, to Jungian concepts or to theological principles, the question of memory is fused with the question of history. And history is multidimensional. It is not the focus on the past, but the wisdom of the past that we need in order to maintain our ultimate destination. The idea of replacing *Hatikvah* is not only a protest against theoretical Zionism and a call for the post-Zionist epoch. It intimates a turn away from memory and from responsibility, and a turn toward a blind destination.

By a very small stretch of the imagination, one could foresee the elimination of the exclamation *Leshana haba'ah bi'rushalaym* for the very same fallacy, After all, aren't we there yet? ➔

## Shaping a new vision for peace

■ Carmela Ingwer

Gazing back, I realize that my first excited steps on Israel's soil at the age of eighteen signalled the climax of my passionately Zionist childhood. Ferrante and Teicher's haunting rendition of "The Theme From Exodus" had embodied much of what defined my relationship to Israel: "This land is mine—God gave this land to me." Israel was *moledet* (homeland), a precious inheritance to which every Jew had inalienable spiritual and territorial rights. My love of Israel intertwined with love of self; I could not, and still cannot, conceive of the one without the other.

Yet, as Israel approaches its fifty year milestone, I am acutely aware of how my love for it has encountered twists and turns which I could never have foreseen. I have learned, gradually and painfully, that others in the land—who have as deep an attachment as I do to every stone and olive tree—feel oppressed by my people's controlling presence. Celebrating Israel's special birthday, I know I must acknowledge their narrative alongside mine.

### Troubling Testimonies

But where do we go from here? My chance viewing of a 1993 Hebrew documentary entitled "Israeli Soldiers of the Intifada," which aired on PBS, brought Israel's dilemma into sharper focus. A project of the Eduyot Association, an Israeli human rights group, this searing set of interviews with soldiers who had been thrust into the chaos of the Intifada should be seen by anyone seeking the elusive truth behind the headlines. The men featured had volunteered to describe their experiences during the insurrection. The majority were in their twenties and thirties, but among them were a few older reservists, including some commanding officers. Interspersed with the testimonies was graphic footage of street battles and subsequent beatings of Palestinians.

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CARMELA INGWER is a New York based Jewish educator, writer and peace activist.

I unashamedly admit to crying throughout much of the hour-length film; the brutalization of Palestinians by armed Jews was excruciating to watch. No less painful was the knowledge that such treatment was often the norm during Israel's military occupation. Victims of emotional whiplash, most of the interviewed soldiers hid behind formidable defenses of twisted logic and transparent bravado. Facing the camera, they rationalized their behavior:

I am a simple soldier; I take orders and don't think about them much.

So we beat them (the Palestinians). After all, we weren't Nazis.

We didn't break their legs—just their arms, so we wouldn't have to carry them downhill.

If you ask me, a bullet in the leg, that would take care of them. It irritates me to listen to them.

*Magia lahem.* They had it coming. We just gave them a little *chinuch* (education).

Yet, there was also the officer who was deeply distressed over how his men "had lost themselves, lost their control." And the tearful *kibbutznik* who had felt trapped by the need for loyalty to his comrades-in-arms: "I wanted to tell them to stop the beatings, or, at the very least, I wanted to walk away in protest, but I was afraid...I am not proud of my tour of duty...When my children and grandchildren ask me what I did in the army, I will have to tell them that I beat people and chased children down alleys..."

### Transcending Past Powerlessness

Irrespective of one's political convictions, this poignant documentary drives home a bitter truth—namely, that Israel's national narrative of heroic sacrifice has been gravely wounded. We must ask: What are the ramifications of a whole generation of soldiers scarred by violence, feelings of inadequacy, and cynicism? Is there anything to replace Israel's prized ideal of *Taharat Haneshek* (Purity of Arms), a combat duty value rendered meaningless in the streets of Gaza and the West Bank? Can a new national vision—with values that speak to the present reality—arise from the fading glory of the old?

In my view, creating a viable national vision for Israel's future rests on its response to the following either/or questions:

Will Jewish existence in *Eretz Yisrael* be forged from the cumulative despair of past powerlessness, or will Israelis finally put the lie to their self-perceived vulnerability?

## ◆ ◆ ◆ Ta sh'ma ◆ ◆ ◆

We invite you to send us your favorite text and comment. Submissions should not exceed 200 words. Be sure to include proper citation of sources. Hebrew will appear in transliteration.

### ■ Hope P. Cramer

**A** rabbi whose community does not disagree with him is not really a rabbi; and a rabbi who fears his community is not really a man.

RABBI ISRAEL SALANTER

**A**t first, these words appear to challenge rabbis who may be inclined to take a politically correct rather than a halakhically correct position. We can all nod our heads and think how astute Rabbi Salanter was...oh yes, he certainly knew what goes on...my rabbi should read this, etc.

Before we get too smug and judgmental, perhaps we should think again, and ask ourselves who's responsible for the dilemma. Can we honestly fault rabbis for manipulating to survive, to protect themselves and their families against the vagaries of synagogue power plays?

I think Rabbi Salanter directed these words to all of us. Rabbis surely have a mandate to represent and demand high standards, but the rest of us have an equal mandate to be fair with our rabbis and aim for the same high standards in our own actions.

HOPE P. CRAMER, nearly 70 year old, has been an active synagogue member all her life and has seen a lot of rabbis come and go.

Israel's fifty year trajectory may be compared to succeeding at a high-risk obstacle course. Dodging post-Holocaust trauma while winning wars and suppressing terrorists, the fledgling state vanquished its vulnerability beyond anyone's expectations, evolving into a military power with enough muscle to not only survive, but ultimately reverse the direction of some of its adversaries. Sadat's unprecedented bid for peace, the Oslo accords, the treaty with Jordan—all were integrally linked to Israel's standing as the major military force in the region.

However, instead of acknowledging their own hard won strength, many Israelis, echoed by their Diaspora supporters, still submit to a siege mentality. Attaining power is not enough, they claim. Only continued, unre-

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lenting exercise of that power over Palestinians can truly safeguard the country's Jewish citizens.

### Creating A More Inclusive Vision

Such an attitude points up the tenacious grip of the myth of powerlessness. It is not a simple thing for Jews to contend with their own political and military might. Our history has rarely afforded us such an opportunity. Yet if Israel does not see clear to placing limits on its power to ensure Palestinians their own independent space and security, both peoples will be doomed to what author David Shipler has called "the exchange of wound for wound."

Fortunately, the Torah offers striking paradigms for sharing power, models which can strengthen Israel strategically and spiritually as it allows others with lesser power to come into their own. One of Abraham's first actions in Canaan was resolving a territorial conflict between his and Lot's shepherds. Abraham offered Lot whatever portion of land he preferred, saying, "Is not the whole land before you?" (Genesis 13:9). Similarly, a dangerously escalating dispute between Philistine shepherds and Isaac's shepherds over ownership of wells was resolved by Avimelech, the Philistine king. He transcended the mutual hostility and sued Isaac for peace, requesting that they sign an agreement stating "that you (Isaac) will do us no harm, just as we would do none to you" (Genesis 26:29). In each case, the antagonists took risks to share the land and its resources, quelling imminent violence through a partial relinquishing of power.

It seems to me that the Hebrew root *shin, vav, vet* is also instructive, as it gives rise to the closely related words *lasheev*, "to return," as in "returning" to Zion, and *l'hasheev*, "to give back." The linguistic interconnectedness prompts one to ask: In returning to, and repossessing the land, must we not give back some of it? True, so many of us consider "land for peace" to involve giving up what is rightfully ours. In light of the tragic losses Israel has suffered, it is understandably difficult to extricate ourselves from this position. However, to the extent that we can be sensitive to the Palestinians, who feel entitled to a return of land that they regard as having been taken from them, we can more realistically grapple

with the complexities of negotiating territorial issues. "Giving back" does not have to connote weakness, but the strength of relationship and compromise, precisely as Abraham, Lot, Avimelech and Isaac demonstrated.

Will Israel remain mired in its old Zionist ideology, rooted in the concept of the nation-state, or will it have the wisdom to shape a new, post-Zionist vision?

Arthur Hertzberg makes a persuasive case for recasting Zionism in multiethnic terms, arguing that the vocabulary of nationalism which Herzl and other early Zionists so potently employed is currently not only passé, but counterproductive (*Moment*, February 1998). I agree. Redefining Zionism in the tangled, strained-to-the-limit Israeli-Palestinian reality of the late 20th century begs for a broader, more inclusive vision, one which speaks to the shared destiny of two peoples living on the same land. Can we resolve the problems created by characterizing Israel as "the Jewish state," when this appellation only serves to widen the agonizing rift between Jews and Palestinians? Given the fact that Israel was established to be a Jewish country, how can peace and justice best be served against the backdrop of the worsening Israeli/Palestinian collision?

### On The Brink Of A Blessing

When Israel is ready to embrace a multiethnic vision for its inhabitants, I believe it will accept the idea of sharing the land as a blessing, rather than as a concession or curse. Just as Abraham made a radical break with the convictions of his youth, so will a more mature Israel find the courage to reengage its faith by discarding its old belief in the effectiveness of controlling others through exclusion and force.

As Israel reaches fifty, I pray for the time when no soldier will come home wounded in body or spirit from duty in the West Bank and Gaza. May a new vision be borne aloft, mirrored in the eternal words of the Prophet:

Not by might nor by power  
But by My spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.

(Zechariah 4:6) ✦

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