

Envisioning Jewish Peoplehood

בית כנסת ישראל

*Beit Knesset Yisrael*

Envisioning the Place of *Am Yisrael* in the Lives of North  
American Reform Jews

[www.jpeoplehood.com](http://www.jpeoplehood.com)

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## **Annotated Table of Contents of Web Pages**

### **I. Home Page**

This page of the site introduces the project and what it is about. It includes the rationale for the site as well as the hopes for its use by listing enduring understandings, essential questions, and goals.

### **II. What is Jewish Peoplehood?**

This page starts to define the word Peoplehood in terms of the dictionary and how scholars in the field use this word.

#### **A. Challenge of Peoplehood**

This page draws from sociological data and anecdotal evidence found by educators and scholars in the field of Jewish education who focus on issues of Jewish peoplehood.

#### **B. Peoplehood in Texts**

This page contains links to subpages about various Jewish texts where examples of Peoplehood are found.

##### **1. Peoplehood in the Bible**

The Bible offers many examples of the formation of the Jewish people from a tribe to a religion to a nation. The texts, listed in chronologically according to how they appear in the *Tanakh*, are in Hebrew and followed by an English translation. Explanations or modern commentaries are included as well as several discussion questions for use with teens or adults to help them think about Peoplehood through a different lens.

##### **2. Peoplehood in Rabbinic Texts**

There are many texts found in rabbinic sources such as the Mishnah, Talmud, and Tosefta that relate to Jewish peoplehood. Each Hebrew text is followed by an English translation and several discussion questions for use with teens or adults to help them think about Peoplehood through a different lens.

##### **3. Peoplehood in Liturgy**

Jews pray in community. The Talmud teaches us about needing a *minyan* (a quorum of ten), so it is no surprise that much of our liturgy is in the form of first person plural, —well. While most prayers praise or petition God, many prayers are said on behalf of the Jewish people. Reform Judaism includes these expressions of worship and therefore includes many examples of Jewish peoplehood. Several of these are included on this webpage.

#### **C. Reform Judaism and Peoplehood**

This webpage cites the platforms and statements by the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the Union for Reform Judaism, and the Association of Zionists of America that deal with issues of Jewish peoplehood. By looking at the historical data regarding the development of the idea of Jewish peoplehood in Reform Judaism one can gain a greater understanding of how it affects Reform Jewish life today.

#### **D. Zionism and Peoplehood**

This page discusses the relationship, and tension, between the two concepts of Zionism and Peoplehood. By bringing in Zionist thinkers who spoke of creating a State of Israel for the purpose of strengthening peoplehood this page will demonstrate

how Israel is, and continues to be, an important part of developing a sense of peoplehood amongst Jews.

### **III. Peoplehood in Motion**

These pages outline ways Jewish peoplehood is taught and realized in today's world. From quotations by educators and scholars to enacting ways of celebrating in a ritualized or educational setting, Jewish peoplehood plays an important role in shaping the lives of Reform Jews.

#### **A. People about Peoplehood**

This page contains quotes from people who are thinking about Jewish peoplehood. Some are rabbis, educators, and scholars, but some are lay leaders at congregations and other interested people working to grow the Jewish peoplehood agenda within the global world.

#### **B. Peoplehood in Celebration**

These subpages focus on five Jewish holidays which refer to peoplehood or celebrate the Jewish people's collective narrative. They include Tu B'shevat, Purim, Passover, Yom Haatzma-ut and Shavuot. By looking at their liturgy one can see how notions of peoplehood are described in a historical context-both ancient and more modern-to give meaning for Jews today.

##### **1. Tu B'Shevat בשבט ו"ט**

This page provides resources of where ideas of Jewish peoplehood are found within the celebration of Tu B'shevat. The resources include prayers to say on Tu B'Shevat for special foods, midrash, discussion questions, story books for children, social action and environmental ideas, and music.

##### **2. Purim פירופ**

This page provides resources of where ideas of Jewish peoplehood are found within the celebration of Purim. The resources include quotes from Megillat Esther, midrash, discussion questions, story books for children, social action ideas, and music.

##### **3. Passover חספ**

This page provides resources of where ideas of Jewish peoplehood are found within the celebration of Purim. The resources include quotes from the *Haggadah*, suggestions for various *Haggadot*, adult educational books, story books for children, and creative reading and music to enhance your *seder*.

##### **4. Yom Haatzma-ut העצמאות בוי**

This page provides an in depth look at Yom Haatzma-ut ceremonies in various *siddurim* from different movements and countries.

##### **5. Shavuot תועובש**

This page provides resources of where ideas of Jewish peoplehood are found within the celebration of Shavuot. The resources include quotes from the Book of Ruth, midrash, discussion questions, story books for children, social action ideas, and music.

#### **C. Peoplehood in Poetry**

This page contains poetry and excerpts from Israeli and American authors whose works express concern about issues of peoplehood and Zionism. Some are found in the new Reform *Siddur*, *Mishkan T'filah*, and are read during worship services. This page is

meant to serve as a teaching tool, with a video included of a reading of one of the poems, as well as it being a handout. This page will continue to grow with submissions made by educators in the field.

#### **D. Peoplehood in Commemoration**

This page will have examples of Peoplehood found in Yom Hazikaron and Yom Hashoah liturgy.

#### **E. Peoplehood Programs**

The listed organizations are engaged in the Jewish peoplehood endeavor. The programs range in terms of training young adults and educators to direct service work one can do within the Jewish and global communities. They are divided into subcategories: service programs, youth and adult education, synagogue partnerships, Israel engagement and advocacy. Each program has a brief explanation about what they do and for whom the program is designed. There is a hyperlink to take the interested user to the website of the program.

### **IV. Peoplehood Pedagogy**

Through the creation of this website, and other Jewish peoplehood programs, there is an underlying assumption that teaching –peoplehood enriches one's personal Jewish identity and strengthens the collective identity of the Jewish people. However, it is important to take a step back to ask the following questions: why teach peoplehood, how should you teach peoplehood, and what is the role of Israel in teaching Jewish peoplehood. This page attempts to briefly answer those questions based on research from educators and scholars in the field.

### **V. Ritual**

This page contains the initial pieces of a ritual curriculum around the notion of doing a ritual around *Aliyah* or travel to Israel in a congregational setting. With the background information of why this is important, including enduring understandings, essential questions, core concepts, and goals, one learns the incredible value of engaging in this ritual – not just for the person moving or traveling to Israel, but for all of the participants in the sacred space.

#### **A. Berit Milah and Naming**

This page looks at examples of Jewish peoplehood within the texts and liturgy for *berit milah* and naming ceremonies.

#### **B. Travel to Israel**

This page contains a rationale for ritual around travel to Israel including enduring understandings and essential questions. It also contains links to subpages containing prayers, creative readings and songs about Israel and Jewish peoplehood. There is also a book listed for further reading: Hoffman, Lawrence A. *Israel: A Spiritual Travel Guide*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1997.

##### **1. Aliyah**

This ritual can be a standalone event or pieces of text can be excerpted from here to be added into a regular worship service. The page contains readings, text and songs to enhance the experience.

##### **2. Creative Readings**

This page includes poetry and creative piece to be read as part of a ritual to honor a person, family or group who is traveling to Israel.

##### **3. Prayers**

This page includes prayers to be read of a ritual to honor a person, family or group who is traveling to Israel.

**4. Songs**

This page includes songs to be sung as part of a ritual to honor a person, family or group who is traveling to Israel.

**5. While in Israel**

This page contains readings, prayers and meditations in Hebrew, English and English transliteration to use during a visit to Israel. This page can be printed it out so that an individual or family can take it with them in order to have these prayers readily accessible when important moments occur for which they can be said. While these mostly deal with sacralizing Israel, the point is that it is another type of –map‖ for someone to bring to Israel, a Jewish map of time and space, rather than a map of just the land.

**VI. Resources**

**A. Peoplehood in Print**

This list of children's book which includes stories appropriate for five to fourteen year olds deal with issues of Jewish peoplehood found in a variety of settings. Each unique story – about Bible, God, Israel, holidays, lifecycle, the Shoah, world Jewry – expresses the importance of the Jewish people in order to teach tradition and the values of helping one another and repairing the world.

**B. References**

This page contains a long list of books and articles, in Hebrew and English, consulted for use in this website. While not all of them are cited within the text of the pages, they helped to inform the project and are an excellent resource for anyone interested in pursuing this topic.

**C. Synagogue Programming**

This page contains links and explanations to online study guides and programs for synagogue educators, lay leaders, and clergy to use in the congregational setting. One hope for this website is that congregational educators and rabbis will donate their resources to make this site a collaborative collection of work.

**VII. Media and Music**

This page contains various YouTube videos about peoplehood, from educational programs to music videos. It also contains links to songs about peoplehood by popular American and Israeli artists and a –Peoplehood Playlist‖ – a handout one can download with lyrics to songs in Hebrew and English, including English translations and transliteration.

**VIII. Blog**

Often leaders and scholars within the Jewish community think about and grapple with issues of Jewish peoplehood. This blog will post new content once a week based on what is going on around the globe dealing with issues of Jewish community, Israel and/or the Jewish people. Recent postings about issues related to the *Kotel* and the Women of the Wall group include articles by Anat Hoffman and Rabbi Eric Yoffie in *The Jewish Daily Forward* and a personal blog posting by Dr. Lisa D. Grant.

## **IX. About and Contact Us**

The –About page explains what the website is about, in terms of it being a Capstone Project and the fulfillment of a requirement for ordination. Information submitted on the thesis proposal form is included here. The –Contact Us page contains an email address and phone number for how to be in touch with me.

## **X. Sidebar**

The sidebar is a static addition to every page as part of the website template. This means the user has access to all of the links to the [www.peoplehood.wordpress.com](http://www.peoplehood.wordpress.com) pages in addition to viewing the Twitter feed and links to outside websites that deal with issues of Jewish peoplehood in a variety of ways.

### **A. Twitter Feed**

This displays the last five –tweets posted to the Makōm Twitter account ([www.twitter.com/makomisrael](http://www.twitter.com/makomisrael)) and an icon for the user to click in order to follow the feed directly from a personal account. This account may change, but the microblogging nature of the sidebar will continue. This gives current updates to the website visitor, in 140 characters or less, of Jewish peoplehood happenings. It offers hyperlinks to articles and other blogs as well.

### **B. Links**

These are hyperlinks to outside websites divided by themes: Bible, blogs, Jewish world, Progressive and Reform Judaism, and ritual.

## Home Page

In today's world, the Internet is the first stop for people of all ages when they need to find answers or community, even when it comes to Judaism. My 36-year old brother brought this home for me this past December when I asked if he needed me to email and sing the Chanukah blessings to him. He responded, "No thank you, I got them on Google through my new Droid phone." If that doesn't sum up where Judaism is today, then I don't know what does. He used his cell phone to find his answer instead of using it to call his sister, the almost-rabbi. Who needs a synagogue when you have a Smartphone?

He and my wonderful sister-in-law are working hard to embrace Judaism in their home, even though it is not her religion. They engaged in the Chanukah blessings ritual with their 7 month old son. It held meaning for my brother and he wanted to share it; to express his Judaism, teach his family, and to connect himself to the Jewish people. He did not need the synagogue to do this, or even a rabbi.

This may be because many synagogues seem too authoritative and have become static institutions, using old paradigms of membership and belonging. However, from a synagogue's perspective Jewish peoplehood is a primary understanding of what they do.<sup>1</sup> Yet they tend to alienate young adults, their potential membership, due to outdated language and programming geared toward a different audience. With the growing trend of –extended singlehood‖ of non-Orthodox Jewish adults who remain unmarried until the age of 40, this population does not have a compelling reason to join since they do not yet have children.<sup>2</sup>

Rather than thinking creatively about how to engage this population of unaffiliated Jews who want to receive Jewish information, education, ritual and worship, they continue the status quo while watching their numbers decrease as they look out in the pews. Ethan Tucker addressed this issue in the Zeek article, –[What Independent Minyanim Teach Us About the Next Generation of Jewish Communities](http://www.zeek.net/801tucker).‖<sup>3</sup> He cites the following three reasons why Jews do not join synagogues. The first is that –Jews live modern, autonomous lives outside of the sphere of coercive rabbinic power...and thus will make their own normative choices.‖ The second is that highly educated Jews have been trained to think critically about texts as sources of wisdom and not authority. And, lastly, despite the challenges from modernity, many young adults do care what Judaism has to say as a source of help when dealing with personal and communal concerns.<sup>4</sup> They need community of some sort to assist with decision-making and crisis. This means they want and need something, they just know it isn't the typical synagogue.

Today the word –belonging‖ has new meaning when one can belong to any community in the world via a Facebook group or fan page. In the free marketplace of the Internet membership no

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<sup>1</sup> Lawrence A. Hoffman, *ReThinking Synagogues*, (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2006), 39.

<sup>2</sup> Steven M. Cohen, –Changes in American Jewish Identities: From Normative Constructions to Aesthetic Understandings,‖ Institute for Global Jewish Affairs No. 30, March 16, 2008, <http://www.jcpa.org/>.

<sup>3</sup> Ethan Tucker, –What Independent Minyanim Teach Us About the Next Generation of Jewish Communities,‖ January 2008, <http://www.zeek.net/801tucker>.

<sup>4</sup> Tucker, –What Independent Minyanim Teach Us About the Next Generation of Jewish Communities,‖ <http://www.zeek.net/801tucker>.



longer means paying dues but clicking –yes to a request to join. Dr. Ezra Kopelowitz and Dr. Shlomi Ravid, in their study entitled –Best Practices of Organizations that Build Jewish Peoplehood, outline the historical context for opting into the Jewish collective belonging.<sup>5</sup> From the 17<sup>th</sup> century until today –Jewish collective belonging has undergone five shifts in the past two hundred years.<sup>6</sup> The shifts began in the 17th century, with the first shift lasting until the early 20th century. This was a time of Traditional Belonging, in which membership was mandated by law. The second shift is known as Enclave Belonging, and marked the early 20th century until the time of World War II. The Time of Affiliation, the third shift, where membership became a choice, extended through the 1960’s. The sixties through current time is known as the fourth shift, or the time of no affiliation. Now is the time for employing a new model of thinking about being Jewish to turn the tide.

Synagogues have fallen victim to this trend. Strong ideologies have kept congregants away. Kopelowitz and Ravid found religious institutions that are successful in engaging their membership use a Jewish peoplehood paradigm understanding that Jewish belonging is multidimensional and complex and Judaism needs to be approached moderately. Being a part of the Jewish people means being connected to all Jews regardless of identity of the individual or an institution.<sup>7</sup> The research echoes the anecdotal evidence from the Zeek article – people want and need community because they want to be in relationship. That is human nature.

Being Jewish means more than belonging to one synagogue or institution. It means belonging to the Jewish collective. The community encompasses more than the religious piece of Judaism. Therefore, Jewish religious experiences become the journey, not the destination, and religious education provides the tools for this trip that should ultimately lead to communal experiences.<sup>8</sup> The role of the synagogue, or any Jewish institution who works for Jews for that matter, is to bring Jewish people together so that they can relate to one another, the larger world and to God. The way this is enacted can be through social justice work, prayer, and education, but all institutions in the organized Jewish community need to remember those three things are the means, not the end. The ultimate goal is for a single Jewish person to find meaning and fulfillment within their Jewish life by strengthening their connections to others going through a similar quest.

This project may ask more questions than provide answers. It is about the different questions that arise when trying to understand Peoplehood as concept for Jewish education, Jewish identity building, Zionism, and so much more. As this website continues to grow and develop, it is my hope that you will contribute to this blog and to the many resources found throughout the site. Blog posts will be updated weekly so visit often!

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<sup>5</sup> Ezra Kopelowitz and Shlomi Ravid, –Best Practices of Organizations that Build Jewish Peoplehood, January 10, 2010, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Kopelowitz and Ravid, –Best Practices of Organizations that Build Jewish Peoplehood, January 10, 2010, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Kopelowitz and Ravid, –Best Practices of Organizations that Build Jewish Peoplehood, January 10, 2010, 9.

<sup>8</sup> Kopelowitz and Ravid, –Best Practices of Organizations that Build Jewish Peoplehood, January 10, 2010, 27-28.

# What is Jewish Peoplehood?

*Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh Bazei זה בזה*

**All Israel is Responsible for One Another [Bavli,**

**Shavuot 39a]**

In the summer of 2008 I attended a three-week seminar in Israel for my fellowship. The title of this seminar was —Rabbinic Leadership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Challenges of Peoplehood in Creating Compelling Jewish Communities.‖ The guiding themes for the seminar were the following:

- We begin with a core assumption that individual Jewish lives and collective Jewish experience are enriched through a strong connection to the idea and the reality of a thriving Jewish people.
- We also recognize that this assumption is not necessarily a normative and compelling idea within Reform congregational communities, and thus presents a critical challenge to leaders within the Reform movement.<sup>9</sup>

What is —Peoplehood?‖ Is it an ethnicity or is it a culture? This would remove religion from the equation. Is it a nationality? This could not be since Jews come from many nations. Chaim Nachman Bialik wrote about this Jewish dualism —By dualism we mean the rule of two traits in the nation’s soul, one contradicting the other.‖<sup>10</sup> It is embedded within the Jewish psyche and weakens the soul of the nation while enriching national content.

The word —Peoplehood‖ always is underlined by my computer editor as being misspelled. However, the MSN Encarta Dictionary found in Microsoft Word provides this definition: identity as a member of a particular people, especially a nation or ethnic group. —Philologos‖ also tried to tackle this issue in a Jewish Daily Forward article in June 2004.<sup>11</sup> Only two out of the six dictionaries owned by the author contained this word, the 1998 Encarta World English Dictionary and the 1992 American Heritage.<sup>12</sup> “Peoplehood: The state or condition of being a people or one of a people: *As symbols go, few are as national and sectarian as the menorah. It is the symbol of Jewish peoplehood*” (Charles Krauthammer).‖ Philologos continues to say that this word must have formerly entered the English language between 1961 and 1992, the dates between the youngest dictionary without the word and the American Heritage Dictionary. However, the author notes that there is a book published in 1949 titled, *Volume I of the The Jews: Their History, Culture, and Religion* containing an essay by Salo Baron on —The Contribution of Judaism to World Ethics‖ with the sentence, —It may justly be interpreted [in the writings of Saadia Gaon] that the constitutive principle of Jewish peoplehood is... the

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<sup>9</sup> —Rabbinic Leadership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Challenges of Peoplehood in Creating Compelling Jewish Communities‖ (Syllabus for HUC Mandel Fellows Israel Seminar, June 6-28, 2008), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Chaim Nachman Bialik, —Jewish Dualism,‖ Jewish Frontier (July 1961), 13.

<sup>11</sup> Philologos, —Peoplehood from the Jews? On Language,‖ Jewish Daily Forward, 11 June 2004, <http://www.forward.com/articles/5827/>.

<sup>12</sup> *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed., s.v. —Peoplehood.‖

opportunity which the Jewish group affords the individual Jew to share the way of life promulgated in the Torah.<sup>13</sup>

Philologos posits that Jews most likely coined this term since when speaking about the American people or the French people the term often used is –nationhood and when speaking about an ethnic group the term used is –ethnicity. Since the concept of the Jewish people dates back to Biblical times Philologos states that it is inevitable that this term came into being.

Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman also grapples with the meaning of Peoplehood from an ethnicity and cultural perspective. –To the extent that Jewish ethnicity reflects Jewish Peoplehood and represents the commitment to build thriving Jewish community, I applaud it. But, ‘ethnicity’ has a less positive connotation: a nostalgic yearning for Jewish folkways that once sustained us as a people apart, but can longer do so.<sup>14</sup>

Mordecai Kaplan, the founder of the Reconstructionist movement, argued that Peoplehood meant community and Jewish community –needed no justification beyond itself. Every people requires community.<sup>15</sup> Kaplan viewed Judaism as a religious civilization, meaning that his definition of Jewish peoplehood was not devoid of religion. Jewish acts such as *mitzvot* should meet individual human needs while also helping to ensure the survival of the Jewish people.<sup>16</sup> As a Zionist he wrote that –the problem of Judaism is to us simply the problem of the spiritual life of the Jewish people.<sup>17</sup> As he built a new movement he put forth a major tenet regarding Jewish peoplehood. Kaplan believed in creating Jewish solidarity in Palestine and in the Diaspora through building worship communities. Based on this, Hoffman argues that the culturalist position includes religion.<sup>18</sup>

Martin Buber (1878-1965), a philosopher and Zionist, asked in a paper entitled –Nationalism in 1921 what –people and –nation mean, and how they relate to one another. He states that –a people becomes a nation to the degree that it grows aware that its existence differs from that of other peoples and acts on the basis of this awareness. So the term ‘nation’ signifies the unit ‘people,’ from the point of view of conscious and active difference.<sup>19</sup> However, the nation will not succeed if it is an end in and of itself, it is part of building something bigger; for the Jews it is Judaism. In another essay Buber wrote, –Israel is a people like no other, for it is the only people in the world which, from its earliest beginnings, has been both a nation and a religious community.<sup>20</sup> Therefore a notion of peoplehood cannot lack a commitment of faith.

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<sup>13</sup> Salo Baron, –The Contribution of Judaism to World Ethics in *Volume II of The Jews: Their History, Culture, and Religion*, ed. Louis Finkelstein (1949).

<sup>14</sup> Lawrence A. Hoffman, *ReThinking Synagogues*, (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2006), 5.

<sup>15</sup> Hoffman, *ReThinking Synagogues*, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Eugene B. Borowitz, *Renewing the Covenant*, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 258.

<sup>17</sup> Mordecai M. Kaplan, –The Reconstruction of Judaism (August 4, 1920), in *Jew in the Modern World* eds. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 500.

<sup>18</sup> Hoffman, *ReThinking Synagogues*, 8.

<sup>19</sup> Martin Buber, –Nationalism, in *The Weimer Republic Sourcebook*, eds. Anton Kaes and Martin Jay (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 251.

<sup>20</sup> Martin Buber, *Israel and the World: Essays in a Time of Crisis*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1948), 248.

Steven M. Cohen and Jack Wertheimer recognize that Jews have always understood the two sides of our identity – the ethnic and the national—and one cannot be separated from the other.<sup>21</sup> One might think peoplehood is embedded within tribal associations and shared history, but this is a difficult way to classify Jewish peoplehood, especially in the Reform community who welcomes so many Jews by choice.

According to Leonid Nevzlin, the founder of the NADAV Fund for the Advancement of Jewish Heritage and Chair of Beth Hatefutsoth, Jews have a complex identity: –We are one people, but we live all over the world and in many ways. We want to live as Jews – whatever that may mean to us – but also to play an active role in our broader cultures and communities.¶<sup>22</sup> This is a challenge for the Jewish people, how to be one in the midst of diversity, diversion and acculturation into non-Jewish society. He posits that in order for Jewish life and to continue, Jews need a sense of a shared identity. Instead of being about the –I¶ of our individual selves or local community, the Jewish people should think in terms of the globalized –we.¶ This is Jewish peoplehood.

Dr. Shlomi Ravid, the newly appointed director of the Global Jewish Peoplehood Hub, notes that Jewish Peoplehood serves as a core concept, emerging in the last 10 years, to help Jews reinterpret our identity. It can be felt but it is hard to describe. For Ravid that is not an issue, the challenge is how to teach it so that feeling is strengthened. Ravid also explains that peoplehood is a term that transcends time and personal acquaintance. He defines it as –a worldview that gives the sense of belonging and responsibility for the Jewish people the status of core values.¶<sup>23</sup> With the issues of persecution and anti-Semitism on the decline, and the establishment of the sovereign State of Israel, Jewish peoplehood has come to the forefront of our communal language about how to continue to progress Jewish identity and the Jewish community. This is the gap that needs to be filled. Ravid is –promoting a cultural approach to Jewish life that is based on profound interconnectivity, mutual responsibility among Jews, and uncompromising care – and he is doing it with the aim of reaching every corner of the world.¶<sup>24</sup>

The question becomes why the issue of peoplehood has emerged now. What has happened in the Jewish world to get people like Nevzlin, Ravid, Cohen and Wertheimer to bring this to the forefront of the Jewish communal discourse? Yonatan Ariel and Simon Caplan, the people behind the new Jewish Peoplehood Hub, are among the several thinkers, educators and researchers in the field who have begun to answer this question. In a paper entitled –Creating a Center/Hub for Applied Jewish Peoplehood Strategies and Programs: Thoughts and Questions,¶ Ariel and Caplan hypothesize that the emergence of the Jewish peoplehood discussion has emerged in response to declines in –a shared consensus that Israel and/or traditional Jewish practice is the primary locus for the allegiance of the majority of the Jewish people¶ and a level

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<sup>21</sup> Steven M. Cohen and Jack Wertheimer, –Whatever Happened to the Jewish People,¶ *Commentary* (June 2006), 1.

<sup>22</sup> Leonid Nevzlin, –Letter from Leonid Nevzlin, Founder of the Nadav Fund,¶ *Peoplehood Now* (2006): 4.

<sup>23</sup> Elana Maryles Sztokman, –Profile: Shlomi Ravid – *Doing Jewish Peoplehood*,¶ *Jewish Educational Leadership* Volume 7:2 (Winter 2009), 52.

<sup>24</sup> Elana Maryles Sztokman, –Profile: Shlomi Ravid – *Doing Jewish Peoplehood*,¶ *Jewish Educational Leadership* Volume 7:2 (Winter 2009), 50.

of Jewish responsibility for traditional expressions of Jewish life.<sup>25</sup> As Jewish leaders worry about the Jewish future there needs to be a multi-directional conversation which embraces pluralism and differences amongst all Jews across the globe, rather than just Jews from one country interacting with Israel and not other countries.

Ravid states that it is in response to a need to view the world as a Jewish collective and create a language for communication among Jews that is not alienating or separating like –Israel-Diaspora.<sup>26</sup> Professor Arnold Eisen agrees with this idea stating that peoplehood seems to be the only viable candidate for bringing all Jews together, regardless of where we live or our denominational affiliations.<sup>27</sup> Dr. Misha Galperin, the Executive Vice President and CEO of The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, states that today we need to find a way for articulating why be Jewish because many Jews do not have –an enduring sense of Jewish Peoplehood.<sup>28</sup> Galperin agrees with Ravid that peoplehood creates a feeling of being connected to other Jews, through culture, religion, history and values.<sup>29</sup>

Yonatan Ariel writes –Jewish Peoplehood strikes me as one of those slippery terms that are a lot easier *done* than *said*.<sup>30</sup> He states that is characterized by shared history, traditions, memories, and culture. Ariel also recommends for us to buy Jewish peoplehood shares now. As the global market increases so will peoplehood. It is going to grow quickly and take over the Jewish intellectual and educational market. He suggests a few ways for this to happen - through –pluralogue,<sup>31</sup> an awareness of nationhood, increased solidarity, and education.<sup>31</sup> By engaging in Jewish causes, marking Jewish time, creating Jewish space, and creatively writing Jewish text, a global understanding of Peoplehood can be achieved and implemented.

Guy Tsfoni, an Israeli educator serving as the founder and director of the Shdemot Center for Community Leadership at Oranim Academic College of Education, defines Jewish peoplehood differently. The Jewish community is built on memory, and a yearning for community is an individual's quest for identity within the public sphere. Therefore, peoplehood is the international network of these local –communities of memory.<sup>32</sup>

However, Jewish Peoplehood is hard to define. Like the concept of Zionism, it means different things to different people, and it is not seen by everyone as the Jewish communal crisis of this era. Through this website we can enter a discussion of what it means to you, to me, and to all of us. We can explain the importance of seeking a definition amidst the complexity through the books, articles and blog postings. We can see how Jews are engaging in acts of –Peoplehood!

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<sup>25</sup> Yonatan Ariel and Simon Caplan, –Creating a Center/Hub for Applied Jewish Peoplehood Strategies and Programs: Thoughts and Questions, 2008.

<sup>26</sup> Yonatan Ariel, –Your People Shall Be My People, (paper presented at the Limmud conference, Manchester, England, December 29, 2009). Yonatan Ariel, –Your People Shall Be My People.

<sup>27</sup> Arnold Eisen, –United as One People, *Peoplehood Now*, 8.

<sup>28</sup> Misha Galperin, –Jonah, A Pair of Jeans and a Story of Jewish Peoplehood: A Message for Yom Kippur 2007/5768, *The Peoplehood Papers* (New York: United Jewish Communities, 2007), 4.

<sup>29</sup> Galperin, –Jonah, A Pair of Jeans and a Story of Jewish Peoplehood: A Message for Yom Kippur 2007/5768, 4.

<sup>30</sup> Ariel, –Your People Shall Be My People.

<sup>31</sup> Ariel, –Your People Shall Be My People.

<sup>32</sup> Guy Tsfoni, –The Jewish Nation Building Community that Builds the Jewish People, (Shdemot, 2005).

through synagogue resources, liturgy and ritual. But, most importantly, we can work together to try to build a sense of Peoplehood, no matter how we define it.

## Challenge of Peoplehood

Peoplehood is not only a difficult word to define, it is also a difficult concept to grasp and not everyone buys into it. Jay Michaelson critiques this as a term created by Jewish elites –to find common ground among secular Israelis and Hasidim in Brooklyn, Jews-by-ethnicity from the former Soviet Union and “cultural Jews” in Europe.<sup>33</sup> It can be understood as something positive which unites Jews or something negative as something it is not – race, ethnicity, religion or nationality. Michaelson’s critique of this view is that it is without any meaning, we are all Jewish but we don’t know what that means. —Peoplehood embraces it all and, by saying nothing, includes everything. A positive definition starts to narrow what peoplehood means, thus leaving some people out. Jews are not all united around issues of Judaism or Israel. Peoplehood may unite Jews who define themselves as such but, according to Michaelson, it does not do anything. It is not a compelling term (since it is empty of meaning) for many engaged Jews let alone those who are unaffiliated. Michaelson states the challenge of Peoplehood as this: –Is it important that all these new Jewishnesses fall under a vague rubric of “This is my people”? Does the new label really increase our pride or kinship with our fellow Jews? Or is it merely a buzzword, having meaning only within the halls of large institutions, full of sound and funding but ultimately signifying nothing?<sup>34</sup>

In an opinion article, author Hillel Halkin harshly critiques Shlomo Sand’s book, *The Invention of the Jewish People*,<sup>35</sup> which posits that Jewish people are an invention of modern times to justify their need for a state.<sup>36</sup> The book is highly controversial among other modern scholars who take issue with the thesis that the Jewish people are a modern construct of something that does not really exist. Neil Rogachevsky and Dov Zigler, guest columnists in *The Jewish Post* on December 24, 2009, also noted that this book’s claims are completely illogical. For one reason, it is impossible to remove one’s Jewishness in the eyes of others. But, —the broader point is that Zionsim and Israel are based on Jewish religion and not ethnic kinship.<sup>37</sup>

Dr. Misha Galperin, in his article within *The Peoplehood Papers*, defines what Jewish Peoplehood is and is not. He claims it is one of the many ways Jews engage with Judaism; a shared history, culture, values and future; an extended family; collective aspects of identity; a way to unify diversity; and a global community of purpose.<sup>38</sup> He states that is not only

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<sup>33</sup> Jay Michaelson, –Peoplehood: There’s No There There, *Jewish Daily Forward*, April 25, 2008, <http://www.forward.com/articles/13170/>.

<sup>34</sup> Michaelson, –Peoplehood: There’s No There There. *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Shlomo Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2009).

<sup>36</sup> Hillel Halkin, –Jewish Peoplehood Denied, While Israel’s Foes Applaud, *Jewish Daily Forward*, June 24, 2009, <http://www.forward.com/articles/108457/>

<sup>37</sup> Neil Rogachevsky and Dov Zigler, –Zionism sans Jews? *The Jewish Post*, December 24, 2009, Opinion section.

<sup>38</sup> Galperin, –Jonah, A Pair of Jeans and a Story of Jewish Peoplehood: A Message for Yom Kippur 2007/5768, *ibid.* 4.

nationality, devoid of religiousness, a buzzword for fundraising purposes, or an ethnicity.<sup>39</sup> Both ways of defining Jewish peoplehood are challenging. Firstly, a definition framed by boundaries in negative terms (what it is —not) describes elements it may be lacking. It should include some pieces of nationality, religion, ethnicity and even a rallying cry for the Jewish community to financially back programming based on this endeavor. Secondly, some of the positive claims of what peoplehood is seem too amorphous, unclear, and filled with —in-speak. Clergy and educators need to find a way of articulating peoplehood through education, worship and action that resonates with their membership.

Galperin also notes another challenge of peoplehood – the divide between the nationalism of Israelis and the religion of American Jews.<sup>40</sup> This separates the Jewish family; one of his main definitions of what peoplehood should be. Guy Tsfoni lists a similar challenge from an Israeli's perspective. Israel also needs new paradigms of collective peoplehood, —where individuals and groups in Israel could define themselves as members of a particular community in parallel with their civic and democratic identity within the framework of the State of Israel.<sup>41</sup>

Barbara Lerner Spectre, the founding director of Paideia, the European Institute for Jewish Studies in Sweden, approaches peoplehood from a European perspective. She notes the challenge of peoplehood as perhaps the —secular reworking of the notion of a special people that was addressed with a special mission of becoming a holy nation, a nation of priests.<sup>42</sup> She states that this is acceptable because it helps to maintain and inspire the Jewish people. Both Spectre and Tsfoni seek an international network. Tsfoni argues that in —the same way one cannot imagine a Jewish Community without the broad context of belonging to the Jewish People, one cannot imagine the existence of the Jewish People, but as the physical and spiritual corporation of Jewish communities all over the world.<sup>43</sup>

Enacting peoplehood and making it meaningful, is also a challenge, especially for younger generations. In the publication by the Jewish Education Service of North America (JESNA) focused on Israel Education, Michael Rukin, a lay leader in Boston's Jewish community, argues that using Jewish Peoplehood as a method of Jewish education is an outdated model. This generation has collective memories built on different foundations than the generation that preceded them and —we must join with their realities and open new, inviting, attractive Jewish vistas for them.<sup>44</sup>

Another challenge of Jewish peoplehood is how to measure it. The Peoplehood Index Project was created to do just that – to measure closeness among Jewish communities in a quantitative

<sup>39</sup> Galperin, —Jonah, A Pair of Jeans and a Story of Jewish Peoplehood: A Message for Yom Kippur 2007/5768, ¶ 4.

<sup>40</sup> Galperin, —Jonah, A Pair of Jeans and a Story of Jewish Peoplehood: A Message for Yom Kippur 2007/5768, ¶ 6-7.

<sup>41</sup> Guy Tsfoni, —The Jewish Nation Building Community that Builds the Jewish People, ¶ (Shdemot, 2005), 6.

<sup>42</sup> Barbara Lerner Spectre, —Jewish Peoplehood, ¶ *The Peoplehood Papers* (New York: United Jewish Communities, 2007), 17.

<sup>43</sup> Tsfoni, —The Jewish Nation Building Community that Builds the Jewish People, ¶ 6.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Rukin, —Looking for the Keys, ¶ *Agenda: Jewish Education* #18 (Winter 2004), 30.

and nuanced way.<sup>45</sup> Leonard Saxe and Benjamin Phillips from Brandeis University seem a bit skeptical of this approach for two reasons. They question if empirical data can change behavior and make a difference, and if peoplehood can be reduced to quantifiable and comparable terms.<sup>46</sup>

Although the challenges of Jewish peoplehood are great, it does not mean it is not worth trying to do. From creating a definition to figure out ways to enact it, it is a field of study that has come to the forefront of the Jewish community today and will continue to evolve. The mission of finding new ways for Jews to be in relationship with one another will always be on the mind of the leadership of the Jewish community as they grapple with ways to ensure Jewish continuity.

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<sup>45</sup> Yoav Shoham and Nimrod Goor, –The Peoplehood Index Project,‖ in *The Peoplehood Papers* Volume 4 (Jerusalem: The Jewish Agency, 2009), 7.

<sup>46</sup> Leonard Saxe and Benjamin Phillips, –Jewish Peoplehood: Greater Than the Sum of its Parts,‖ in *The Peoplehood Papers* 4 (Jerusalem: The Jewish Agency, 2009), 34.



## Peoplehood in Texts: Peoplehood in the Bible

There are many examples of how the people in the Bible move from being individuals, into families, into tribes, into community and then into a nation. Below are several quotations from the text that demonstrate these transitions. You will also find discussion questions to help spark conversations about these texts. We welcome your comments and feedback.

[illegible]

פֶּתַח, אֶגֶר, יְהִי; בְּרֵךְ, בְּרֵךְ  
 וְאֵל, וְאֵל  
 מ

And Adonai said to Abram, Get out from your country, and from your family, and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you; And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. (Gen 12:1-2)

*The Jewish people, are born in the land of Israel through a covenant with God and Abraham (Lech Lecha). Israel becomes a central location, as the Jews leave for Egypt, living in exile and yearn for redemption by returning to Zion. This theme of exile-redemption recurs twice more after the destruction of the Temples and the dispersal of the Jewish people.<sup>47</sup>*

1. Where else could the Jewish people have been born? How is Israel an integral part of this story?
2. Here the offspring of Abram are considered **עַמְּךָ**, a great nation. How might this make them a great people?

שָׁמַע מֶלֶךְ הַלְהִים יִי, וְקָנַל יוֹגֵם, יִקְהִי־הָאֵל שְׁלֵמִים, יִמְנָהּ הָאֵל הַצִּי־הֵאָוֹר  
א אָא נֶאֱלַף  
אָא

And God said to him: I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a community of nations will be from you, and kings will come from your loins. (Gen 35:11)

*The first commandment found in Genesis 1:28, פֶּרּוּ וּבָרְאוּ , tells Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and multiply.” This is the way in which the Jewish people will continue to grow and eventually become a nation.*

1. Here the people are called **עַמֵּי הָעוֹלָם** – a community of nations. What does this mean in comparison to the term **גוֹי גָּדוֹל** – a great nation<sup>11</sup> used earlier in the text?
2. What does this imply in terms of the future of the Jewish people and all people?

<sup>47</sup> Bernard Reisman, —An Ideology for American Jews,|| *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, 63:4 (1987): 277.

וְיִהְיֶה, הָהָר וְ-ת-וּעַמּוֹר רַרמִם; וְת-מְעַתְּסַרשָׁת וּנְגַשׁוּ, וְ-מְפִנִּיפִמֹר

www.jpeoplehood.com

*In the Book of Ruth the Israelites are defined as a people; not just as a religion.*

[illegible]

<sup>48</sup> Tamara Cohn Eskenazi and Andrea L. Weiss, eds, *The Torah: A Women's Commentary* (New York: URJ Press and Women of Reform Judaism, 2008), 305.

1. What does it mean for an outsider to recognize the Jewish people as –your people?||
2. What does it mean for a non-Jewish person to want to become part of the Jewish people? What other steps might needed besides a ritual conversion?

[illegible]

1. Relate this text back to the initial text in Genesis 12. What must a nation or people do to survive as such outside of the land of Israel?
2. Is Israel a necessary ingredient for the success and future of the Jewish people?

## Peoplehood in Texts: Peoplehood in Rabbinic Texts

*Below is a sampling of texts taken from rabbinic sources. Each text has a few discussion questions following it. We suggest you use these with teens or adults if you are doing a text study on the theme of Jewish peoplehood, or even Jewish identity. These texts help us look at this notion of what it means to be part of the Jewish people through a different lens. If you find other texts from this time period that relate to Peoplehood please submit a comment so that we may add it to our list of educational resources.*

**Tosefta, Berakhot 3:14-3:15** שז - תוספתא מסכת ברכות (ליברמן) פרק ג הלכה טו

העומדים בחוצה לארץ מכוונים את לבם כנגד ארץ ישראל שנ' ויתפללו דרך ארצם .  
העומדים בארץ ישראל מכוונים את לבם כנגד ירושלם ומתפללים שנ' ויתפללו אל העיר  
הזאת

העומדים בירושלם מכוונים את לבם כנגד בית המקדש שנ' והתפללו אל הבית הזה  
העומדים במקדש מכוונים את לבם כנגד בית קדשי הקדשים ומתפללים שנ' ויתפללו אל  
המקום הזה נמצאו עומדין בצפון פניהם לדרום בדרום פניהם לצפון במזרח פניהם למערב  
במערב פניהם למזרח נמצאו כל ישראל מתפללים למקום אחד

Those who are outside the land [Israel] turn their hearts toward the Land of Israel, as it is written: –And they will pray toward their land|| [II Chr. 6:38]. Those standing [in the Land of Israel] direct their hearts toward Jerusalem and pray, as it is written: –And they shall pray toward this city|| [II Chr. 6:38]. Those standing in Jerusalem shall direct their hearts toward the Temple, as it is written: –And they shall pray toward this House|| [II Chr. 6:32]. Those standing in the Temple should direct their hearts toward the Holy of Holies and pray, as it is written: –And they shall pray toward this place|| [I Kgs. 8:30]. Thus, those who stand in the north will face south, those in the south will face north, those in the east will face west, and those in the west will face east. Thus all Israel will be praying to the same place.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it important for the entire Jewish community to face the same direction when praying?
2. What else could the Biblical quotes have meant?
3. What is special about praying toward one specific place that is on the earth (as opposed to towards the heavens)?

**Mishnah, Pirke Avot 1:14** משנה, פרקי אבות א:יד

הוא היה אומר אם אין אני לי מי לי וכשאני לעצמי מה אני ואם לא עכשיו אימתי

If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?

### Discussion Questions:

1. What is more important – being for yourself or being for the community?
2. How do you balance this tension that exists in our daily lives – being for ourselves and being for others at the expense of others?
3. How does the third question relate to the first two?
4. What does this phrase mean when we look through a lens of social justice – doing for ourselves vs. doing for others? Who are the others?

Talmud Bavli, Shavuot 39 ט' שבועות, תלמוד בבלי

כל עבירות שבתורה מכל העולם לא? והכתיב (ויקרא כ"ו) וכשלו איש באחיו – איש בעון אחיו, מלמד שכל ישראל ערבים זה בזה

For all of the transgressions that are in the Torah, is not the whole world punished? It is written, –And they shall stumble one upon another (Leviticus 26) because of the failing of the other, this teaches that all Israel are responsible for one another.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Who is considered part of the –whole world?
2. What does it mean to be responsible for one another?
3. What social justice themes are found in this text?
4. Why only Israel? What about everyone else in the world?

### Talmud Bavli, Ta'anit 11a

תנא: חסוכי בנים משמשין מטותיהן בשני רעבון. תנו רבנן: בזמן שישראל שרויין בצער ופירש אחד מהן, באין שני מלאכי השרת שמלוין לו לאדם, ומניחין לו ידיהן על ראשו, ואומרים: פלוני זה שפירש מן הצבור – אל יראה בנחמת צבור

Our Rabbis have taught that when Israel is sunk in sorrow, and a Jew stands apart from them, the two ministering angels that accompany every one of us come and place their hands on that person's head and say: –You have separated yourself from the community; you will not see the consolation of the community.

Translation by: Chaim Stern. *Gates of Freedom: A Passover Haggadah* (Chappaqua, NY: Rossel Books, 1982), 17.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Why would a Jew separate him or herself from the community of Israel when times are tough?
2. Why if one of us separates him or herself from the community of Israel during a difficult time is he or she not worthy to see its repair?

3. What social justice themes are found in this text?
4. Why only separating yourself from Jews? What about everyone else in the world?



## Peoplehood in Texts: Peoplehood in Liturgy

Jews pray in community. The Talmud teaches us about needing a *minyan* (a quorum of ten), so it is no surprise that much of our liturgy is in the form of first person plural, –we. While most prayers praise or petition God, many prayers are said on behalf of the Jewish people. Reform Judaism includes these expressions of worship and therefore recognizes our responsibility to connect and care for the Jewish collective. A few of these, taken from the Reform *siddur Mishkan T'filah* are listed below. Please note that often the Jewish people are called –Israel as in *Am Yisrael*.

### Nisim B'chol Yom (page 40)

יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, בָּרוּךְ יְיָ  
וְאֵלֵינוּ, בָּרוּךְ יְיָ  
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, בָּרוּךְ יְיָ

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, ozeir Yisrael big'vurah.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who girds Israel with strength.

יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, בָּרוּךְ יְיָ  
וְעַתָּה, בָּרוּךְ יְיָ  
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, בָּרוּךְ יְיָ

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, oteir Yisrael b'tifarah.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who crowns Israel with splendor.

### V'haarev Na (page 42)

יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, בָּרוּךְ יְיָ  
וְעַתָּה, בָּרוּךְ יְיָ  
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, בָּרוּךְ יְיָ

*Baruch atah, Adonai, ham'lameid Torah l'amo Yisrael.*

Blessed are You, Adonai, who teaches Torah to your people Israel.

### Alternative Readings

I am a Jew because the faith of Israel demands no abdication of my mind.

I am a Jew because the faith of Israel requires all the devotion of my heart.

I am a Jew because in every place where suffering weeps, the Jew weeps.

I am a Jew because at every time when despair cries out, the Jew hopes.

I am a Jew because the word of Israel is the oldest and the newest.

I am a Jew because the promise of Israel is the universal promise.

I am a Jew because, for Israel, the world is not yet completed; we are completing it.

I am a Jew because for Israel, humanity is not created; we are creating it.

I am a Jew because Israel places humanity and its unity above the nations and above Israel itself.

I am a Jew because, above humanity, image of the divine Unity, Israel places the unity which is divine.<sup>49</sup>

We are Israel: witness to God's covenant.

We are Israel: forbidden to worship power.

We are Israel: prophets of a vision for all.

We are Israel: schooled in the suffering of the oppressed.

We are Israel: trying to beat swords into plowshares.

We are Israel: teaching sacred words from Torah.

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<sup>49</sup>Edmond Fleg, "Why I am a Jew," in *The Zionist Idea*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1997), 483. Reprinted in *Mishkan T'filah*, 41.

## Ahava Rabbah (page 62)

Blessed are You, Adonai, who chooses your people Israel in love.

פְּדוּרָא יִיְיָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ

**Hashkivenu** (pages 18 and 160)

וְשֵׁם יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, אֲדֹנָיִם, שְׁמוֹעַ אֶת הַקּוֹל וְעוֹשֶׂה אֶת הַמַּעֲשִׂים. *Baruch atah, Adonai, shomeir amo Yisrael laad.*

Blessed are You, Adonai, Guardian of Israel.

שׁוֹלָם לְיַנּוּעַ לְיִי אֵל עַל וּתְהוֹפֶרֶשׁ , בְּדוֹרוֹ אֲתָה יְיָ  
ת עָסָפְ עֲמוֹ שֶׁרָסָרָשׁ לִי מִן הַמִּלֻּחִים

Blessed are You, Adonai, whose shelter of peace of peace is spread over us, over all your people Israel, and over Jerusalem.

יֵאָל יֵאָל , עֲבֹדֵי יֵיָי  
וְגַם שֶׁשֶׁ עָתָה  
אֵל

Blessed are You, Adonai, who redeems Israel.

[illegible]

Grant abundant peace to Israel Your people forever, for You are the sovereign God of all peace. May it be pleasing to You to bless Your people Israel, in every season and moment with your peace. Blessed are You, Adonai, who blesses Your people Israel with peace.<sup>51</sup>

**Torah Service** (pages 104, 106, 108 and 110)

*Baruch shenatan Torah l'amo Yisrael bik'dushato.*

בְּדוֹר וְדוֹר וְתוֹרָה יֵאָלֵף יִשְׂרָאֵל וְתִשְׁמַח  
לְפָנֵי שְׂמֹחַ עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל וְתִשְׁמַח לְפָנֵי שְׂמֹחַ עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל

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<sup>50</sup> Harvey J. Fields, –We Are Israel in *Mishkan T'filah: A Reform Siddur* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2007), 71.

<sup>51</sup> Elyse Frishman, ed., *Mishkan T'filah* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2007), 96.

Blessed is God who in holiness gave the Torah to the people Israel.

As we recite our Torah blessings we thank God for choosing us from the peoples:

אֲשֶׁר יָחַר נֹו כָּל בָּשִׂים יְתֵן נֹוֹת קְדוֹת, בְּדֹוֹר יִיְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ לָךְ הָעֹוֹ לָם  
בְּבָרָכָה אֵת הָעֹוֹ לָךְ אֶת הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
אֵל

*Batuch atah adonai eloheinu melech haolam, asher bachar banu mikol ha'amin v'natan lanu et torato.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who has chosen us from among the peoples, and given us the Torah.

- פִּי יְהִי לְךָ הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מִשְׁמַח הָעֹוֹת קְדוֹת, וְזֹאת  
מִשְׁמַח הָעֹוֹת קְדוֹת - נִי שֶׁ עָלָה  
בְּ

*V'zot haTorah asher sam Moshe lifnei b'nei Yisrael, al pi Adonai b'yad Moshe.*

This is the Torah which Moses placed before the people of Israel, God's word through the hand of Moses. (Deut 4:44 and Num 9:23)

הָאֵל לְעוֹלָם: עֲמֵם לְבָנֵי יִיְיָ הָאֵל - אֵת הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, עֲמֵם - עֲמֵם, לְ  
יְיָ - קָרְבָנוּ, שֶׁ עָלָה - אֵת הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, אֵת הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
שֶׁ

*Hodo al eretz v'ahamayim. Vayarem keren l'amo, t'hilah l'chol chasidav, liv'nei Yisrael am k'rovo. Hal'lu Yah!*

God's majesty is above the earth and heavens; and God is the strength of our people, making God's faithful ones, Israel, a people close to the Eternal. Halleluyah! (Psalm 148: 13-14)

**Aleinu** (page 586)

אֵל מִן אֵת הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִן אֵת הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ, אֵל מִן אֵת הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ, אֵל מִן אֵת הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
שֶׁ, אֵת הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִן אֵת הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ, אֵת הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִן אֵת הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
קְדוֹת הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִן אֵת הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ, אֵת הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִן אֵת הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
דָּג בְּמִשְׁמַח הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ

*Aleinu l'shabeyach l'adon hakol, latet gedulah l'yotzer b'reishit, shelo asanu k'goiyeh ha'aratzot, v'lo saman k'mishpachot ha'adamah, shelo sam chelkeinu kahem, v'goraleinu k'chol hamonam.*

—Let us now praise the Sovereign of the universe, and proclaim the greatness of the Creator who has set us apart from the other families of the earth, giving us a destiny unique among the nations.<sup>52</sup>

**Prayer for Separation** (From Havdalah, page 614)

הָאֵל, בֵּין וִים עֵי, בֵּין יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, בֵּין רֹוֹא חֵם בְּשִׁיל קְדוֹשׁ, אֵת הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ לָךְ הָעֹוֹ לָם  
שֶׁתִּתֵּן לָנוּ שֶׁ עֵי שֶׁ עָלָה, אֵת הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִן אֵת הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ, אֵת הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִן אֵת הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
לְחֹלוֹ, בְּדֹוֹר אֵת הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, אֵת הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִן אֵת הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
שֶׁ

יְלֵדָשׁ  
קָדֹשׁ  
בְּיָמֵינוּ  
הַיּוֹמָה  
הַזֶּה

*Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam, hamavdil bein kodesh l'hol, bein or l'hoshech, bein yom hashvi'I l'sheishet yamei hama'aseh. Baruch ata Adonai, hamavdil bein kodesh l'hol.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe; who distinguishes between the holy and ordinary, between light and dark, between Israel and the nations, between the seventh day and the six days of work. Blessed are You, Adonai who distinguishes between the holy and ordinary.

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<sup>52</sup> Frishman, ed., *Mishkan T'filah*, 586.

# Reform Judaism and Peoplehood

## The History of the Reform Movement's Sense of Peoplehood

In the mid-1800's Reform Judaism rejected nationhood as an organizing principle for the Jewish faith. American Jews enthusiastically followed along with the modernization and nationalism in Europe, trying to shed their ethnic identity which made them seem different or disloyal to the nation in which they lived. Examples of this can be found in the dedication address at Temple Beth Elohim in Charleston, South Carolina when Rabbi Gustav Posnanski called America –The Jew's Palestine, Charleston their Jerusalem, and the synagogue their Temple.<sup>53</sup> In 1845, the Frankfort on the Main Conference of Rabbis removed from worship any prayers for the return to Zion and the restoration of the Jewish state.<sup>54</sup> The Philadelphia Conference in 1869, the Pittsburgh Conference in 1841, and the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 continued along this vein adopting principles rejecting the idea that –peoplehood equals nationhood.¶

In 1869 thirteen rabbis met to adopt –The Philadelphia Principles¶ in order to demonstrate a different kind of Judaism distinct from Orthodoxy.<sup>55</sup> Interpreting the Messianic ideals of Judaism differently, they did not see the need to restore a Jewish state or to be separate from other nations. The goal for Judaism to reach its highest ideal was to accept and confess the unity of God. They embraced the idea that the Jewish people were bound by religion –the selection of Israel as a people of faith, as a bearer of the highest idea of mankind ...¶<sup>56</sup>

In a groundbreaking act, the leaders in 1885 came together to vote on a statement of religious belief, something Jews had never done before. They adopted a –corporate definition of religious faith,¶ similar to how Christians view Christianity, without a sense of connectedness or responsibility for one another.<sup>57</sup> The Reform leadership abandoned the messianic idea for the return to Zion. The Pittsburgh Platform's fifth point established Israel as people, not a place: –We recognize, in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect, the approaching of the realization of Israel's great Messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice, and peace among all men. We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.¶<sup>58</sup>

Though there were a few dissenters, overall, the Reform Movement held fast to this point of view until the eve of the Second World War. With the rise of Nazism on the horizon, Jews were no longer safe in Europe. Therefore, the Columbus Platform (1937) asserted the ideological statement that –We affirm the obligation of all Jewry to aid in its up building as a Jewish

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<sup>53</sup> Ami Isseroff, –Opposition of Reform Judaism to Zionism-A History¶ (August 12, 2005), [http://www.zionism-israel.com/his/reform\\_judaism\\_history.htm](http://www.zionism-israel.com/his/reform_judaism_history.htm) (accessed May 7, 2007).

<sup>54</sup> Isseroff, [http://www.zionism-israel.com/his/reform\\_judaism\\_history.htm](http://www.zionism-israel.com/his/reform_judaism_history.htm) (accessed May 7, 2007).

<sup>55</sup> Michael A. Meyer and Gunther Plaut, eds., *The Reform Judaism Reader*, (New York:UAHC Press, 2001), 196.

<sup>56</sup> Meyer and Plaut, eds., *The Reform Judaism Reader*, 197.

<sup>57</sup> Lawrence A. Hoffman, *My People's Passover Haggadah: Traditional Texts, Modern Commentaries Volume I*, (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2008), 55.

<sup>58</sup> Conference of Reform Rabbis, –The Pittsburgh Platform (1885),¶ *Jew in the Modern World*, eds. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 469.

homeland by endeavoring to make it only a haven of refuge for the oppressed but also a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life.¶<sup>59</sup> The statement reflects a whole series of changes that were happening in the world at this time.

Forty years later, the Centenary Perspective furthered this premise of –obligation¶ by creating a category about the State of Israel and the Diaspora. The second sentence relates to the Jews as a people with a responsibility to one another, –We also feel great satisfaction at how much of our pioneering conception of Judaism has been accepted by the Household of Israel.¶<sup>60</sup> The document notes how the creation of the State of Israel raised an awareness of what it meant to be Jews as a People. The second section of the document is entitled –The People Israel.¶ It states that it is impossible to define the Jewish people and Judaism precisely because it is always in process of –becoming.¶<sup>61</sup> The Perspective’s definition of –peoplehood¶ is an ethnic group bound by language, land, history, culture and institutions, like any other ethnic group, but with a uniqueness due to a relationship with God and a social justice agenda.

In 1978 ARZA members gathered in Washington, D.C. for their First National Assembly. ARZA justified the creation of the organization through a platform, claiming to have grown out of the recognition that –in our tradition there is no division between the religious domain and the polity of the Jewish people.¶<sup>62</sup> The ARZA platform accepted the Jerusalem Program set forth at the 27<sup>th</sup> Zionist Congress in 1968 that articulated aims of Zionism through a peoplehood context: 1) The unity of the Jewish people and the centrality of Israel in Jewish life; 2) The ingathering of the Jewish people in its historic homeland Eretz Yisrael through *aliyah* from all countries; 3) The strengthening of the State of Israel which is founded on the prophetic ideals of justice and peace; 4) The preservation of the identity of the Jewish people through the fostering of Jewish and Hebrew education and of Jewish spiritual and cultural values; and 5) The protection of Jewish rights everywhere.<sup>63</sup>

The ARZA platform is organized around principles regarding the state of Israel and the Jewish people. The creation of the State is seen as the Jewish people’s ultimate endeavor in modern times – –as the instrument for the creative survival of the Jewish people and of Judaism. Israel exists for the sake of the Jewish people.¶<sup>64</sup> The State of Israel is a symbol of redemption for the Jewish people and *aliyah* is necessary to maintain its survival and to create a strong progressive Judaism from within Israel for Israelis.

In 1989 the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) resolved to support the Association of Reform Zionists of America’s (ARZA) initiative to form a Reform Zionist Think Tank whose initial goal was to create dialogue within the Movement about its relationship to Zionism and

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<sup>59</sup> Central Conference of American Rabbis, –Columbus Platform,¶ *The Guiding Principles of Reform Judaism* (1937), [http://ccarnet.org/Articles/index.cfm?id=40&pge\\_id=1606](http://ccarnet.org/Articles/index.cfm?id=40&pge_id=1606) (accessed May 7, 2007).

<sup>60</sup> Meyer and Plaut, eds., *The Reform Judaism Reader*, 203.

<sup>61</sup> Meyer and Plaut, eds., *The Reform Judaism Reader*, 205.

<sup>62</sup> –Platform: Association of Reform Zionists of America (Adopted by ARZA’s First National Assembly, Washington, D.C., September 16, 1978), 1.

<sup>63</sup> –Platform: Association of Reform Zionists of America,¶ 1.

<sup>64</sup> –Platform: Association of Reform Zionists of America,¶ 2.



Israel.<sup>65</sup> From 1992 to 1994 the Think Tank met delivering nine major papers and eighteen responses in total. All of these combined formed the –Reform Judaism and Zionism: A Centenary Platform (1997) drafted by equal representation from all arms of the Reform Movement. The preamble outlines the Movement’s Zionist history from 1885 to 1976 describing the rejection of Jewish peoplehood and Zionism in the Pittsburgh Platform and the reversal of this in 1937 in the Columbus Platform. It is followed by six new major points grounded in both theological and ideological notions.<sup>66</sup> The first defines Judaism as both a religion and a people who have now been returned to their homeland. Through covenant Jews are obligated to –strive towards the attainment of the Jewish people’s highest moral ideals to be a *mamlechet kohanim* (kingdom of priests), a *goy kodesh* (a holy people), and *l’or goyim* (a light unto the nations).<sup>67</sup> The second point affirms the idea that the State of Israel is an outgrowth of the Holocaust. As such, Israel should be a just society maintaining the civil, human and religious rights for all of its citizens where the sanctity of Jewish life takes precedence over Jewish land. The third point legitimates Diaspora Jewry as well, stating it is interdependency with Israeli Jewry – that each is responsible for the other. The fourth point discusses a Reform Jew’s obligations to Israel such as promoting its security, ensuring the welfare of its citizens, increasing the importance of the Hebrew language, fostering a deeper understanding of Israel, encouraging travel to Israel as well as *aliyah*, and educating Israelis about the values of Reform Judaism. The fifth point asserts that the State of Israel exists to protect the future of all Jewish people and, as such, should always be a pluralistic, democratic society. Lastly, the Platform emphasizes the hope of redemption and the fulfillment of the messianic dream of peace under one God.

Only two years later the CCAR accepted a new Pittsburgh Platform that created a more programmatic view for Reform Jews based on God, Torah and Israel.<sup>68</sup> It included peoplehood statements such as, –We affirm that the Jewish people is bound to God by an internal *b’rit*, covenant, as reflected in our varied understandings of Creation, Revelation and Redemption.<sup>69</sup> Another peoplehood statement says, –We are Israel, a people aspiring to holiness, singled out through our ancient covenant and our unique history among the nations to be witnesses to God’s presence. We are linked by that covenant and that history to all Jews in every age and place.<sup>70</sup> This platform also mentions strengthening Progressive Judaism in Israel which will enrich the spiritual lives of both Israelis and Diaspora Jews. The platform affirms and validates Jewish life both in and outside of Israel encouraging each group to learn more about the other. The State of Israel is a home for Jews but not the center for Reform Jewish life.<sup>71</sup>

The Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), formerly the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), revised its mission statement twelve years ago to read, –The mission of the Union for Reform Judaism is to provide vision, leadership and programmatic support to Reform Jewish

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<sup>65</sup> Ammiel Hirsch, –Comments to CCAR Plenum Preceding Presentation of ‘The Miami Platform,’ (Miami: June 24, 1997), <http://ccarnet.org/Articles/index.cfm?id=43> (accessed May 7, 2007).

<sup>66</sup> Central Conference of American Rabbis, –Reform Judaism & Zionism: A Centenary Platform, (Miami: June 24, 1997), [http://ccarnet.org/Articles/index.cfm?id=42&pge\\_id=1606](http://ccarnet.org/Articles/index.cfm?id=42&pge_id=1606) (accessed May 7, 2007)

<sup>67</sup> Central Conference of American Rabbis, –Reform Judaism & Zionism: A Centenary Platform.

<sup>68</sup> Central Conference of Reform Rabbis, –Pittsburgh Platform, *A Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism*, (Pittsburgh: 1999), [http://ccarnet.org/Articles/index.cfm?id=44&pge\\_id=1606](http://ccarnet.org/Articles/index.cfm?id=44&pge_id=1606) (accessed May 7, 2007).

<sup>69</sup> Central Conference of Reform Rabbis, –Pittsburgh Platform.

<sup>70</sup> Central Conference of Reform Rabbis, –Pittsburgh Platform.

<sup>71</sup> Richard N. Levy, *A Vision of Holiness* (New York: URJ Press, 2005), 235.

congregations and to perpetuate and advance Reform Judaism.¶ To fulfill the mission the Union outlined four major goals, with the last one including a focus on the Jewish people. It states: –To be supportive of the State of Israel and the Jewish people wherever they live and foster the development of Liberal Judaism worldwide under the auspices of the World Union for Progressive Judaism.¶ During his final presidential address prior to retirement Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler shared with the Biennial convention body, on December 2, 1995, his love for the Jewish people. –‘Fringes, not fences’ has been the consistent goal of the Reform movement.¶<sup>72</sup> He continued with this metaphor saying, –‘Fringes, not fences’ has governed the miraculous ingathering of our people, and ‘fringes, not fences’ has made Israel into a sun-colored, luxuriant tapestry of ethnic diversity.¶<sup>73</sup>

Read the CCAR Platforms [here](#).

Read the Union for Reform Judaism mission statement [here](#).

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<sup>72</sup> Alexander M. Schindler, –Excerpts from the Presidential Address,¶ *UAHC Biennial* (December 2, 1995), [http://urj.org/Articles/index.cfm?id=3827&pge\\_prg\\_id=18045&pge\\_id=1186](http://urj.org/Articles/index.cfm?id=3827&pge_prg_id=18045&pge_id=1186) (accessed May 7, 2007).

<sup>73</sup> Schindler, –Excerpts from the Presidential Address.¶

# Zionism and Peoplehood

התקווה בת שנות אלפים להיות עם חופשי בארצנו ארץ ציון וירושלים

**The hope of two thousand years,  
To be a free nation in our land,  
The land of Zion and Jerusalem.**

(Excerpt from *Hatikvah*, Israel's National Anthem, written by Naftali Herz Imber)

## Introduction

It is important to look at Zionism through a peoplehood lens since so much of the research, and what Jews think about peoplehood, relates to Israel on many levels. From the hope for a homeland to the creation of the State to conflict and strife, it is difficult for a Jew to separate what it means to be part of a people from Israel. This leaves us with a challenging question -- does the State of Israel provide a means for creating a –Sense of Peoplehood‖ or vice versa? This begs the other question of how Zionism and Peoplehood related to one another historically and what does this mean for today? Is this a –chicken/egg‖ question – which came first?

The Jewish people have existed since ancient times but so has Zion. Examples of both are found repeatedly in the Bible, a foreshadowing that the rabbis note in Talmudic times. For example, from Isaiah 2:3 we read: **עַד-וָנֹרָא יֵצֵא מִצִּיּוֹן תּוֹרַת ה' וְכֵן יִשְׁרָתוּ עַל-כָּל הָעַמִּים** *Ki mitziyon teitzei Torah, ud'var*

*Adonai miY'rushalayim*, For from out of Zion will come the Torah, and the word of God from Jerusalem. A longing for a return to Zion is an overlay on the text by the rabbis in Talmudic times. Since this period took place outside of the land of Israel, as they tried to continue vibrant Jewish life without Temple sacrifice, they dreamt of an idealized Israel rather than the one they had left. A place for redemption as our ancestors had found when they returned from exile. In Midrash Tanchuma, Lev, Kedoshim 10 we read, –Just as the navel is placed in the center of the human body, the Land of Israel is placed at the center of the world.‖<sup>74</sup>

For many, Israel means the birthplace of the Jewish people, the homeland of the Jewish people, and the epicenter of the Jewish people. This can be viewed as a definition for *eretz Yisrael*, or the land of Israel. On the other hand, for many, *Medinat Yisrael*, or the State of Israel, means safe-haven for the Jews, providing a sense of security for the Jewish people. It is seen as the most significant Jewish undertaking of the Jewish people, built on Jewish values and serving as *or la'goyim*, or a light unto the nations.

## Historical Background of Zionism and Peoplehood

The Declaration for the Establishment of the State of Israel states: –*Eretz Yisrael* (the Land of Israel, Palestine) was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and

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<sup>74</sup> Wayne D. Dosick, *Living Judaism: The Complete Guide to Jewish Belief, Tradition, and Practice*, (New

York: HaperCollins Publishers, 1995), 353.

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.‖ Zionist thinkers like Leo Pinsker, Theodore Herzl, Ahad Ha'am, A.D. Gordon, Rav Kook, and David Ben Gurion kept the notion of peoplehood at the forefront of their conception of what Zionism mean. They all saw the creation of a homeland at the core in order to reach higher ideals of the Jewish people. Israel became their central focus and, Jewish peoplehood served as the important reason for why they worked toward the creation of the State. Below you will find brief overviews of a few Zionist thinkers whose writings articulated a theme of Jewish peoplehood as an impetus for their efforts to help build the State of Israel. Even contemporary writers and Zionists, such as Amos Oz, express their need for homeland through a framework of Peoplehood.

Leo Pinsker (1821-1891) became a Zionist in response to the violence against Jews in Russia in the 1870's and 1880's. An assimilated Russian Jew, he fought against anti-Semitism as the pogroms began. He wrote, –the Jewish people has no fatherland of its own, though many motherlands; it has no rallying point, no center of gravity, no government of its own, no accredited representatives. It is everywhere a guest, and nowhere *at home*.‖<sup>75</sup> The answers to the question of how the Jewish people could be safe and free lie within the creation of a homeland.

Theodore Herzl (1860-1904) also sought a safe-haven for the Jewish people due to the anti-Semitism running rampant in Europe during the late 1800's. The need for a Jewish homeland was in response to what others were doing to the Jewish people, –We are one people—our enemies have made us one whether we will or not, as has repeatedly happened in history. Affliction binds us together, and thus united, we suddenly discover our strength.‖<sup>76</sup>

Ahad Ha'am (1856-1927) saw the need for a cultural and spiritual revival amongst the Jewish people. –This Jewish settlement, which will be a gradual growth, will become in course of time the centre of the nation, wherein its spirit will find pure expression and develop in all its aspects up to the highest degree of perfection of which it is capable.‖<sup>77</sup> For Ha'am, a center for the nation of the Jewish people was of vital importance. In this center the Jews could pursue *tikkun olam* and create a stronger sense of what it means to be Jewish and peoplehood. The national center will not be a –secure home of refuge‖ for our people, but it will be a *home of healing for its spirit*.‖<sup>78</sup> Palestine, or Israel, was not the end, but the means for the end of creating a national center to influence Jews in the *Diaspora* spiritually.

A.D. Gordon (1856-1922), a labor Zionist, immigrated to Palestine to work the land in hopes of bringing about redemption for himself and the Jewish people. Differing from Ahad Ha'am's approach, he included a different take on Jewish peoplehood. –The center of our national work, the heart of our people, is here in Palestine, even though we are but a small community in this

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<sup>75</sup> Leo Pinsker, –Auto-Emancipation,‖ in *The Zionist Idea*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1997), 183.

<sup>76</sup> Theodore Herzl, –The Jewish State,‖ in *The Zionist Idea*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1997), 220.

<sup>77</sup> Ahad Ha'am, –The Jewish State and the Jewish Problem,‖ in *The Zionist Idea*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1997), 267.

<sup>78</sup> Ahad HaAm, *Summa Summarum*, 1912, *Ten Essays*, 160.

country, for here is the mainspring of our life.<sup>79</sup> Like Ha'am, Palestine is the heart or the center of which the idealized way of being Jewish emanates for all of the Jewish people.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935) proposed a religious Zionism. Jews, as the chosen people (according to the Bible), have a relationship with the land and one another. This, in turn, links them to God, Israel, and one another. Only in Israel can the connection to God and Jewish peoplehood be achieved. –Eretz Israel is a part of the very essence of our nationhood; it is bound organically to its very life and inner being.<sup>80</sup>

David Ben Gurion (1886-1973) served as the first Prime Minister of Israel. In 1944 he wrote –The Imperatives of the Jewish Revolution<sup>81</sup> as an argument for the need of a Jewish state. Justifying it as a place of independence for the Jewish people he talks about the vision of our ancestors who preserved the value and prophetic hopes, and these in turn preserved them during their trials.<sup>81</sup> The meaning of the Jewish revolution is independence for the Jewish people in its homeland. –Dependence is not merely political or economic; it is also moral, cultural, and intellectual, and it affects every limb and nerve of the body, every conscious and subconscious act.<sup>82</sup> The Jewish people needed a place for an independence of the heart.

Writer Amos Oz (1939 - ) wrote about Israel and the Jewish people that –the land of the Jews could not have come into being and could not have existed anywhere but here.<sup>83</sup> Professor Eliezer Schweid from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, discussed how the goal of Zionism today is still to create a national, spiritual center spoken of by Ahad Ha'am, but for different reasons. Assimilation is not only affecting Jews in Diaspora but also Jews in Israel. This in a post-modern form is immigration to other countries.<sup>84</sup>

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## A Zionism Today that Creates Peoplehood

The Reform synagogue typically relies on three main ways to connect their membership to Judaism and their community: worship, education, and social action. One could view this through the lens of Pirke Avot 1:2:

על שלושה דברים העולם עומד--על התורה, ועל העבודה, ועל גמילות החסדים

The world stands on three things: *Torah* (education), *Avodah* (worship), and *G'milut Chasidim* (acts of loving kindness). Missing from this equation is Israel, one of the most important

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<sup>79</sup> Aaron David Gordon, –Our Tasks Ahead,<sup>81</sup> in *The Zionist Idea*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1997), 382.

<sup>80</sup> Abraham Isaac Kook, –The Land of Israel,<sup>81</sup> in *The Zionist Idea*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1997), 419.

<sup>81</sup> David Ben Gurion. –The Imperatives of the Jewish Revolution,<sup>81</sup> in *The Zionist Idea*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1997), 608.

<sup>82</sup> David Ben Gurion. –The Imperatives of the Jewish Revolution,<sup>81</sup> in *The Zionist Idea*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1997), 609.

<sup>83</sup> Amos Oz, –The Meaning of Homeland,<sup>81</sup> in *Zionism: The Sequel*, ed. Carol Diamant, (New York: Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc., 1988), 248.

<sup>84</sup> Eliezer Schweid, –The Goals of Zionism Today,<sup>81</sup> in *Zionism: The Sequel*, ed. Carol Diamant, (New York: Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc., 1988), 338-339.

components for enriching one's Judaism and helping to create a greater sense of Jewish peoplehood. It is missing because Israel means so many things. It is not just the land of Israel or the State of the Israel. It is also *Am Yisrael*, the People of Israel, and *K'lal Yisrael*, the Community of Israel.

The study [Beyond Distancing: Young Adult Jews and Their Alienation from Israel](#)<sup>85</sup> by Steven M. Cohen and Ari Y. Kelman, shows that young adults between the ages of 21-35 have a decreasing connection to Israel and increasing ambivalence towards Israel. In other words, teens and young adults do not see caring about Israel as an important part of what it means to be Jewish. The respondents in this age cohort are less engaged and less supportive of Israel than the older respondents.

However, if one has travelled to Israel then there is a shift in this thinking. The study [Generation Birthright Israel: The Impact of an Israel Experience on Jewish Identity and Choices](#) showed that 18-26 year olds who participated on a Birthright Israel trip not only had positive perceptions of their experience, but an increased connection to Israel, greater sense of connectedness to the Jewish people, and increased interest in creating Jewish families.<sup>86</sup> This experience not only helped these young adults learn about Israel and stay involved in some way, it also gave them a sense of feeling more connected to the worldwide Jewish community. The participants did not feel more Jewish in a religious sense, but felt more Jewish in a peoplehood sense.

So, this leaves the American Jewish community with one big question - Does having a relationship with Israel affect having a relationship with the Jewish people or what it means to be Jewish? Perhaps this is so if one has travelled to Israel. Elan Ezrachi argues that that —the combination of travel to Israel and contact with Israel's culture and society is the most powerful agency for Jewish Peoplehood education.‖<sup>87</sup>

Ask any Israel educator and they will tell you that students or young adults who participate in a trip to Israel not only return with an increased commitment to Israel, but also an increased identification to their sense of Judaism and the Jewish people. Birthright Israel trips do not just expose 18-26 year olds to the land of Israel and Israeli soldiers, but also to the thousands of other young adults on similar trips from around the world. Staff a trip and you will soon have a new appreciation for Brazilian or Argentinean Jews staying in your hotel and hanging out with your participants late at night in the lobby.

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The Jerusalem Program, initially adopted in 1951 at the 23<sup>rd</sup> World Zionist Congress put forth a set of ideals and principles about what Zionism is supposed to be. These have been revised over the past 50 years as the State of Israel came into being and the world has changed in terms of who Jewish people are today and how they enact a relationship with Israel. The most recent

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<sup>85</sup> Steven M. Cohen and Ari Y. Kelman, –Beyond Distancing: Young Adult American Jews and Their Alienation from Israel,‖ 2009.

<sup>86</sup> Leonard Saxe, Benjamin Phillips, Theodore Sasson, Shahr Hecht, Michelle Shain, Graham Wright and Charles Kadushin, –Generation Birthright Israel: The Impact of an Israel Experience on Jewish Identity and Choices,‖ (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, October 2009), 1.

<sup>87</sup> Elan Ezrachi, –Re-Imagine Israel Education,‖ *Agenda: Jewish Education Issue #18* (Winter 2004), 15.

Jerusalem Program, updated in 2004 at the meeting of the Zionist General Council reflects a theme of Jewish peoplehood. It is a statement of what Zionism means today by the official Zionist organization.

**Jerusalem Program, updated in June 2004**<sup>88</sup>

Zionism, the national liberation movement of the Jewish people, brought about the establishment of the State of Israel, and views a Jewish, Zionist, democratic and secure State of Israel to be the expression of the common responsibility of the Jewish people for its continuity and future.

The foundations of Zionism are:

- The unity of the Jewish people, its bond to its historic homeland Eretz Yisrael, and the centrality of the State of Israel and Jerusalem, its capital, in the life of the nation
- *Aliyah* to Israel from all countries and the effective integration of all immigrants into Israeli Society
- Strengthening Israel as a Jewish, Zionist and democratic state and shaping it as an exemplary society with a unique moral and spiritual character, marked by mutual respect for the multi-faceted Jewish people, rooted in the vision of the prophets, striving for peace and contributing to the betterment of the world
- Ensuring the future and the distinctiveness of the Jewish people by furthering Jewish, Hebrew, and Zionist education, fostering spiritual and cultural values and teaching Hebrew as the national language
- Nurturing mutual Jewish responsibility, defending the rights of Jews as individuals and as a nation, representing the national Zionist interests of the Jewish people, and struggling against all manifestations of anti-Semitism
- Settling the country as an expression of practical Zionism

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<sup>88</sup> –The Jerusalem Program, June 2004, <http://www.azm.org/2004.shtml>.



## Peoplehood in Motion

### Quotes and Links:

–Israel is a people like no other, for it is the only people in the world, which, from its earliest beginnings, has been both a nation and religious community.¶<sup>89</sup>

–We affirm anew in our generation the covenant which God made with Moses on Sinai, that we are and shall be a Holy People. From this covenant of peoplehood comes our Judaic genius for community, and from our Prophets the never-ending call to social justice. So do we assume the mantle of our responsibilities for ourselves as we adopt at each convention our resolutions of social concern, and as we embrace into the community the aged and the young, the strong and the infirm, the single person and the family, the rich and the poor.

–In an era of transition, we believe that secular forces may be infused with spiritual values, that the alienated may find connectedness with others, and that the loneliness of isolation may be overcome by community. As we believe in our active participation in the concerns of K'lal Yisrael and all humanity, we also resolve to strengthen ourselves and our people through Jewish education, through maintaining the sanctity of marriage, through nurturing children of Jewish faith, and through adherence to the religious mandate of Rabbi Hillel: —Separate not thyself from the congregation.¶

–Thus, in this spirit, do we in convention assembled in Dallas, Texas, in November, 1975, Kislev 5736, spread upon the record of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods our statements which seek to inform and educate, to intensify understanding and to lead to action our Sisterhoods, District Federations and members. [2]¶

Women of Reform Judaism, *Credo of Peoplehood and Jewish Responsibility*(1975), <http://www.wrj.org/programming/resolutions-statements/credo-of-peoplehood-and-jewish-responsibility-1975/>

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<sup>89</sup> Martin Buber. *Israel and the World: Essays in a Time of Crisis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), 248.

## People about Peoplehood

Below please find quotations from rabbis, educators, scholars, and community leaders about what they mean when they think about the concept of Peoplehood. Add your comments as well!

### Reform Zionism and Peoplehood

–Reform Jews believe that Judaism is a religious civilization. Our identity as a people is rooted in the land of Israel. The Jewish communities in and outside of Israel share a common faith and fate.‖ Rabbi Peter Knobel, –An Open Conversation About Reform Judaism,‖ in *Reform Zionism in Search of Clarity*, by David W. Nelson (New York: ARZA, 2008), 10.

[Based on the above statement] –Thus origin and destiny are intertwined, power and security are interdependent, and intellectual awareness and spiritual awakening become the narrative of our modern Jewish experience.‖ Rabbi Karyn Kedar, –An Open Conversation About Reform Judaism,‖ in *Reform Zionism in Search of Clarity*, by David W. Nelson (New York: ARZA, 2008), 10.

## Peoplehood in Celebration

Virtually all Jewish holidays have a communal aspect and celebrate the Jewish people's collective narrative. Some of the most salient include Tu B'shevat, Purim, Passover, Yom Haatzma-ut and Shavuot. By looking at their liturgy one can see how notions of peoplehood are described in a historical context-both ancient and more modern-to give meaning for Jews today.

## Passover פסח

### What you will find on this page:

Introduction  
Rabbinic Text  
Readings  
Music  
Books and *Haggadot*  
Children's Story

### Introduction

We can view the holiday of Passover as the quintessential –Peoplehood Holiday<sup>90</sup> in that it celebrates the sacred story of B'nai Yisrael becoming a nation as they move from slavery to freedom. The story of the Exodus continues to provide meaning for us in today's world – from the rescue and resettlement of Soviet Jewry and the ongoing struggle for Jews leaving Ethiopia Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman states that —Peoplehood is how the story of being a Jew began. It is the underlying story of every Haggadah.<sup>90</sup>

On April 1, 2007 *Zeek: A Journal of Jewish Thought and Culture*, published an online [interview](#) entitled –Four Questions, Five Answers: On Passover, Peoplehood, and Policy<sup>91</sup> with Deborah Housen-Couriel, Einat Wilf, Moty Cristal, Barak Ben-Eliezer, and Jacob Ner-David moderated by Yosef Israel Abramowitz. Abramowitz poses the question: —What would help make Passover an even stronger Peoplehood holiday, especially for the next generation? Are there any special things you do to make Passover come alive?<sup>91</sup> The responders all agree that it is a great celebration of Peoplehood. Wilf responds: –Passover is the Peoplehood holiday *par excellence*. It is the holiday that celebrates the creation of the Israelites as a people and a nation that has a right to manage its own communal affairs in a land of its own. It contains all elements of what later developed into Jewish identity: the acknowledgement of being a single people derived from common ancestry; the acceptance of common laws and rules from God that govern personal and communal relations, as well as rituals; the quest for a land where the people could exercise sovereignty; and the idea of the repeated telling of history across generations is central to the constitution of a single people.<sup>92</sup>

A number of creative ideas emerge from this interview. Ben-Eliezer suggests viewing the notion of home in three spheres: one's personal home, one's communal home such as synagogue, and one's national home, Israel. This gives meaning to the phrase *L'shana Habah b'Yerushalayim*

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<sup>90</sup> Hoffman, Lawrence A. and David Arnow. *My People's Passover Haggadah: Traditional Texts, Modern Commentaries Volume 1* (Woodstock: VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2008), 69.

<sup>91</sup> Abramowitz, Yosef Israel and Stephen Hazan Arnoff, –Four Questions, Five Answers: On Passover, Peoplehood, and Policy, *Zeek: A Journal of Jewish Thought and Culture*, April 1, 2007, [http://www.jewcy.com/zeek/archive/four\\_questions\\_five\\_answers\\_passover\\_peoplehood\\_and\\_policy](http://www.jewcy.com/zeek/archive/four_questions_five_answers_passover_peoplehood_and_policy) (accessed January 17, 2010).

<sup>92</sup> Abramowitz, Yosef Israel and Stephen Hazan Arnoff, –Four Questions, Five Answers: On Passover, Peoplehood, and Policy, *Zeek: A Journal of Jewish Thought and Culture*, April 1, 2007, [http://www.jewcy.com/zeek/archive/four\\_questions\\_five\\_answers\\_passover\\_peoplehood\\_and\\_policy](http://www.jewcy.com/zeek/archive/four_questions_five_answers_passover_peoplehood_and_policy) (accessed January 17, 2010).

through a peoplehood frame. It is not about visiting Israel for the sake of being there, but about coming home and every Jew meeting there, to be together.

Cristal articulates that *Pesach Shenit* should become the –Passover Peoplehood Party, celebrated with friends and the community. Similar to Ben-Eliezer’s idea of spheres, the first *seder* is about family and the second is about the Jewish people.

What also makes Passover a compelling holiday is all of the traditions from around the world. Each *seder* offers its own home-grown customs. My Ashkenazi cousin married an Israeli from a Sephardic background, so I have seen first-hand different rituals and symbols throughout the *seder*, from a woven basket as a *seder* plate to being banged on the head with it during a rousing version of –*Ha Lachma Anya*. Housen-Couriel suggests having a mini-festival to help each community share their musical, cultural and culinary traditions with the larger Jewish community.<sup>93</sup>

*Below you will find readings about Peoplehood related to Passover and the Exodus, liturgy found in the Haggadah that talks about the Jewish people as a nation, and Haggadot or books about Passover that touch on issues of Peoplehood.*

We are a people in whom the past endures, in whom the present is inconceivable without moments gone by. The Exodus lasted a moment, a moment enduring forever. What happened once upon a time happens all the time.<sup>94</sup>

### ***B’chol Dor Vador - Talmud Bavli, Pesachim 116a***

בכל דור ודור יצא ממצרים איש ואשה  
לבנותיו ולבנותיהם ויאמרו להם  
ביום ההוא ויאמרו להם  
ביום ההוא ויאמרו להם  
ביום ההוא ויאמרו להם

In every generation it is one’s duty to regard him or herself as though he or she personally had come out of Egypt, as it is written (Ex 13): –You shall tell your child on that day: This is on account of what Adonai did for me when I came out of Egypt.‖

### **Creative Peoplehood Readings for Your Seder**

#### *Miriam’s Cup (רמ סוכים) Kos Miryam*

Commentary: Beginning the *seder* with Miriam’s Cup establishes yours as a *seder* that will consistently highlight women’s roles in the Exodus. By involving every *seder* participant in the filling of Miriam’s Cup, the participatory nature of the *seder* is also immediately established. Just as everyone has poured some water into Miriam’s Cup, so,

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<sup>93</sup> Abramowitz, Yosef Israel and Stephen Hazan Arnoff, –Four Questions, Five Answers: On Passover, Peoplehood, and Policy,‖ *Zeek: A Journal of Jewish Thought and Culture*, April 1, 2007, [http://www.jewcy.com/zeek/archive/four\\_questions\\_five\\_answers\\_passover\\_peoplehood\\_and\\_policy](http://www.jewcy.com/zeek/archive/four_questions_five_answers_passover_peoplehood_and_policy) (accessed January 17, 2010).

<sup>94</sup> Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Israel: An Echo of Eternity*, (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1997), 128.

too, the presence of each person at the table will add something unique to the *seder*. On another level, when the Miriam's Cup is filled with water from each person's glass, we are enacting our hope of refilling the magical healing Well of Miriam through inclusiveness and collectivity. *Pass around the empty Miriam's Cup. Each person should pour some water from her or his own drinking glass, or from a pitcher of water, into the cup.*

ALL: We begin our *seder* with יוֹם מִרְיָם *kos Miryam*, Miriam's Cup. Legend tells of a mysterious well filled with מַיִם חַיִּים *mayyim hayyim*, living waters that followed the Israelites through their wandering in the desert while Miriam was alive.

READERS: Miriam's Well was said to hold Divine power to heal and renew. Its fresh waters sustained our people as we were transformed from a generation shaped by slavery into a free nation. Throughout our subsequent journeys, we have sought to rediscover these living waters.<sup>95</sup>

Tonight at our *seder*, let us remember that we are still on the journey. Just as the holy One delivered Miriam and her people, just as they were sustained in the desert and transformed into a new people, so may we be delivered, sustained and transformed on our journey to a stronger sense of ourselves, both as individuals and as one people.

ALL: זֶה יוֹם מִרְיָם זֶה יוֹם מִרְיָם *Zot kos Miryam, kos mayim chayyim*. מִי צֵיִט זֶה יוֹם מִרְיָם *Zeicher litzi'at mitrayim*. This is the Cup of Miriam, the cup of living waters. Let us remember the Exodus from Egypt. These are living waters, God's gift to Miriam which gave new life to Israel as we struggled in the wilderness. May the Cup of Miriam refresh and inspire us as we embark on our journey through the Haggadah.<sup>96</sup>

For other readings visit [Ritual Well](#).

## MUSIC

**Miriam's Song** *Music and Words: Debbie Friedman*

And the women dancing with their timbrels,  
Followed Miriam as she sang her song.  
Sing a song to the one whom we've exalted,  
Miriam and the women danced and danced the whole night long.

And Miriam was a weaver of unique variety.  
The tapestry she wove was one which sang our history.  
With every strand and every thread she crafted her delight,  
A woman touched with spirit she dances toward the light.

When Miriam stood upon the shore and gazed across the sea,

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<sup>95</sup> Tamara Cohen, ed. *The Journey Continues: The Ma'ayan Passover Haggadah* (New York: The Ma'ayan: The Jewish Women's Project, 2002), 29.

<sup>96</sup> Tamara Cohen, ed. *The Journey Continues: The Ma'yan Passover Haggadah*, 30.

The wonder of this miracle she soon came to believe.  
Whoever thought the sea would part with an outstretched hand,  
And we would pass to freedom and march to the promised land.

And Miriam the prophet took her timbrel in her hand,  
And all the women followed her just as she had planned.  
And Miriam raised her voice in song she sang with praise and might,  
We've just lived through a miracle we're going to dance tonight.

[Listen](#) to sound clips of Jewish peoplehood music appropriate for a *seder* such as L'chi Lach, Miriam's Song, and The Water in the Well.

#### **ADULT EDUCATIONAL BOOKS AND HAGGADOT**

Cohen, Tamara, ed. *The Journey Continues: The Ma'yan Passover Haggadah*. New York: The Ma'ayan: The Jewish Women's Project, 2002.

The authors of this Haggadah pride themselves on the inclusivity of their texts which are meant to challenge everyone at the *Seder* spiritually and intellectually. Women are fully integrated into the holiday and the story of liberation. Creative and poetic writings, gender inclusivity, and songs appeal to a wider audience as well as its color illustrations. The text is also accessible to non-Jews who may be present at the *Seder*. Additions such as an orange on the *Seder* plate to represent those who may be marginalized within the Jewish community such as gays and lesbians and Miriam's cup filled with water to represent the healing powers of the well. The Haggadah also recommends including a *tzedakah* box at your *Seder* table to help those in need (but if you do not handle money on the holiday collect *tzedakah* prior to lighting the candles).

Hoffman, Lawrence A. and David Arnow. *My People's Passover Haggadah: Traditional Texts, Modern Commentaries Volume 1*. Woodstock: VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2008.

This book serves as a commentary, adding a lens upon the ancient story of the Exodus and the ritual of the *Seder*. It has the traditional Hebrew text, translation, explicative essays, and historical information. The layout of the book is designed to look like the Talmud and the commentaries feature scholars from all Jewish denominations. Chapter six entitled, "Peoplehood with Purpose: The American Seder and Changing Jewish Identity," discusses why the *Seder* has been one of the longest standing Jewish traditions that continues to be conducted in homes today, when so many other customs and practices have been tossed aside or forgotten by unengaged Jews.

Schwartz, Frances Weinman. *Passage to Pesach: Preparing for Passover through Text and Tradition*. New York: UAHC Press, 2003.

This book gives a historical survey of Pesach; an overview of the five special Shabbatot leading up to the holiday; and an explanation of the *seder* and the *Haggadah*. Schwartz asserts that Passover is the most popular Jewish holiday that defines Jews as individuals and as a people. This book aims to help the reader find his or her place in the ancient tradition and story.

Stern, Chaim. *Gates of Freedom: A Passover Haggadah*. Chappaqua, NY: Rossel Books, 1982.

This Haggadah includes traditional texts and modern translations augmented by passages from Biblical and Rabbinic literature and creative writings. Supplementary readings focus on social justice themes about minority rights, oppression, liberty and freedom for all people in the world, and the responsibility of all Jews to fight together against these injustices.

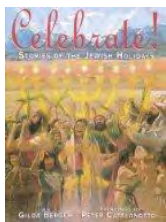
Zion, Mishaël and Noam Zion. *A Night to Remember: The Haggadah of Contemporary Voices*. Jerusalem: Zion Holiday Publications, Inc./Halaila Hazeh Ltd., 2007.

This colorful *Haggadah* is a compilation of ancient texts, modern stories, songs and activities. Woven between the parts of the *seder* are stories of freedom from people all over the world. With the creative text on the left-hand side and the traditional on the right-hand side the blending of stories creates a vibrant *Haggadah* for an entire family.

Zion, Noam and David Dishon. *A Different Night: The Family Participation Haggadah*. Jerusalem: The Shalom Hartman Institute, 1997.

This Haggadah contains the traditional texts as well as a variety of stories, songs, activities and explanations. The leader should pick and choose on which areas to focus based on the interests around the table. Like the Reform *siddur*, *Mishkan T'filah*, the right-hand side of the page contains the texts and directions for the traditional *seder*. The left-hand side offers supplemental stories, explanations, readings and meditations. Illustrations augment the text and can be discussed in the same way as a different type of text. All of the material invites the reader into the story – to truly see one's self as if he or she had escaped from Egypt.

## CHILDREN'S STORIES



**Berger, Gilda. *Celebrate! Stories of the Jewish Holidays*. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1998.**

For eight different Jewish holidays, including Passover, the author has written a short story, the meaning of the holiday, and the ways in which it can be celebrated. This book focuses on Jewish values such as, joy, commandments, and peoplehood. This book is appropriate for children in primary and elementary grades, ages five to eleven.





**Weber, Elka. *The Yankee at the Seder*. Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press, 2009.**

Immediately following the Civil War, a Jewish Yankee seeks a Passover *Seder*. A Confederate family opens their home, keeping in mind the words of the Haggadah, –let all who are hungry come and eat.‖ The story of the Exodus becomes a metaphor for events that took place during the War and allows for dialogue and debate for each side. A friendship develops between the soldier and the family as they learn more about one another. This book is appropriate for children in elementary school.

## יום העצמאות Yom Haatzma-ut

Yom Haatzma-ut, celebrated on the fifth of Iyar, is an expression of Jewish peoplehood. All Jewish holidays celebrate a historical event, but Yom Haatzma-ut is one of the few that also brings us into the present and future through its liturgy and readings. By bringing in ancient and modern texts—such as psalms, quotes from prophets, poetry by Israelis, and the Declaration of the State—the holiday focuses on themes such as hope and peace. Hope for a sovereign state, hope to be a united Jewish people, and hope to be a just world. It –recognizes that a new era has dawned in the life of the Jewish people.<sup>97</sup> Unlike many other holidays which celebrate an ancient historical experience, such as Hanukkah or Passover, or holidays focused on a personal journey, such as Yom Kippur, Yom Haatzma-ut draws our attention to the collective narrative of the Jewish people in more recent times. It becomes an expression of peoplehood in our liturgy unlike any other. –It is a *mitzvah* for every Jew to mark Yom Ha-Atsma-ut by participation in public worship services and/or celebrations which affirm the bond between the Jews living in the Land of Israel and those living outside.<sup>98</sup> While its theme is celebrating the creation of the State of Israel, the meta-theme becomes about the Jewish people with an awareness of this collective in the present day and all of its future potential. This celebration serves as a reminder for working toward this goal.

The Reform movement publicly accepted this day as a special worship service in 1970 when the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) convened on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem proclaiming Israel Independence Day as a –permanent annual festival in the religious calendar of Reform Judaism.<sup>99</sup> Responsa have been written about this holiday as well. One responsum deals with the question of whether or not an American congregation should sing Hatikvah at the conclusion of a worship service and about marking the day publicly.<sup>100</sup> The determination was that it is considered a *mitzvah* to do both.

With the creation of the new Reform *siddur*, [Mishkan T'filah](#), came a new service to celebrate Yom Haatzma-ut, Israel Independence Day. [Gates of Prayer](#), the Reform *siddur* prior to the new one published in 2007 offered prayers for the Shabbat prior to the holiday.<sup>101</sup> This change has shown how the holiday has been elevated to a holy day in the Reform movement.

The Conservative movement also includes a special prayer service for this day, comparing it to Hanukkah as another day in our Jewish calendar which celebrates a miracle—the creation of the Jewish State in the Land of Israel after 2000 years of exile.<sup>102</sup> Therefore, the additional prayers said on Hanukkah such as the additions of Al-Hanissim in the Amidah and the recitation of the full Hallel are added.

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<sup>97</sup> Peter S. Knobel, ed. *Gates of the Seasons: A Guide to the Jewish Year* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2003), 102.

<sup>98</sup> Knobel, ed. *Gates of the Seasons: A Guide to the Jewish Year*, 102.

<sup>99</sup> *CCAR Yearbook* 80 (1970), 39.

<sup>100</sup> –*Hatikvah* and The Star-Spangled Banner, || *CCAR Responsa* 5758.10 (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis), <http://data.ccarnet.org/cgi-bin/respdisp.pl?file=10&year=5758> (accessed January 27, 2010).

<sup>101</sup> Chaim Stern, ed., *Gates of Prayer: The New Union Prayerbook* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1975), 412.

<sup>102</sup> Reuven Hammer, *Or Hadash: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Weekdays* (New York: The Rabbinical Assembly of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, 2008), 205.

The brief service for Shabbat prior to Yom Ha-atsma-ut in Gates of Prayer contains psalms and readings focused on a longing for Zion and for a peaceful state. It includes Psalm 137, –If I forget you, O Jerusalem; the prayer for the peace of Jerusalem; Is 2:3; and the Hannah Senesh poem, –Blessed is the match consumed in kindling flame. There were also special Torah and Haftarah readings. A shift occurred when the movement created a new *siddur* about 30 years later. The brief worship service that had been an addition to Shabbat became a stand-alone ritual to be practiced on the actual holiday of Yom Haatzma-ut.

However, Gates of Prayer also includes a brief section on –Israel’s Mission within the section of –Special Themes. The language of the initial reading is in the first person, plural, –Long ago, our ancestors...<sup>103</sup> The prayers and meditations focus on ideas of chosenness and being a light unto the nations. All of the readings turn the worshipper’s attention back to what it means to be a Jew as part of the people Israel. For example, –O God of Israel, teach us to be worthy of the name of Jew and –I am a Jew because the faith of Israel demands of me no abdication of the mind.<sup>104</sup> Celebrating Israel means celebrating being Jewish and part of something greater than one’s self.

In Mi shkan T’fil ah the focus of this service is explicitly on Jewish peoplehood.<sup>105</sup> The celebration of the creation of the state convenes the Jewish people around Israel to help us celebrate the miracle of being a Jewish people and further ideals of creating a just world. The service, labeled as a ceremony, uses seven candles as symbols for the mini-themes found within the service. Woven throughout the service are excerpts from the [Declaration of Independence for the State of Israel](#) to frame the purpose of the candle and readings of that section. The first, –For the Miracle of Rebirth-נפלאות || begins with –Eretz Yisrael was the birthplace of the Jewish people...<sup>106</sup> The first candle is lit and then Psalm 122:1-3, 6-9 is recited. The left side of the two-page spread, which typically contains the alternative readings, includes quotations from Hanna Senesh, Albert Einstein and Theodore Herzl. The Einstein and Herzl quotes include language about people; how what we do for Israel honors the Jewish people and our longing to be a free people in Zion. This pattern continues with quotations from the Declaration and quotations about Israel, Jerusalem and the Jewish people. For the fifth candle there are two peoplehood quotes in relation to Torah. The first is by Peretz Smolenskin, –Without the Hebrew language, there is no Torah, and with Torah, there is no Jewish people.<sup>107</sup> The second is by Eliezer Ben-Yehudah, beginning with the following, –This people has unlimited potential!<sup>108</sup> These rituals and prayers, while Zionist in nature, help to create a sense of peoplehood. By elevating the status of a civic holiday to a religious holy day that honors Israel’s independence, Jews around the world can celebrate the creation of the sovereign state. The language about the Jewish people, and a longing to be together in the land of our ancestors, makes this communal worship experience about something greater than one’s self.

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<sup>103</sup> Chaim Stern, ed., *Gates of Prayer: The New Union Prayerbook*, 703.

<sup>104</sup> Chaim Stern, *Gates of Prayer: The New Union Prayerbook*, 705.

<sup>105</sup> Frishman, ed., *Mishkan T’filah*, 538-553.

<sup>106</sup> Frishman, ed., *Mishkan T’filah*, 538.

<sup>107</sup> Frishman, ed., *Mishkan T’filah*, 547.

<sup>108</sup> Frishman, ed., *Mishkan T’filah*, 547.

The Conservative movement includes many similar readings and blessings, but is much less focused on peoplehood with more Zionist readings.<sup>109</sup> Genesis 12:1-3, when Avram is commanded to go to the land (*lech lecha*) is chanted before the evening service. Then the worship begins with Psalm 126, a poem by Judah Halevi (My heart is in the east...) and then the words of Jeremiah 31:9-12. Other prophetic quotations from Joshua, Isaiah, and Micah are read which remind us to praise God for our redemption and returning to Zion. Other readings are included by Menahem Mendel Dolitski (1899), Israel Rashal (1970), and Neomi De-Mayo (1981) which all focus on Israel.<sup>110</sup> It ends with the Declaration of the Anniversary of the State of Israel, the prayer for the State of Israel, and Hatikvah. The shofar is sounded at the conclusion with the phrase, –Next year In Jerusalem.‖

The Reconstructionist movement's prayer book, *Kol Haneshama*, includes different readings and songs, with only the first poem containing a component of peoplehood.<sup>111</sup> This poem, by Nahum Waldman, encourages us to pray for an Israel that is just and fair, filled with peace, and sparking within all Jews a desire to make a place that can serve as an example for other places around the world.<sup>112</sup> The service also includes a Zionist piece by David Ben Gurion about remembering those who helped create the state and the prophetic words from Ezek 37:1-14 about the dry bones. The music included is about Jerusalem, Jerusalem of Gold and *Sisu et Yerushalayim*. Yehuda Halevi's poem, Ode to Zion, and a reading from the members of Kibbutz Buchenwald continue to further the purpose of this holiday's celebration within the Reconstructionist setting – to celebrate the establishment of a safe haven for Jews wherever they are in the world. The service concludes with Hatikvah.

The Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues *siddur*, *Service of the Heart*, published in 1967, also has a chapter for prayers and readings on special themes which include a similar section to the *Gates of Prayer*, entitled –Israel's Mission.‖ Pulling together quotations from Ex 19:5, Is 42:1, Is 43:10, Is 42:7, Is 49:6, Gen 28:14, Amos 3:2, Is 11:9, and Is 54:10 these prophetic texts talk about the mission of the Jewish people through covenant, as a chosen people, to be an example to the world to create a just society in the land of Israel. The British *siddur* also contains a brief two-page service for Israel Independence Day or the preceding Sabbath.<sup>113</sup> Also beginning with Psalm 137 the service focuses on themes of peace and Jews serving as a light until the nations. However, the service contains a reading asking God to tell the Jewish people to build a just and merciful land for all humanity written by Rabbi Chaim Stern and found in *Gates of Prayer*. Quotes from Isaiah 49:13, 51:3, and 2:3 show this longing for Jerusalem and Zion found in text.

The Israeli Movement for Progressive Judaism's *siddur* also contains service for Yom Haatzmaut.<sup>114</sup> Containing similar text quotations to the services found in the other prayer books, this

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<sup>109</sup> Reuven Hammer. *Or Hadash, A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Weekdays*. (New York: The Rabbinical Assembly of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, 2008), 205 -208.

<sup>110</sup> Reuven Hammer. 206-207.

<sup>111</sup> David A. Teutsch, ed. *Kol Haneshama: Daily*, (Wyncote, PA: The Reconstructionist Press, 1996), 457-471.

<sup>112</sup> Nachum Waldman, –To Touch Hands in Peace.‖ in *Likrat Shabbat: Worship, Study, and Song* (The Prayer Book Press of Media Judaica, 1981), 457.

<sup>113</sup> *Service of the Heart*, (London: Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, 1967), 285-286.

<sup>114</sup> Adina Ben-Chorin, Calman Rosen, Vivian Singer, eds., *Ha'avodah She'balev*, (Jerusalem: Congregation Har-el, 1992), 220.

service includes Psalm 126; the beginning of the Amidah followed by Genesis 13, Exodus 26, Genesis 28 and then *chatimah* for the *Avot*; more text quotations from Deuteronomy 34, Joshua 1, Zecharia 8; and quotations from Israeli leaders. The service concludes with a special *Kiddush* for Yom Ha'atzma-ut: *Blessed are you Adonai who sanctifies Israel and Yom Ha'atzma-ut*. This service is much more focused on Israel rather than Jewish peoplehood, but it is not surprising since it is an Israeli service ritualizing and sacralizing a civil holiday.<sup>115</sup>

The siddur also contains *a Mi Sheberach* for soldiers and a prayer for the Peace of Israel, which pull from prophetic texts from Micah and Isaiah that focus on peace in Israel and not very much on peoplehood except for the line –Be near to all the people of Israel throughout the lands of their dispersion.<sup>116</sup> Perhaps Israelis may not have the same need to create this sense of peoplehood throughout the service in the same way that Jews not living in Israel try to fulfill this need.

In addition to prayer, music, and dance one can honor the holy day of Yom Ha-Atasma-ut by giving *tzedakah* to an organization which strengthens the State of Israel as a –way of affirming the unity of the Jewish people.<sup>117</sup> As one can see, this holiday which focuses on celebrating the creation of the State of Israel is observed by Jews around the world. Their prayers and meditations focus on Israel, no matter where they are physically. The holiday suspends corporeal reality with worship and ritual to connect all Jews on a spiritual plane.

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<sup>115</sup> Ben-Chorin, Rosen, Singer, eds., *Ha'avodah She'balev*, 224.

<sup>116</sup> Ben-Chorin, Rosen, Singer, eds., *Ha'avodah She'balev*, 129.

<sup>117</sup> Knobel, *Gates of the Seasons*, 102.

## Peoplehood in Poetry

*This page contains poetry and excerpts from Israeli and American authors whose works express concern about issues of peoplehood and Zionism. Some are found in the new Reform Siddur, Mishkan T'filah, and are read during worship services. Please use this page as a teaching tool when demonstrating various ways that peoplehood is expressed. We also welcome your submissions to this page.*

### The Diameter of the Bomb, by Yehuda Amichai

The diameter of the bomb was thirty  
centimeters  
and the diameter of its effective range about  
seven meters,  
with four dead and eleven wounded.  
And around these, in a larger circle  
of pain and time, two hospitals are scattered  
and one graveyard. But the young woman  
who was buried in the city she came from,  
at a distance of more than a hundred  
kilometers,  
enlarges the circle considerably,  
and the solitary man mourning her death  
at the distant shores of a country far across the  
sea  
includes the entire world in the circle.  
And I won't even mention the howl of orphans  
that reaches up to the throne of God and  
beyond, making  
a circle with no end and no God.<sup>118</sup>

קוטר הפצצה היה שלושים סנטימטרים  
וקוטר תחום פגיעתה כשבעה מטרים  
ובו ארבעה הרוגים ואחד עשר פצועים.  
ומסביב לאלה, במעגל גדול יותר  
של כאב וזמן, פזורים שני בתי חולים  
ובית קברות אחד. אבל האשה  
הצעירה, שנקברה במקום שממנו  
באה, במרחק של למעלה ממאה קילומטרים,  
מגדילה את המעגל מאוד מאוד,  
והאיש הבודד הבוכה על מותה  
בירכתי אחת ממדינות הים הרחוקות,  
מכליל במעגל את כל העולם.  
ולא אדבר כלל על זעקת יתומים  
המגיעה עד לכיסא האלוהים  
ומשם והלאה ועושה  
את המעגל לאין סוף ואין אלוהים

### Discussion Questions:

1. In this poem, what holds the Jewish people together?
2. Does this poem only refer to Israel? Could it apply anywhere? Could it have meaning during any time, or just more recently?
3. If you could illustrate this poem, and the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora as described here, how would you do it? What would it look like?
4. What is the meaning of the last line of this poem? What is Amichai saying about God and theology?
5. Where are you in this poem?
6. Why do you think this poem is included in the Reform *siddur* (prayerbook)? Where would you put it (near which prayers)?

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<sup>118</sup> Yehuda Amichai, "Diameter of the Bomb," in *Poems of Jerusalem*, trans. Chana Bloch & Stephen Mitchell (Tel Aviv: Schocken Publishing House Ltd., 1987), 119.

### **Why I Am a Jew, by Edmond Fleg**

I am a Jew because the faith of Israel demands no abdication of my mind.  
I am a Jew because the faith of Israel requires all the devotion of my heart.  
I am a Jew because in every place where suffering weeps, the Jew weeps.  
I am a Jew because at every time when despair cries out, the Jew hopes.  
I am a Jew because the word of Israel is the oldest and the newest.  
I am a Jew because the promise of Israel is the universal promise.  
I am a Jew because, for Israel, the world is not yet completed; we are completing it.  
I am a Jew because for Israel, humanity is not created; we are creating it.  
I am a Jew because Israel places humanity and its unity above the nations and above Israel itself.  
I am a Jew because, above humanity, image of the divine Unity, Israel places the unity which is divine.<sup>119</sup>

### **We Are Israel, by Harvey J. Fields**

We are Israel: witness to God's covenant.  
We are Israel: forbidden to worship power.  
We are Israel: prophets of a vision for all.

We are Israel: schooled in the suffering of the oppressed.  
We are Israel: trying to beat swords into plowshares.  
We are Israel: teaching sacred words from Torah.

Hate evil and love what is good;  
Let justice flow as a mighty stream.  
We are Israel: proclaiming your truth, as we did on the shores of the sea.<sup>120</sup>

#### *Discussion Questions:*

1. Compare these two poems. Which one do you relate to more?
2. Compare and contrast the use of –Jew|| and –Israel|| – how do they relate to one another? How do they differ?
3. With which do you feel more comfortable – the personal language of –I|| or the communal language of –We?||
4. How do you relate to the expectations of social justice work in these two readings?
5. Where are you in this poem?
6. Why do you think these readings are included in the Reform *siddur* (prayerbook)? Where would you put them (near which prayers)?

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<sup>119</sup> Edmond Fleg, –Why I am a Jew,|| in *The Zionist Idea*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1997), 483. Reprinted in *Mishkan T'filah*, 41.

<sup>120</sup> Harvey J. Fields, "We Are Israel" in *Mishkan T'filah: A Reform Siddur* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2007), 71.

### **"The Jews," by Yehuda Amichai**

The Jews are like photos in a display window,  
All of them together, short and tall, alive and  
dead,

Brides and grooms, bar mitzvah boys and  
babies.

Some are restored from old yellowed  
photographs.

Sometimes people come and break the  
windows

And burn the pictures. And then they start  
Photographing and developing all over again  
And displaying them again, sad and smiling.

Rembrandt painted them wearing Turkish  
Turbans with beautiful burnished gold.

Chagall painted them hovering in the air,  
And I paint them like my father and my  
mother.

The Jews are an eternal forest preserve  
Where the trees stand dense, and even the dead

Cannot lie down. They stand upright, leaning  
on the living,  
And you cannot tell them apart. Just that fire  
Burns the dead faster.

And what about God? God lingered  
Like the scent of a beautiful woman who once  
Faced them in passing and they didn't see her  
face,  
Only her fragrance remained, kinds of  
perfumes,  
Blessed be the Creator of kinds of perfumes.

A Jewish man remembers the sukkah in his  
grandfather's home.  
And the sukkah remembers for him  
The wandering in the desert that remembers  
The grace of youth and the Tablets of the Ten  
Commandments  
And the gold of the Golden Calf and the thirst  
and the hunger  
That remember Egypt.

And what about God? According to the

היהודים הם כמו תצלומים מוצגים בחלון ראווה  
כולם יחדיו בגבהים שונים, חיים ומתים  
חתנים וכלות נערי בר-מצווה עם תינוקות

ויש תמונות משוחזרות מתצלומים ישנים שהצהיבו  
ולפעמים באים ושוברים את החלון  
ושורפים את התמונות. ואז מתחילים  
לצלם מחדש ולפתח מחדש  
ולהציג אותם שוב כואבים ומחייכים

רמברנדט צייר אותם חבושי תרבושים  
טורקיים ביפי זהב מועם

שגאל צייר אותם מרחפים באוויר  
ואני מצייר אותם כאבי וכאמי

היהודים הם שמורת יער עד  
שהעצים בה עומדים צפופים, ואפילו המתים  
לא יוכלו לשכב. הם נשענים, עומדים, על החיים  
ואין מבדיל ביניהם. רק האש  
תשרוף את המתים מהר יותר

ומה בדבר האלוהים? אלוהים נשאר  
כמו בושם אישה יפה שעברה פעם  
על פניהם ואת פניה לא ראו,  
אך בשמה נשאר, מיני בשמים  
בורא מיני בשמים

אדם יהודי זוכר את הסוכה בבית סבו  
והסוכה זוכרת במקומו  
את ההליכה במדבר שזוכרת  
את חסד הנעורים ואת אבני לוחות הברית  
ואת זהב עגל הזהב ואת הצמא ואת הרעב  
שזוכרים את מצרים

ומה בדבר האלוהים? לפי הסכם  
הגירושין מגן עדן ומבית המקדש  
אלוהים רואה את בניו רק פעם  
אחת בשנה, ביום הכיפורים

היהודים הם לא עם היסטורי  
ואפילו לא עם ארכיאולוגי, היהודים  
הם עם גיאולוגי עם שברים  
והתמוטטויות ושכבות וגעש לווהט  
את תולדותיהם צריכים למדוד  
בסולם מדידה אחרת



settlement  
Of divorce from the Garden of Eden and from  
the Temple,  
God sees his children only once  
A year, on Yom Kippur.

The Jews are not a historical people  
And not even an archaeological people, the  
Jews  
Are a geological people with rifts.  
And collapses and strata and fiery lava.  
Their history must be measured  
On a different scale.

The Jews are buffed by suffering and polished  
by torments  
Like pebbles on the seashore.  
The Jews are distinguished only in their death  
As pebbles among other stones:  
When the mighty hand flings them,  
They skip two times, or three,  
On the surface of the water before they drown.

Some time ago, I met a beautiful woman  
Whose grandfather performed my circumcision  
Long before she was born. I told her,  
You don't know me and I don't know you  
But we are the Jewish people,  
Your dead grandfather and I the circumcised  
and you the beautiful granddaughter  
With golden hair: We are the Jewish people.

And what about God? Once we sang  
–*There is no God like ours*,|| now we sing,  
–There is no God of ours||  
But we sing. We still sing.<sup>121</sup>

#### *Discussion Questions:*

1. In this poem, what holds the Jewish people together?
2. What do you think Amichai means by this line: –The Jews are not a historical people  
And not even an archaeological people, the Jews are a geological people with rifts.||  
What is his definition of Jewish peoplehood?
3. What is Amichai saying about God and theology, about ritual and holiday observance?

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<sup>121</sup> Yehuda Amichai, –The Jews,|| in *Yehuda Amichai, a life of poetry, 1948-1994*, eds. Benjamin Harshav and Barbara Harshav (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), 462.

היהודים משויפי סבל ומלוטשי ייסורים  
כמו חלוקי אבן לחוף הים  
מותר היהודים רק במותם  
כמותר חלוקי אבן על שאר האבנים  
כשהיד החזקה משליכה אותם  
הם קופצים שתי פעמים או שלוש  
על פני המים, לפני שהם טובעים

לפני זמן מה פגשתי אישה יפה  
שסבה עשה לי ברית מילה  
זמן רב לפני שנולדה. אמרתי לה  
את לא מכירה אותי ואני לא מכיר אותך  
אבל אנחנו העם היהודי  
סבך המת ואני הנימול ואת הנכדה היפה  
זהובת השיער: אנחנו העם היהודי  
ומה בדבר האלוהים? פעם שרנו  
"אין כאלוהינו" עכשיו אנו שרים, "אין אלוהינו"  
אבל אנו שרים, אנחנו עדין שרים

**Among all the Nations by Natan Alterman / נתן אלתרמן / מכל העמים"**

[youtube=http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mMd82tovvo]

This video is of Alterman's wife reading his poem in Hebrew.

While our children wept in the gallows'  
shadow,  
we heard nothing of the world's great rage.  
From among all the nations you chose us,  
you loved us and showed that you wanted us.

From among all the nations you chose us,  
the Norwegians, the Czechs, and the British.  
As our children are marched to the gallows -  
Jewish children, children who are wise,  
they know that their blood won't be thought of  
as blood -  
and they call to their mothers, "Don't watch."

And the ax by night and by day devours,  
and the Christian father in the city on high  
from his holy palace does not emerge  
to stand against the pogrom with his savior -

To stand for a day, for a single day only,  
where the child has stood for years  
like a lonely young goat,  
anonymous,  
a Jew.

But there's great concern for the paintings and  
sculptures  
and famous collections which might be  
destroyed,  
while the famous collection of infants' heads  
are crushed against roads and walls.

Their eyes say: Mother, Don't watch,  
how we're laid out in long lines.  
Experienced soldiers, all well-known,  
only we among them are small.

Their eyes say more:  
God of our fathers, we knew  
among all the children you'd chosen us

בבכות ילדינו בצל גרדומים  
את חמת העולם לא שמענו  
כי אתה בחרתנו מכל העמים  
אהבת אותנו ורצית בנו

כי אתה בחרתנו מכל העמים  
מנורווגים, מצ'כים, מבריטים  
ובצעוד ילדינו אלי גרדומים  
ילדים יהודים, ילדים חכמים  
הם יודעים כי דמם לא נחשב בדמים  
הם קוראים רק לאם: אל תביטי

ואוכל הגרון בימים ובליל  
והאב הנוצרי הקדוש בעיר רום  
לא יצא מהיכל עם צלמי הגואל  
לעמוד יום אחד בפוגרום

לעמוד יום אחד, יום אחד ויחידי  
במקום שעומד בו שנים כמו גדי  
ילד קט  
אלמוני  
יהודי

ורבה דאגה לתמונות ופסלים  
ואוצרות אומנות פן יפצצו  
אך אוצרות-אמנות של ראשי עוללים  
אל קירות וכבישים ירצצו

עיניהם מדברות: אל תביטי, האם  
איך שורות ארוכות הנחנו  
חיילים ותיקים וידועים לשם  
רק קטנים-בקומה אנחנו

עיניהם מדברות עוד דברים אחדים  
אלהי האבות, ידענו  
שאתה בחרתנו מכל הילדים  
אהבת אותנו ורצית בנו

שאתה בחרתנו מכל הילדים  
להרג מול כסא כבודך

and loved us and showed that you wanted us -  
That among all the children you chose us  
before your throne to be slaughtered,  
and you gather our blood in vessels of clay  
for beside you it has no collector;

As though it were flowers you take in its scent,  
and you gather it up in a mantle,  
and you'll seek it - from the veins of the  
murderers,  
and the veins of the silent as well.

ואתה את דמנו אוסף בכדים  
כי אין לו אוסף מלבדך

ואתה מריחו כמו ריח פרחים  
ואתה מלקטו במטפחת  
ואתה תבקשנו מידי הרוצחים  
ומידי השותקים גם יחד

(Translation from  
[http://wujs.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=275&Itemid=232](http://wujs.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=275&Itemid=232))

#### *Discussion Questions:*

1. In this poem, what holds the Jewish people together?
2. What feelings or thoughts do you have watching Alterman's wife reading this poem?
3. What is Alterman saying about God and theology, about belief?

#### **Rabbi Milton Steinberg (1903–1950)**

For long centuries the growth of Judaism has been hampered by dispersion and persecution. But when a Jewish Commonwealth has become into being, when outcast Jews have found peace, when the Hebrew language and literature have taken root in their native soil, the Tradition will have a fresh chance at free, spontaneous unfolding. Its circumstances will be favorable as they have not been in two millennia. And not in Palestine only, but throughout the world. For Palestine then will be an unfettered heart pumping the blood of health and vigor to all the Jewries of the dispersion.

Who knows what revelations the people of revelations shall have to speak at that time? This much is certain: the Jewish people everywhere will be the stronger for the homeland and its revived Hebrew culture, and therefore the better able to labor for the advent of that ideal society which it was the first to project and after which it has striven so long and mightily.<sup>122</sup>

#### *Discussion Questions:*

1. In this passage, what holds the Jewish people together?
2. What is the significance of creating a view of Jewish peoplehood from negative events such as dispersion and persecution?
3. What is the significance of Hebrew and the State of Israel in creating a stronger Jewish people? Does it really strengthen global connection?

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<sup>122</sup> Milton Steinberg, *Basic Judaism* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1947), 97-98.

## **We All Stood Together by Merle Feld**

My brother and I were at Sinai  
He kept a journal  
of what he saw  
of what he heard  
of what it all meant to him

I wish I had such a record  
of what happened to me there

It seems like every time I want to write  
I can't  
I'm always holding a baby  
one of my own  
or one for a friend  
always holding a baby  
so my hands are never free  
to write things down

And then  
As time passes  
The particulars  
The hard data  
The who what when where why  
Slip away from me  
And all I'm left with is  
The feeling

But feelings are just sounds  
The vowel barking of a mute

My brother is so sure of what he heard  
After all he's got a record of it  
Consonant after consonant after consonant

If we remembered it together  
We could recreate holy time  
Sparks flying<sup>123</sup>

### *Discussion Questions:*

1. In this poem, what holds the Jewish people together?
2. Why is it so significant for the Jewish people to be together to recreate holy time? Can this be done independent of community?
3. Where is God in this poem? What is the significance about the absence of God? Is it about God or is it about the people?

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<sup>123</sup> Merle Feld, "We All Stood Together," *A Spiritual Life: A Jewish Feminist Journey* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999), 205.

## Peoplehood Programs

*There are many organizations around the world that are engaged in the Peoplehood endeavor. Read on to hear who they are, what they do, and how they are influencing the Jewish community around the world through their work.*

### SERVICE PROGRAMS

#### [American Jewish World Service](#)

The American Jewish World Service (AJWS) serves the international community based on the Jewish imperative to pursue justice. By bringing together Jewish volunteers to do social justice work, this pluralistic organization works to alleviate poverty, hunger and disease in the developing world. AJWS, through advocacy and education, works with the Jewish community in North America on issues of human rights, civil society and sustainable development for all people in the world. *These programs are for adult volunteers.*

#### [AVODAH: The Jewish Service Corps](#)

Through *AVODAH: The Jewish Service Corps* young adults provide direct service to metropolitan communities in the United States affected by poverty. The participants work full time for a year on issues of social change. The Corps members, whose work is grounded in issues of social justice and other Jewish values, are trained to become service providers to residents of low income communities.

#### [PresenTense](#)

PresenTense invests in young adults around the world, giving them tools and networks so they can change the face of the Jewish community and influence the Jewish people. *This program is for young adults who qualify for the PresenTense Fellowship.*

### YOUTH AND ADULT EDUCATION

#### [Jewish Lens](#)

The Jewish Lens offers a full curriculum for middle and high school students. Based on the photographic works of Zion Ozeri, photos serve as the catalyst for exploring Jewish values, identity, and tradition. These photographs reflect a theme of Peoplehood, with complex and diverse works from the Jewish community. Through analysis and discussion the students relate to the images using Jewish values and texts. Unique Jewish communities around the world provide both the stage for these photos as well as the basis for student research. After this phase of the curriculum is complete, students work on understanding their own communities through documentary work. The project finishes with an exhibition displaying the students' works from all of the schools involved. *This program is for educators of teens in middle school and high school.*

#### [The Jewish Peoplehood Hub](#)

This new project, in partnership with [Makōm of the Jewish Agency for Israel](#), [The NADAV Foundation](#), and [The UJA-Federation of New York](#), seeks to create a sense of *Klal Yisrael*

through think-tanks, program planning, and leadership development. The organization strives to articulate, cultivate, incubate, and generate through language, creative programming, conversations, resources and networking. On the website, visitors can find a directory of activities, events, and resources that are open to Jews of all backgrounds and denominations.

### **The Lokey International Center for Jewish Education, Haifa, Israel**

Based on the center's ideals of grappling with spirituality, faith and God as well as Jewish peoplehood, the center prioritizes creating relationships between learning groups of Jews in Israel and the Diaspora based on shared values. They offer a curricula containing [synagogue programming](#) to use in partnership with the Center. The Center is deeply committed to *Klal Yisrael*, strengthening the Jewish identity of Israelis and their bonds with Jews throughout the world. *This program is for educators who work with children and adults.*

### **My Family Story International Competition**

This is a curricular unit created by the School for Jewish Peoplehood Studies at Beit Hatfutsot to assist teachers and students as they prepare for this competition. The activities, texts and supporting material help students create their program for their journey into their family histories. Authored by Dr. Cecilia Waismann and Dr. Elana Maryles Sztokman, this curriculum creates a sense of peoplehood as students investigate their personal family story and how it relates to the collective story of the Jewish people and worldwide historical events. Ultimately the project is designed to help the students develop their sense of personal Jewish identity and a connection, and commitment, to the Jewish people. *This program is for educators who work with children in elementary schools.*

### **Partnership 2000**

This program, run by the Jewish Agency, seeks to pair Jewish communities around the world with Israeli communities with the hopes of building community and leadership. The P2K program seeks to bring Israel into local communities through their team of emissaries. P2K also brings volunteers together to identify issues and create responses, as well as determining projects and budgets. All of these activities allow for –partnerships with a purpose.¶

### **Taube-Koret Center for Jewish Peoplehood of the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco**

The Taube-Koret Center for Jewish Peoplehood works to promote Jewish literacy, learning, exploration and innovation. Classes, workshops, lectures, literary programs and public forums are offered to the community to provide diverse learning opportunities to adults, no matter what their Jewish background or level education. *This center offers classes and programs for people of all ages.*

## **SYNAGOGUE PARTNERSHIPS**

### **Kehillat YOZMA, the Reform Congregation of Modi'in**

YOZMA, which means –initiative¶ in Hebrew, prides itself on being a welcoming community. The name of the congregation is also an acronym – *Yahadut Z'maneinu, Moreshet Ha'am* - Judaism in our Time, Heritage of our People. It seeks to create a progressive Judaism in Israel through *tikkun olam*, education and worship — all based on values of Jewish pluralism. Not only

does the congregation open its doors to new immigrants from Reform communities across the globe, they also host visiting synagogue groups. By sharing their worship and their homes Kehillat YOZMA embodies the meaning of *klal Yisrael* - one Jewish community no matter where one is in the world.

## ISRAEL ENGAGEMENT AND ADVOCACY

### Association of Reform Zionists of America (ARZA)

ARZA is the Zionist arm and voice of the Reform Movement in the United States. The organization seeks to incorporate Israel into the Jewish identity of Reform Jews. ARZA also works to enhance Israel as a –pluralistic, just and democratic Jewish state.¶

According to their website ARZA has three core mission activities:

**Engagement:** Bringing Israel into the minds, hearts and lives of American Reform Jews through increased awareness, education and programming.

**Advocacy:** Empowering Reform Jews to promote Israel in a caring, honest and intelligent manner in their communities and beyond.

**Travel:** Creating hands-on experiences in Israel that lead to a lifelong relationship.

### Makōm

Makōm is changing the communal conversation about Israel. Makōm’s mission is to empower educators to help their students develop deep, sophisticated, and honest connections with Israel through both hugging and wrestling. The organization strives for disciplined imagination as we nurture people and develop content to face the multi-dimensional challenge of Israel engagement for our times. Downloadable educational resources are available on their website.

## INTERFAITH AND OUTREACH

### Interfaith Family

This online resource is a place for interfaith families who are exploring how to incorporate Judaism into their lives. The site also acts as an advocate for Jewish communities that welcome those in interfaith relationships. Interfaith Family provides educational and non-judgmental information, resources, and ways for interfaith families to connect with each other.

### Jewish Mosaic

This organization strives to –redefine the boundaries of the [Jewish] community to include Jewish of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.¶ Jewish Mosaic wants to ensure that LGBT Jews are welcome in all Jewish institutions and that they can participate in all facets of Jewish life. The organization also advocates on behalf of their population, and does research to help Jewish decision makers find ways to make their communities more inclusive.

### Keshet

Keshet’s mission is to ensure that all GLBT Jews are fully integrated as a part of their local Jewish communities. Nationally, Keshet offers support, training, and a wide variety of resources for communities looking to better integrate this population segment. In the Greater Boston area Keshet offers social as well as cultural events for GLBT Jews.

### Jewish Outreach Initiative

The Jewish Outreach Institute has been a leader in developing Jewish outreach programming since the late 1980s. Throughout the year the JOI holds national conferences and publishes resources. Their programs include:

*The Mothers Circle* - free educational programs for non-Jewish women raising Jewish Children

*Empowering Ruth* - a free online course and online community for women Jews-by-choice

*The Grandparents Circle* - a networking program for Jewish grandparents whose adult children have intermarried. The course offers helpful tips to enhance their grandchildren's Jewish identities.

*For the Men* - a series of programs for Jewish men in interfaith relationships



# Peoplehood Pedagogy

אֵין דָּעַר זעהן;  
בִּי אָר פֿאַרלירן

Where there is no vision the people perish (Prov 29:18)

## Why Teach Peoplehood?

When it comes to engaging congregants, synagogues face many obstacles. Placing an emphasis on membership, outreach, worship, and youth to create a welcoming community, conversations about Jewish peoplehood fall lower on the priority list. According to Steven M. Cohen, at any given moment only 40% of American Jewish adults are members of a synagogue and Reform Jews affiliate and attend worship at a lower rate than Orthodox and Conservative Jews.<sup>124</sup>

Perhaps one would view this as a failure of the traditional synagogue model which mostly concentrates its efforts on membership and worship. Other studies show that Jews, while they care about Israel's survival, do not have a strong sense of Jewish peoplehood and that Israel is not a significant factor in their religious identity.<sup>125</sup> The opposite could also occur that one could have a strong sense of Jewish peoplehood without a strong religious identity. This leaves congregations in a bit of a quandary as they try to achieve both goals at the same time. As it is, actively being Jewish, especially Reform is no longer considered a responsibility, but a choice. Judaism competes for peoples' time and interest in a world where community can be found elsewhere, even online.

With so many obstacles creating a compelling reason for why Jews should feel that they belong to the greater Jewish world is a difficult task. Why should congregations pursue this endeavor? Assuming the premise that an internalized sense of belong to the Jewish people enriches one's Judaism, congregations can start to tackle the other challenge that lies ahead: why it is important for a congregations to work with other Jews around the world on issues of social justice? How should the congregation make Israel compelling and meaningful for its membership? How is this articulated and how is this done? Is it through –one-shot deals or strategic educational planning combined with organizational and curricular change? How does a congregation ensure that whatever they are able to accomplish regarding peoplehood education and commitment is sustainable over a period of time?

According to Dr. Isa Aron learning is at the core of Jewish identity, –for Jews, learning is more than an intellectual exercise; it engages our emotions and influences our actions. It is, by definition, communal; even when one learns alone one is inextricably linked to Jews in other times and places.<sup>126</sup> As the –people of the book, education is at our core of what we do to ensure a Jewish future.

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<sup>124</sup> Steven M. Cohen, –Members and Motives: Who Joins American Jewish Congregations and Why, S3K Report 1 (Fall 2006): 1.

<sup>125</sup> American Jewish Committee, –2003 Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion (1/11/2004), <http://www.ajc.org/site/apps/nl/content3.asp?c=ijTI2PHKoG&b=846741&ct=1051537> (accessed December 25, 2007).

<sup>126</sup>Isa Aron, *Becoming a Congregation of Learners*, (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000), 11.

Dr. Shlomi Ravid, a leading thinker and educator in the field of Peoplehood education, argues that the Jewish community is in need of a –Peoplehood Pedagogy. He states, –The Jewish People is in dire need of a profound and integrative educational approach to ensure that a Peoplehood consciousness forms a fundamental outcome of Jewish education worldwide.<sup>127</sup> This means constructing a collective narrative from individual narratives through listening and caring for one another. It also means actively pursuing *tikkun olam* to demonstrate caring for the world.

Other educators have thought about how this should be enacted in a Reform congregational setting. In the Spring 2007 issue of the CCAR Journal Rabbi Michael Marmur uses the metaphor of the four or five cups of wine from the *Seder* to emphasize how important it is for congregations to create a liberal Israel theology to help bridge Israelis and Jews in the Diaspora and strengthen one's relationship to Judaism.<sup>128</sup> This metaphor for Reform Zionism is one grounded in Jewish peoplehood. He opens his article with a text from Hermann Cohen:

The loss of the national state has already been determined by the messianic idea. On this, however, is based the *tragedy of the Jewish people* in all its historical depth. How can a people continue to live and fulfill its messianic task, when it is deprived of the universal human protection state gives to its people?<sup>129</sup>

Writing from an Israeli's perspective, Marmur claims that Jews in the Diaspora feel distant from the Israel portrayed in the media.<sup>130</sup> He faults Jews in the Diaspora for being less interested in engaging in a meaningful dialogue with Israelis. Just as God becomes present when Jews participate in learning, prayer, and community, –God becomes present, too, in the people Israel and the State of Israel, when we display the confidence to face up to the inadequacies, the honesty to face up to the often grim prospects, and the energy to appreciate the huge achievements.<sup>131</sup>

## The Role of Israel

Often in Israel education, Peoplehood is one of the means for teaching about the ancient and modern Israel. Even though Reform congregations are not necessarily successful in the Israel education pieces of their curricula, they do pride themselves on being places to build Jewish identities and a sense of belonging to the Jewish people.<sup>132</sup> Teaching Israel as a means for developing and reinforcing Jewish identity is one of the three principle ways it is taught.<sup>133</sup> Originally, creating a sense of Jewish peoplehood had been the main goal for teaching Israel according to Barry Chazan's study in 1974.<sup>134</sup> Dr. Lisa Grant found this to be the third most important goal for teaching Israel in her study conducted in 2006.<sup>135</sup> Grant sought to find the

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<sup>127</sup> Elana Maryles Sztokman, –Profile: Shlomi Ravid – *Doing Jewish Peoplehood*, *Jewish Educational Leadership* Volume 7:2 (Winter 2009), 51.

<sup>128</sup> Michael Marmur, –Happiness inside the State: Toward a Liberal Theology of Israel, *CCAR Journal*, Vol. LIV, No. 2 Issue 212 (Spring 2007): 84-97.

<sup>129</sup> Hermann Cohen, *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism* (The American Academy of Religion, 1995), 267.

<sup>130</sup> Marmur, –Happiness inside the State: Toward a Liberal Theology of Israel, 86.

<sup>131</sup> Marmur, –Happiness inside the State: Toward a Liberal Theology of Israel, 94.

<sup>132</sup> Lisa D. Grant, –Israel Education in Reform Congregational Schools, *CCAR Journal*, Vol. LIV, No. 3 Issue 212 (Spring 2007): 3-24/

<sup>133</sup> Grant, –Israel Education in Reform Congregational Schools, 5.

<sup>134</sup> Barry Chazan, –Israel in American Jewish Schools Revisited, *Jewish Education* 42:2 (1979).

<sup>135</sup> Grant, –Israel Education in Reform Congregational Schools, 9.

answer for why Reform congregations teach Israel and how they might answer the question –why Israel matters.¶ While the research and small survey sample did not provide a clear answer, she offered one of her own, –Israel matters because we cannot understand ourselves as individual Jews or as a part of the Jewish people without a strong spiritual and physical connection to the people, the land, the history and the contemporary reality of the Jewish state.¶<sup>136</sup>

However, Israel is also a means for teaching peoplehood as one can see by the Mandel Fellows seminar which took place in Israel. Another example of this is the program –[Israel: The Vision and Venture of the Jewish People](#)¶ by Beth Hatefutsoth. By looking at the creation of the State of Israel as a unifying force for the Jewish people to work together to build a homeland, this curriculum helps create a new paradigm for understanding Peoplehood. This transcends issues of how to deal with pluralism. It teaches the learner how and why Israel became a State and why it continues to be an important task, unifying the Jewish people.

### **The Role of the Congregation**

Reform congregations must craft a Jewish peoplehood mission with practical ramifications. The words in the prayer books do not necessarily affect one’s feelings about belonging to a long tradition, nor do holiday celebrations devoid of meaningful language about being a part of something across time and space. The congregation can create many entry points for this to occur. This may be through teaching Hebrew, the shared language for the Jewish people. For some worship may resonate; for others, it may be social action.

Therefore, one must ask, **what is this Jewish peoplehood all about?** We are all linked to one another. We see this in our texts, recite it in our liturgy, and celebrate it in our homes during holiday times. This means recognizing the inextricable link between Jews around the world, and to Israel no matter where one lives. We pray in community, often using communal language towards Jerusalem, for Jerusalem, and for peace with its neighbors because there is nothing more important than the sanctification of human life. As Jews we read about our ancestors’ journey through the land of Israel in our most sacred texts and celebrate historical accounts through holiday celebrations such as Sukkot and Passover. Also around the world we, as Jews, commemorate special days honoring the creation of the State of Israel and memorializing those who lost their life for the State. These are more than just civic holidays like Memorial Day and Thanksgiving which we celebrate in America. Our ancient prayers are included in our ceremonies and services, thus making them Jewish as well as Reform. To enrich the spiritual lives of their members, congregations must educate all of them about what it means to be part of a collective called the Jewish people. Every congregation and Jewish leader must craft their own narratives that are not only demonstrated through their words, but also their actions.

### **How to Measure Success**

One major question is how to measure success. A successful congregation who infuses a sense of peoplehood into the fabric of its very being will be able to demonstrate this through the

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<sup>136</sup> Grant, –Israel Education in Reform Congregational Schools,¶ 21.

language and prayers it chooses for worship, how its holidays are celebrated, the artwork on the walls, the Jewish music taught and stories told in the classrooms, how much Hebrew spoken in the hallways, its congregational trips, and so on. There are so many possibilities. However, these are all behavioral modifications which are easier to measure than changes in feelings, beliefs and attitudes. Congregations must also invest time in having conversations about how people view their own Jewish identity in relationship to other Jews.

It is also difficult to measure changes in attitudes, but one can measure how often language and tools about peoplehood are used throughout every aspect of congregational life. This is how one can tell if the congregation has crafted their notion of Jewish peoplehood in a thoughtful manner. Whether it is through social justice agenda or increased Israel advocacy, peoplehood education and programs can start to appear within the congregation in a systemic and thoughtful manner. Peoplehood does not need to be an independent subject, since so much of what it means is found within our prayers, texts and history.

### **How Should You Teach Peoplehood?**

Before creating a way to teach peoplehood one must define the desired outcomes and ask the essential questions of why this is important. Dr. Misha Galperin, in his article in *The Peoplehood Papers* Volume 1, wrote –Desired Outcomes for Jewish Peoplehood.‖ They are:<sup>137</sup>

- Connecting Jews to each other and to Jewish communities.
- Engendering the feeling of belonging.
- Providing venues for discovering meaning.
- Advancing the idea of responsibility to your family, your community, your people, and your world (in that order).

Based on research of four innovative peoplehood programs Carol Novis asked the questions they were attempting to answer:<sup>138</sup>

1. How can Jews forge a connection to their roots and preserve their future?
2. How can Jews across the Jewish world narrow the increasing gap between their communities?
3. How can Jews be inspired to feel connected to a global Jewish people?

The programs she wrote about, and many more, can be found on the [Peoplehood Programs](#) page of the website.

Yonatan Ariel and Simon Caplan define strategies for Jewish peoplehood practice. Also by looking at existing peoplehood programs they have one or more of the following features within them.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Galperin, –Jonah, A Pair of Jeans and a Story of Jewish Peoplehood: A Message for Yom Kippur 2007/5768,‖ 8.

<sup>138</sup> Carol Novis, –Innovative Peoplehood Programs,‖ *Peoplehood Now*, 34.

- Increasing connectivity between Jewish people in Jewish meaningful ways
- Emphasizing international connectivity that includes but does not isolate Israel as special or different to other Jewish communities from a peoplehood perspective
- Promoting the value of *klal Yisrael* of *kol yisrael arevim, zeh bazeh*
- Expanding the reach of basic elements such as language, consensus components of culture, tradition and shared past
- Tapping into the concerns and passions of young people for subjects such as the environment and social action (*tikkun olam*)
- Enhancing the centrality of –Jewish responsibility<sup>139</sup> – looking inwards and outwards through voluntarism, philanthropy, inclusiveness, openness and other behaviors

Based on the research, and on the existing programs, there seem to be four main ways to teach Jewish peoplehood:

1. Theory and Practice (for adult learners)
2. Social Relationships (for children, teens and adults)
3. Shared Social Justice Work (for children, teens and adults)

Below are some brief examples of these:

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<sup>139</sup> Yonatan Ariel and Simon Caplan, —Creating a Center/Hub for Applied Jewish Peoplehood Strategies and Programs: Thoughts and Questions, 2008.

## *Theory and Practice*

At a seminar I attended in the summer of 2008 with leaders of HUC's education schools the professors put forth a way to teach Peoplehood to adult learners. They outlined the following methods:<sup>140</sup>

- Studying conceptions of collectivity and Jewish peoplehood from theological, sociological and philosophical perspectives.
- Encountering and grappling with issues of boundaries, diversity and normativity as they relate to peoplehood and Israel.
- Grappling with the place of peoplehood in the values and commitments of Reform Judaism.
- Exploring issues of boundaries, diversity and normativity with congregational community.
- Engaging in dialogue with educators and communal leaders in Israel who are exploring similar questions in their own work.

By blending the theoretical with the practical and having human interactions, a high level of peoplehood education took place that could be replicated with other graduate and undergraduate institutions.

## *Social Relationships*

Using social relationships is another way to teach peoplehood. Sisterhood congregational programs and other partnerships like Yachdav by [the Lokey International Center for Jewish Education](#) use this mode. By creating a virtual *mifgash* children and adults can connect to one another through the internet, work together on programs, and eventually meet one another face to face. Dr. Ezra Kopelowitz found in his study of Jewish Community Day Schools that a people-to-people approach creates ongoing and lasting relationships between North American and Israeli children.<sup>141</sup>

Guy Tsfoni takes the concept of *mifgash* with congregational partners one step further by suggesting evaluating and renewing worship models based on best practices of the other and developing modes for voluntarism and learning together.<sup>142</sup>

## *Social Justice Work*

Social justice work is another important way to teach Peoplehood. In *A Vision of Holiness* Richard Levy quotes Daniel 12:3 stating that God's promise to Abraham will not be fulfilled

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<sup>140</sup> –Rabbinic Leadership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Challenges of Peoplehood in Creating Compelling Jewish Communities|| (Syllabus for HUC Mandel Fellows Israel Seminar, June 6-28, 2008), 1.

<sup>141</sup> Ezra Kopelowitz, –Towards What Ideal do We Strive? A Portrait of Social and Symbolic Engagement with Israel in Jewish Community Schools,|| (Israel: The Jewish Agency for Israel and RAVSAK, 2005), 12

<sup>142</sup> Guy Tsfoni, –The Jewish Nation Building Community that Builds the Jewish People,|| (Shdemot, 2005).

when the Jews have multiplied, but when people have become so wise they will turn each other into –doers of justice.¶<sup>143</sup>

וְהַיְדוּשׁ יִשְׁתַּבַּח וְהַיְחִי וְהַיְהוּדִים יִשְׁתַּבְּחוּ וְהַיְחִי וְהַיְהוּדִים יִשְׁתַּבְּחוּ וְהַיְחִי וְהַיְהוּדִים יִשְׁתַּבְּחוּ

And the wise ones will shine as the brightness of the firmament; and that they turn the many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever. (Dan 12:3)

Ezra Kopelowitz writes how community involvement through leadership development is a best peoplehood practice.<sup>144</sup> Through volunteer opportunities participants develop communities leading to important social networks. Arnold Eisen cites social justice work as a task for Jews to do this work: –Jews who call themselves religious and Jews who do not, need to work on building just and caring Jewish communities.¶<sup>145</sup>

## Enduring Understandings

- Having a sense of belonging to the Jewish people, and an understanding of what this means in today's world, is an essential component of one's Jewish identity and enriches one's Judaism.
- Jewish peoplehood means being a part of the history, tradition, and future of *am Yisrael* (the Jewish people) and *klal Yisrael* (the community of Israel).
- It is important for Reform congregations to address how to best approach ideas of Jewish peoplehood as one of the core values, together with Torah, *avodah*, and *g'milut chasidim*.
- North American Reform Jews are important people within the context of world Jewry and its future.

## Essential Questions

- Why should Jewish peoplehood matter to North American Reform Jews?
- What possible tools do congregations need to create a sense of Jewish peoplehood amongst congregants?
- What are the multiple ways to integrate *am Israel* in a meaningful way in a congregational setting?
- What does it mean to be part of the Jewish people across time and space?
- What does Jewish peoplehood mean to Israelis and how does that affect North American Jewry?

<sup>143</sup> Richard N. Levy, *A Vision of Holiness* (New York: URJ Press, 2005), 84.

<sup>144</sup> Ezra Kopelowitz, –Leadership Development As a Best Peoplehood Practice,¶ eJewish Philanthropy Blog, posted January 27, 210, <http://ejewishphilanthropy.com/leadership-development-as-a-best-peoplehood-practice>. blog.com/archives/2006/03/the\_new\_america.html#c080052 (accessed March 28, 2006).



<sup>145</sup> Arnold Eisen, –United as One People, ll *Peoplehood Now* (2006), 8.

# Ritual

Elizabeth Gilbert wrote, in the New York Times bestseller Eat Pray Love:

*This is what rituals are for. We do spiritual ceremonies as human beings in order to create a safe resting place for our most complicated feelings of joy or trauma, so that we don't have to haul those feelings around with us forever, weighing us down. We all need such places of ritual safekeeping. And I do believe that if your culture or tradition doesn't have the specific ritual you're craving, then you are absolutely permitted to makeup a ceremony of your own devising, fixing your own broken-down emotional systems with ...do-it-yourself resourcefulness.*<sup>146</sup>

## Why is Ritual Relevant to Peoplehood?

Dr. David Mittleberg discusses the tension that both Israelis and Diaspora Jews are facing right now. We are –failing to educate our children to be Jews by choice. To choose to be Jewish, to be primarily Jewish...<sup>147</sup> Mittleberg cites Mordechai Kaplan who labeled Judaism as a civilization and as a people.<sup>148</sup> Although, in another article, Mittleberg critiques institutionalized Jewish religion as a dividing factor amongst the Jewish people around the world,<sup>149</sup> ritual and prayer is the common denominator which links us all together.

Ritual connects Jews to Judaism. However, it can also connect Jews to the Jewish people. During lifecycle moments the personal seems more important than the communal. It is often viewed as a –me! moment – for the bride and groom, for the *bar mitzvah*, for the baby and the parents.<sup>150</sup> But community is needed for these rituals thus making it also about others who witness it. Creative and meaningful ritual enhances the experience for not just the person going through the ritual, but for all those present. Using language about the Jewish people and about Israel bridges the gap between the individual and the community. It becomes about the event, and the individual is the means for gathering the community.

Looking at ritual through a Peoplehood Lens, and even creating a new ritual, can make it seem as a new initiative of sorts. A relatively new area of study, peoplehood educational programs, including the creation of standards and benchmarks, are on the horizon by a handful of scholars and educators in North America and Israel who take this subject seriously in order to help better the work of the Jewish community globally so that more Jews will stay involved. Dr. Ezra Kopelowitz and Ari Engelberg note two core goals to help strengthen such an initiative which apply to this area of ritual. The first is to enable Jews to seek out meaningful interaction with

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<sup>146</sup> Elizabeth Gilbert, *Eat Pray Love: One Woman's Search for Everything Across Italy, India and Indonesia*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2006) 187.

<sup>147</sup> David Mittleberg, –Jewish Peoplehood Education|| (paper presented at the BASIS Summer Forum, Israel, July 9, 2009), 2.

<sup>148</sup> David Mittleberg, –Jewish Peoplehood Education|| (paper presented at the BASIS Summer Forum, Israel, July 9, 2009), 3.

<sup>149</sup> David Mittleberg, –Towards Jewish Peoplehood,|| in *The Peoplehood Papers, Volume 2* (Tel Aviv: Beit Hatefutsoth, 2008), 22.

<sup>150</sup> Dasee Berkowitz, –Israel in the Life Cycle|| (paper presented at the Makōm Think/Practice Tank, October 15, 2009), 2.

other Jews and the second is to build a collective Jewish experience.<sup>151</sup> Ritual meets both of these goals, especially the four elements which provide the building blocks of meaningful Jewish experience: context, ability, awareness and motivation.<sup>152</sup> Within the first block a ritual must create a –compelling temporal, spatial and social context which frames social interaction or intellectual experience.<sup>153</sup> Celebrating a newborn baby or someone travelling to Israel accomplishes this for every participant. It creates an emotional connection between the individuals having this shared experience. According to Tom Driver, –One obvious aspect of ritual is that it not only brings people together in physical assembly but also tends to unite them emotionally.<sup>154</sup> Victor Turner writes about liminal moments in ritual.<sup>155</sup> These are sacred times during a transitional person where everyone present is transformed. Ritual also creates an intellectual connection through the religious dimension. While it is difficult to measure the future action, perhaps it will increase one’s interest in participating in prayer or encourage a visit to Israel.

## Why Ritual?

Before thinking about creating new rituals, such as ones for travel to Israel and *aliyah*, or fulfilling the *mitzvah* of conduction ancient ones one must answer the questions, –why ritual, and, –why ritual in a congregational setting? Ritual can have a very powerful affect on people, both those who take part in it and those who witness it. According to Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman ritual requires both predictability and spontaneity.<sup>156</sup> Ritual is –our creative ordering of an ideal cosmos, an alternative reality that we ‘play out’ in the sacred dramas of our rites, and that we apply as a prophetic standard to judge the failure of our human stewardship of the world around us.<sup>157</sup> Ritual creates an order to the experience by melding liturgy to action and music and gives order to the world. Hoffman asks, –How do simple human beings find their way through the maze of things they might be, if not, primarily through ritual?<sup>158</sup> Ritual allows humans to recreate the drama of recreating for one another in a way that God may have once done for our ancestors that we read about in the Torah.

Maurice Bloch, one of many critics of ritual, saw it as an extreme form of traditional authority, taking place through symbols, song, dance and features of articulation.<sup>159</sup> Freud, Durkheim, and Marx all offered harsh critiques as well as seeing ritual as a disease—delusionary and oppressive.<sup>160</sup> However, its formalized redundant nature is necessary to help rally and transform

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<sup>151</sup> Ezra Kopelowitz and Ari Engelberg, –Jewish Peoplehood: Criteria for the development and evaluation of Peoplehood programming, (Jerusalem: Research Success Technologies, 2009), 2-3.

<sup>152</sup> Ezra Kopelowitz and Ari Engelberg, –Jewish Peoplehood: Criteria for the development and evaluation of Peoplehood programming, 3.

<sup>153</sup> Ezra Kopelowitz and Ari Engelberg, –Jewish Peoplehood: Criteria for the development and evaluation of Peoplehood programming, 3.

<sup>154</sup> Tom F. Driver, *Liberating Rites*, (BookSurge, LLC, 2006), 152.

<sup>155</sup> Victor Turner, *Ritual Process* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1968), pp. 94-165.

<sup>156</sup> Lawrence A. Hoffman, –Ritual, God, and Me, in *Jewish Spiritual Journeys: 21 Essays Written to Honor the Occasion of the 70th Birthday of Eugene B. Borowitz*, eds. Lawrence H. and Arnold Wolf (Springfield, NJ: Behrman House, 1997), 37.

<sup>157</sup> Lawrence A. Hoffman, –Ritual, God, and Me, 40.

<sup>158</sup> Lawrence A. Hoffman, *Beyond the Text*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), 175.

<sup>159</sup> Maurice Bloch, *Ritual History and Power*, (London: Berg Publishers, 1989), 19-45.

<sup>160</sup> Lawrence A. Hoffman, –Ritual, God, and Me, 44.

a community. Hoffman states that –ritual is a human art form that can transform as well as maintain, liberate as well as oppress.¶<sup>161</sup> Creating ritual becomes a way of continuing God’s work. Just as God created the world, we can create rituals to help continue a process of tikkun olam. –The key to understanding ritual in all its potential is to see God as the first ritualizer, God the Creator telling us by the example of Genesis that we too must exercise our God-like creativity.¶<sup>162</sup>

As for the second question – –Why ritual in a congregational setting?¶ – Rabbi Lawrence Kushner teaches that –Jews need one another, and therefore congregations, to do primary religious acts which they should not, and probably cannot, do alone. Doing primary religious acts are the only way we have of growing as Jews.¶<sup>163</sup> Communal prayer is one of the primary acts which operate on an emotional level with song, meditation, and silence. It is a –matter of the heart.¶

### ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS:

- Participating in ritual and worship creates a sense of belonging to the Jewish people and connecting one’s self to the larger whole.
- Ritual is an integral component to what it means to be an engaged Reform Jew.
- In order to demonstrate how a connection to Israel enriches the lives of all Reform Jews there needs to be a way to celebrate those traveling to Israel and making *aliyah* in a ritualized manner similar to a birth, wedding, or *b’nei mitzvah*.

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- How does worship connect the individual to the collective?
- How does ritual bring a new level to Reform worship and enhance a spiritual experience?
- Why should ritual matter?

### CORE CONCEPTS:

- Liturgy can serve as one of the many ways a Reform Jew can learn about and integrate their understanding of what it means to be a part of the Jewish people.
- Worship and ritual helps to enrich the religious experience of Reform Jews.

### EVIDENCE OF UNDERSTANDING

- Not only will clergy begin to incorporate these rituals into their regular worship calendars, congregants will come to expect to participate in them.
- In the same way that mainstream life cycle events are celebrated such as *b’rit milah*, *b’nei mitzvah*, an *auf ruf* and weddings, ritual for *aliyah* and special blessings for travel to

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<sup>161</sup> Lawrence A. Hoffman, –Ritual, God, and Me,¶ 45.

<sup>162</sup> Lawrence A. Hoffman, –Ritual, God, and Me,¶ 45.

<sup>163</sup> Lawrence Kushner, –The Tent-Peg Business: Some Truths about Congregations,¶ *New Traditions Premier Issue* (Spring 1984): 87.

Israel will be incorporated into the regular synagogue worship experience, whether on Shabbat or as a stand-alone ritual.

## **GOALS**

- To impact the person being blessed or honored.
- To impact those witnessing and participating in the ritual.

## Berit Milah

**יא** וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלָיו , הֲלוֹ מִן הַנָּחַשׁ זֶה דֹבֵר עִם לְךָ .  
וְכָתוּב בְּסֵפֶר גֵּזְרֵינוּ : וְעַתָּה תִּהְיֶה נִקְרָאת כְּצֵדִיק .  
**אֱלֹהִים**

And God said to him: 'I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a community of  
nations will be from you, and kings will come from your loins.  
(Gen 35:11)

The first commandment found in Genesis 1:28, פְּרֹוּ ורבו, tells Adam and Eve to —be fruitful and multiply.¶ This is the way in which the Jewish people will continue to grow and eventually become a nation (see the quote at the top of the page from Gen 35:11).

Every Jewish child who is born becomes a part of this Jewish community. The community has a responsibility to help raise and educate a child:

וְלֹא־יִמָּדַד תִּמְדַּר ת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד יִשְׁרָוּ עַם, וְכִי תִּשְׁרָו עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיַד הַיָּדָיו וְכִי תִּשְׁרָו עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיַד הַיָּדָיו וְכִי תִּשְׁרָו עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיַד הַיָּדָיו

And you (plural) shall teach them [the laws from God] to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk on the way, when you lie down and when you rise up. (Deut 11:19). While the child's parents are the primary caretakers, the community must help by serving as teacher, as seen by the plural form of the verb **וְהִלַּכְתֶּם**.<sup>164</sup>

*A berit milah*<sup>165</sup> and naming ceremony inducts a newborn into the Jewish people through a public rite of passage. This important ritual is not only for the newborn and the parents, but for the family and the community. A child is publicly welcomed into the covenant of the Jewish people. The covenant that God established with Abraham in Gen 15:1-7 that his future generations would be –as numerous as the stars in heaven‖ is renewed with every ritual. –Each *berit mila*, then, serves to bear witness that as one more child is being added to the firmament of Israel, God is keeping the promise.‖<sup>166</sup>

For a *berit Milah* a *minyan* is not mandatory, but is preferred (See Shulchan Aruch YD 265:6). The witnesses all stand (except for the *Sandak*) because the Shulchan Aruch also cites II Kings 23:3 **וְכָל הָעָם** **עָמְדוּ** **לְפָנָיו**, the entire nation stood at the covenant.

Circumcision comes from Gen 17:9-13:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל אַבְרָהָם וְאַתָּה וְעַמְּךָ יְרֵכָה אִתְּךָ לְעֵתָהּ  
 וְאַתָּה יְרֵכָה אִתְּךָ לְעֵתָהּ וְאַתָּה יְרֵכָה אִתְּךָ לְעֵתָהּ  
 And God said to Abraham, and you will guard my covenant—you and your seed that comes after  
 you in their generations.

The covenant service for a son, found in the Reform rabbi's manual, begins with a reading for all who are assembled there, –We rejoice! A child has come into the world. We rejoice as we bring the child into the *Berit*, the covenant between God and the Jewish people.<sup>167</sup> The covenant service for a daughter is modeled after the one for a son. The same peoplehood reading begins

<sup>164</sup> Simeon J. Maslin, ed. *Gates of Mitzvah: A Guide to Jewish Lifecycle*. (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1975), 68.

<sup>165</sup> Sometimes when בר תר is transliterated it is spelled as *-berit*, "*-b'rit*," or *-brit*.|| When the word מ לה is

transliterated it is sometimes spelled as *-milah* or *-mila*.

<sup>166</sup> Richard N. Levy. "The Liturgy of Berit Milah" in *Berit Milah in the Reform Context*, ed. Lewis Barth, (Los Angeles: Berit Mila Board of Reform Judaism, 1990), 10.

<sup>167</sup> David Polish, ed. *Rabbi's Manual*, (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1988), 6.

the ceremony. Midrash Rabbah, Exodus 28:2 states that the –House of Jacob| refers to the women of Israel.<sup>168</sup> An adopted child goes through a *berit milah* or naming and then is also introduced into the community of Israel –as a true member of our people.||<sup>169</sup> There is also a prayer celebrating the honor an adopted child brings to *Am Yisrael*.<sup>170</sup>

The name given to the newborn establishes his or her personal identity. Often, among the traditional community, the name is not revealed until the ceremony, demonstrating the strong connection to the Jewish people. When the child receives his name it is by the following formula, –Let him/her be known among our people Israel by the name of \_\_\_\_\_.||<sup>171</sup> There are many different traditions for how a family chooses a name. Ashkenazi parents typically name a child after a deceased relative. Sephardi families choose to name a child after the living. In ancient times names were given in connection to a major event that happened within the family, in the community (see Isa 7:14), or in the world (see Gen 10:25).<sup>172</sup> Some Israelis continue this tradition today. Hassidic families often name after a famous *tzadik*. Whatever name is given to a child, he or she is named for someone else linking the Jewish people across time.

## WEB RESOURCES

**Berit Mila Program of Reform Judaism** <http://www.beritmila.org/>

This program helps to make this ritual a more meaningful experience for Jewish families and a relevant life-cycle ritual. They offer two services: 1) training and certifying Reform *mohalim* to perform *mila* and 2) helping liberal Jews to find non-Orthodox *mohalim* for their sons. The training program is open to men and women who are already qualified medical practitioners. Over 300 people have been trained by this program, helping to make this ritual beautiful and meaningful for any family, accepting whatever type of Jewish family it may be.

**Ritual Well** <http://www.ritualwell.org/lifecycles/babieschildren/>

Here you will find creative readings, meditations, articles, and special ceremonies for a baby naming and *berit milah*.

## BOOKS FOR FURTHER READING

Barth, Lewis, ed. *Berit Milah in the Reform Context*. Los Angeles: Berit Mila Board of Reform Judaism, 1990.

This book provides background information regarding this ancient ritual and information for conducting it in modern times. It contains a good basic overview of *berit milah* and how to approach it in a liberal context.

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<sup>168</sup> David Polish, ed. *Rabbi's Manual*, 17.

<sup>169</sup> David Polish, ed. *Rabbi's Manual*, 25.

<sup>170</sup> David Polish, ed. *Rabbi's Manual*, 27.

<sup>171</sup> David Polish, ed. *Rabbi's Manual*, 12 and 21.

<sup>172</sup> Isaac Klein. *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice*. (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1992), 429.



Krohn, Paysach. *Bris Milah: Circumcision – The Covenant of Abraham*. Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, LTD., 1985.

This book explains the traditions, laws and customs associated with *berit milah*. Written by a traditional *mohel*, he includes background, historical, and *halakhic* information about the ritual, naming, and adoption. He deals with issues of having a *berit* on a holiday or Shabbat and adds other texts and prayers for this important event.

Stern, Chaim, Donna Berman, Edward Graham, and Leonard H. Poller. *On the Doorposts of Your House*. New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1994.

This book contains creative ceremonies, using traditional Hebrew texts for *berit milah* for a boy, *berit hahayyim* (covenant of life) for a girl, and baby naming. Many of these traditional and creative readings focus on the covenant with Abraham and the past and future generations of the Jewish people.

## Ritual: Travel to Israel

### Why a ritual around travel to Israel?

Travel to Israel is an expression of peoplehood, bringing community together and moving from one state to another together.

For travel to Israel you will find a few pieces that can be said during the worship service to publicly honor and recognize members of the congregation going on a short-term or long-term journey. The point is that it becomes part of the worship culture of the congregation; to be as normative and –canonized as singing the *Mi Sheberach*.

### ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS:

- Celebrating Israel in a ritualized way, whether during a prescribed holiday or around one's travel to Israel, helps to connect Reform Jews to the Jewish people across time and space.
- Having a relationship with Israel is an essential component of one's Jewish identity.
- In order to demonstrate how a connection to Israel enriches the lives of all Reform Jews there needs to be a way to celebrate those making *aliyah* in a ritualized manner similar to a birth, wedding, or *b'nei mitzvah*.

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- Why should ritual matter when it comes to *aliyah* or travel to Israel?
- What are creative ways to integrate Israel in a meaningful way into prayer to enhance the worship experience of the individual Reform Jew?
- What does it mean to pray for Israel and about Israel?
- How does praying for Israel relate to Jewish peoplehood?

### CORE CONCEPTS:

- Liturgy can serve as one of the many ways a Reform Jew can learn about and integrate their understanding of Israel and the Jewish people.
- Liturgy centered on Israel is often a foreign concept in Reform worship.

### EVIDENCE OF UNDERSTANDING

- In the same way that mainstream life cycle events are celebrated such as *b'rit milah*, *b'nei mitzvah*, an *auf ruf* and weddings, rituals for *aliyah* and special blessings for travel to Israel will be incorporated into the regular synagogue worship experience, whether on Shabbat or as a stand-alone ritual.
- Clergy and lay leaders will offer to lead worship or prayerful experiences for those traveling to Israel or making *aliyah* whether or not the one traveling or moving asks for this.

## GOALS

- To impact the person being blessed or honored as well as those witnessing and participating in the ritual.
- To integrate Israel into the *t'filah* and add other prayer-filled moments that enhances Jewish life.

## *For Further Reading*

**Hoffman, Lawrence A. *Israel: A Spiritual Travel Guide*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1997.**

This guidebook helps a traveler to Israel, or –pilgrim, prepare spiritually for his or trip, shape sacred time, understand the holiness found at many sites, and offer blessings. The book's compact size makes it easy for any trip leader to carry with them in their backpack so that he or she can refer to it often.

## LINKS:

- a. Aliyah Ritual**
- b. Creative Readings**
- c. Prayers**
- d. Songs**
- e. While in Israel Handout**

# Ritual, Travel to Israel: Aliyah Ritual

## Why a ritual to celebrate *Aliyah*?

*Aliyah* is an expression of Jewish peoplehood. During the Amoraic period, when Jewish life in Babylonia was thriving, rabbis left behind their homes to live in Palestine. This can be seen in YT Rosh Hashana 58b and YT Shabbat 15c. Just as in the BT Sukkah 20a when Resh Lakish said that when the Torah was forgotten in Israel, Ezra came from Babylon to reestablish it; and then Hillel and Rabbi Hiyya and his sons did the same in later generations.<sup>173</sup> Today new Reform *olim* bring their brand of –Torah – of pluralism, liberal Judaism and social justice. The first platform for the Association of Zionists of America (ARZA), accepted in 1978, stated that is –in order to retain strong bonds of kinship between both great communities [North America and Israel] – and to help strengthen the Reform movement in Israel.<sup>174</sup>

The Hebrew word *Aliyah* means –ascent, – a –going up. – We hear this phrase often when one is called to recite the blessings before and after a Torah reading. He or she receives an *aliyah l'Torah*. For Zionism this term means leaving one's home and making a new one in the land of (and State of) Israel. But, for Reform Jews this word is not heard often in this context. Many of us do not know of anyone who has left their home in North America to create a new one in Israel. So the question becomes why create, and perform a ritual to celebrate an event that rarely occurs?

The purpose is not to alienate every other Jew in the sanctuary, leading them to believe that is the highest and holiest way to achieve Jewish fulfillment. On the contrary. Honoring the individual sanctifies an important moment in that person's life as well as every participant in the ritual. It is a convener of sorts, bringing together the community.

Rabbi Peter Knobel wrote in the Spring 2008 issue of *Reform Judaism* magazine that –*Aliyah* is a *mitzvah*, the highest expression of our ideal, an opportunity to fully participate in this grand experiment. – This is to honor the person who is fulfilling this *mitzvah*, not to punish those who choose not to do so. Rabbi Ron Symons wrote in response to this a definition for *aliyah*. –One that is an uplifting, spiritual, cultural, religious, or educational experience in which the *People* of Israel, the *Land* of Israel, the *State* of Israel and the *Torah* of Israel combine to raise up the participant. –<sup>175</sup>

## THE RITUAL

*This ritual can be a stand alone event or pieces of text can be excerpted from here to be added into a regular worship service. Please feel free to be creative by adding your own thoughts, words, and melodies to the readings, songs, and prayers below.*

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<sup>173</sup> Andrew Davids, –Israel-Diaspora relations in the Fourth Century – (thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1999), 128-130.

<sup>174</sup> –Platform: Association of Reform Zionists of America (Adopted by ARZA's First National Assembly, Washington, D.C., September 16, 1978), 3.

<sup>175</sup> Ron Symons, in –Reform Zionism: In Search of Clarity, – by David W. Nelson, (New York: ARZA 2008), 13.

## Sifre Deuteronomy 333 ספרי דברים פסקא שלג

וכן היה רבי מאיר אומר כל הדר בארץ ישראל וקורא קרית שמע שחרית וערבית ומדבר בלשון הקדש הרי הוא בן העולם הבא

And Rabbi Meir also teaches: all who live in Eretz Yisrael and recite the Shema both morning and evening and speak the holy language [Hebrew] have a place in the World to Come.

### From Lecha Dodi

Rouse yourselves! Rouse yourselves!	Hitoreri hitoreri	התעוררי התעוררי
Your light is coming, rise up and shine.	Ki va oreich kumi ori	כי בא אורך קומי אורי
Awaken! Awaken! utter a song,	Uri uri shir dabeiri	עורי עורי שיר דברי
The glory of God is revealed upon you.	Kevod Ado-nai alayich niglah	כבוד יי עליך נגלה

Isaiah 51:17, 60:1; Judges 5:12; Isaiah 40:5, 60:1

### Psalms 126: 1-6

קנו יר, עתול וב יְהוָה י עת טון; ינו, קל ימים:  
 ע של ע את צ עי

ל לא חוק ול וננו בז לא ירו יום; יְהוָה, עתוש עמא עה:  
 בז י ש פינו רמָה עג עגליך של

יְהוָה עתוש ענו, ינו ש ימים:  
 עגליך של ע עי

ו עה יְהוָה (בותנו) עיתנו; פי קים עמָגב:  
 ע את ע

ק עים ע עה, ע רמָה י קצרו:  
 ע ע ע

לֶךְךָ ו עכה נ שא רע בא־באו נ שא, אלל תיו:  
 עלי דו ע ה־דו ע רמָה;

*Shir hama-a-lot, b'shuv Adonai et shivat Tzion hayinu k'cholmim. Az yimalei s'chok, pinu ul'shoneinu rinah. Az yomru vagoyim, higdil Adonai laasot im eileh. Higdil Adonai laasot imanu, hayinu s'meichim. Shuvah Adonai et sh'viteinu kaafikim banegev. Hazorim b'dimah b'rinah yiktzoru. Haloch yeileich uvachoh nosei meshech hazarah, bo yavo v'rinah, nosei alumatov.*

A song of ascents. When Adonai restores the fortunes of Zion – we see it as a dream – our mouths shall be filled with laughter, our tongues, with songs of joy. Then will they say among the nations, –Adonai has done great things for them! Adonai will do great things for us and we will rejoice. Restore our fortunes, O Adonai, like watercourses in the Negev. They who sow in

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

## Reading for those who are traveling

May the One who blessed our ancestors,

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,  
Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah,

Bless me and those with whom I travel,  
On this, our journey up to Israel.  
May we travel safely,  
And arrive in peace to the land that we hold dear,

the land that we call Zion.

May we return to those we love

blessed in every undertaking  
inspired and renewed by our People in our land.

Amen.<sup>176</sup>

## My Place by Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav

My place is the Land of Israel.

Wherever I walk,

I am walking to the Land of Israel.

*Rebbe Nachman of Bratslav (1772-1810), a great Jewish mystic of the Chasidic movement, lived in the Ukraine.*

## Restoring Shekhinah, Reclaiming Home

מְזַרֵּיר תְּשִׁינָה וְיֵשׁ בְּעֵלְךָ שָׁכָה  
נֶאֱמַר שֶׁל מְקוֹם עֵשׂוֹן  
שָׁכָה

*Nachazir et hash'kinah limkomah b'tziyon uvateyveyl kulah.*

Let us restore *Shekhinah* to her place in Israel and throughout the world, and let us infuse all places with her presence.<sup>177</sup>

## From Birkat Hamazon

ובנה ירושלים עיר הקודש במהירה בימינו. ברוך אתה יי, בונה ירושלים. אמן.

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<sup>176</sup> Lawrence A. Hoffman. *Israel: A Spiritual Travel Guide* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing,

2005), 57.  
<sup>177</sup> Marcia Falk, *The Book of Blessings* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 228-229.



*Uv-nei Y'rushalayim ir hakodesh bimheira v'yameinu. Baruch atah Adonai, boneh v'rachamav Y'rushalayim. Amen.*

Let Jerusalem, the holy city, be renewed in our time. We praise You, O God, in compassion You rebuild Jerusalem. Amen.

*Harachman, hu keren l'amo yarim.* הרחמן הוא קרן עמו ירים.

Merciful One, give strength to Your people.

הרחמן הוא ישלח ברכב והצלחה בכל מעשה ידינו.

*Harachman, hu yishlach b'racha v'hatzlacha b'chol ma'aseh yadeinu.*

Merciful One, bless and prosper the work of our hands.

הרחמן הוא יאיר אור חדש על ציון ונזכה כלנו מהרה לאורו.

*Harachaman, hu yair or chadash al tzion v'nizkeh chulanu l'oro.*

Merciful One, shed a new light upon Zion, and may it be our blessing to see its splendor.

Stern, Chaim, Donna Berman, Edward Graham, and H. Leonard Poller, eds., *On the Doorposts of Your House* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1994), 14-17.

### Prayer for Separation (From Havdalah)

רוֹךְ יִי, וְנִיהַל לְךָ מְלֹכֵה, בְּיָל קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹלּוֹ, וְאֵר לְשָׁךְ,  
בְּאֵתָהּ אֵל מֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ  
הָ  
יְרֵךְ לְעֵינֵינוּ, יוֹם שֶׁיְעִי, לֵשׁ יְיָ יֵעֵ הָ: וְךָ יִי,  
בֵּין שְׁאֵל מֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ  
הָ  
מֶלֶךְ בְּיָל קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹלּוֹ  
הָ בֵּין

*Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam, hamavdil bein kodesh l'hol, bein or l'hoshech, bein yom hashvi'I l'sheishet yamei hama'aseh. Baruch ata Adonai, hamavdil bein kodesh l'hol.*

Praise to You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe; who distinguishes between the holy and ordinary, between light and dark, between Israel and the nations, between the seventh day and the six days of work. Praise to You, Adonai who distinguishes between the holy and ordinary.

**Hatikvah by Naftali Hertz Imber (1878)**

As long as deep within the heart	Kol od balevav penimah Nefesh Yehudi homiyah	כָּל־עֵדֹם עֲבֹרָה נֶפֶשׁ יְהוּדִי הוֹמִיָּה
The soul of a Jew yearns	U'I'fa'atei mizrach kadimah	וְלִי יִפְאֵא תִי מִזְרָחַ קַדִּימָה
And toward the East	Ayin le-Tzion tzofiyah	עֵינִן פּוֹצֵצוֹתָהּ לְעֵצְיוֹן

An eye looks toward Zion,	Od lo avdah tikvateinu	עדו אל ב ע סה ס יתנו
Then our hope is not lost	Hatikvah bat sh'not	ה ת ק סה ת ק
The hope of two thousand	alpayaim	תונ
		בת

years	Lih'yot am chofshi	פִּי־ם אל,
To be a free people in our land	be'artzeinu	ל קיתו מ פ י
The land of Zion and Jerusalem.	Eretz Tzion v'Yerushalayim.	ע ק באר צנו , א קרץ טון קירו ע
	יִם	

Naphtali Herz Imber (1856-1909), an English poet originally from Bohemia, wrote this poem -Tikvateinu in 1877 while living in Romania. It eventually became the national anthem of the State of Israel.

***T'Filat Haderech* by Debbie Friedman**

May we be blessed as we go on our way.

May we be guided in peace.

May we be blessed with health and joy.

May this be our blessing, Amen.

May we be sheltered by the wings of peace.

May we be kept in safety and in love.

May grace and compassion find their way to every soul.

May this be our blessing. Amen.

## Ritual, Travel to Israel: Creative Readings

### Jewish Travel: Change is God and Death Is His Prophet<sup>178</sup>

Excerpts

I. Jewish travel. As it is written, –I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help:‖ [Psalm 12:1]

not a hike to see a tall mountain in all its glory,

nor a climb to rejoice in the vistas of Nature,

but a hike with a purpose, to seek help from the high heavens.

And how to interpret –I will lift up mine eyes‖? Heavy Jewish eyes that need lifting. And it is written, –Who shall ascend the mountain of the Lord?‖ [Psalm 24:3]

Not hikers singing, knapsacks on their shoulders, but rather a congregation praying with –clean

hands and a pure heart,‖ [Psalm 24:4] not strong bodies and sturdy legs. And fertile valleys

are simply good places for prayers: as it says, –Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord.‖

Even –green pastures‖

and –still waters‖ are not about resting and eating in the shade of a tree

or camping near a stream in the scorch of summer,

but about praising the Lord...

2. Yehuda Halevi wrote, –In the East is my heart, and I dwell at the end of the West.‖

That’s Jewish travel, that’s the Jewish game of hearts between east and west,

between self and heart, to and fro, to without fro, fro without to,

fugitive and vagabond without sin...

Oh, what a world this is, where the heart is in one place and the body

in another (almost like a heart torn from a body and transplanted).

I think about people who are named for a place where they have never been

and never will be.

**The following blessings were composed during July and August by Israeli staff members at the URJ Kutz Camp in Warwick, NY.**

I love Israel because of the wonderfully sweet watermelons I get in Israel every summer. Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, creator of Israeli watermelons. AMEN

I love that in Israel my Romanian grandparents exchange recipes with their Yemenite neighbors in Hebrew. Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who made Israel a mixture of Jewish cultures from all over the world. AMEN

I love Israel because all Israeli citizens share a unique existence and a bond which need not even be spoken. Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, for making Israelis unlike any other people in the world. AMEN

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<sup>178</sup> Yehuda Amichai, Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld. *Open Closed Open: Poems*. (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 2000), 117-118.

I love Israel because I know that I am always at home—a *ben bayit*—when I am in my friends' houses; we are like each other's family. Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who made all Israelis care for one another. AMEN

I love Israel because when I walk down the street with my arms full of food every week to go to a friend's house for Shabbat dinner, the streets are filled with others doing the same. Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, making Shabbat in Israel a Shabbat like no other. AMEN

I love Israel because the sense of camaraderie, built on our successes and travails, is the greatest in the world. Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, that gave us the place to build our lives together. AMEN

I love Israel because it is the only place in the world where people who are so different can unite in such an amazing way around one simple thing—*hov'vei tzion*, a love of the State of Israel. Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has united the Jewish people in the Jewish homeland. AMEN

I love Israel because on Sunday morning, I go to the train station, show my military ID and when I get on the train I find that it is filled with so many other soldiers like me returning to duty after Shabbat, that we have to sit on the floor. Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, the guardian of Israeli soldiers. AMEN<sup>179</sup>

### **A Prayer for Israel**

May you be a light unto the nations, O Israel,  
shine across the universe.  
We rejoice in Israel's beauty.  
Red mountains watch over lush fields.  
Ancient temple walls echo the prayers  
of countless generations.  
We praise Israel's commitment to all who seek refuge  
in the land of our ancestors.  
With joy and compassion.  
Israel welcomes the stranger.  
We remember the brave souls who built our homeland.  
Their toil made the desert blossom and cities rise.  
Just as Joshua and his flock labored in the holy land,  
our people struggle to keep Israel strong.

*We thank God for the land of Israel, a precious gift.  
We pray for God's blessing of peace, a precious gift.*<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> [Our Israel: Reform Response](#), (New York: ARZA, 2008), 14.

<sup>180</sup> Linda Zoll, "A Prayer for Israel," in *Covenant of the Spirit*, (New York: [Women of Reform Judaism](#), 2005), 118.

### **Reading for those who are traveling**

May the One who blessed our ancestors,

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,  
Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah,

Bless me and those with whom I travel,  
On this, our journey up to Israel.  
May we travel safely,  
And arrive in peace to the land that we hold dear,

the land that we call Zion.

May we return to those we love

blessed in every undertaking  
inspired and renewed by our People in our land.

Amen.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Lawrence A. Hoffman. *Israel: A Spiritual Travel Guide* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2005), 57.

## Ritual, Travel to Israel: Prayers

### Before a Journey

יְהוָה, יִצְוֶה וְיִשְׁמְרֶנּוּ מִבֹּרָא וְעַד-עַמְלֹו  
מָר-

-The Eternal One shall guard your coming and your going from time forth and forever||

(Psalm 121:7)

God within and beyond me, Your presence pervades the world. Wherever I go, You are near to me.

אֲשָׁא פִי-יָמָר אֶל-יְהוָה, בֵּא יְהוָה רֵיית יָם.  
; עֲנֵנִי  
גַם-תִּדְרֹךְ נִי ; תִּתֵּן מִינִי יְמִינִי  
מִי, יְהוָה  
תִּנֵּן

-If I take up the wings of the morning, and dwell on the ocean's farthest shore, even there Your hand will lead me, Your strong hand will hold me.|| (Psalm 139:9-10)

Now that I begin a new journey, I turn to You in confidence and trust, for You have always been a light to my path. May I go forth in health and safely reach my destination. May this journey not be in vain; and let me return in contentment to my home and my dear ones. Then will my travels be truly blessed. Amen.

וְיִמְרָ עֵינַי, יְהוָה, בְּדֹרֹךְ יְהוָה.  
תִּתֵּן מִינִי יְמִינִי

We praise You, O God, Protector of wayfarers.

Eternal God, our Rock and Redeemer, grant blessing to the State of Israel, created as a haven forth oppressed and as the fulfillment of a dream. Inspire its leaders and citizens with faithfulness to the aims of its founders: to develop the land for the benefit of all its inhabitants, and to implement the Prophetic ideals of liberty and justice. May they live in harmony with one another and in peace with their neighbors. Help our people to realize the ancient vision, that —out of Zion shall go forth Torah and the word of God from Jerusalem||<sup>182</sup>

### Official Prayer for the State of Israel composed by the Chief Rabbinate (1949)

Heavenly One, Rock and Redeemer of Israel, bless the State of Israel, the first manifestation of the approach of our redemption. Shield it with Your loving kindness, envelop it in Your peace, and bestow Your light and truth upon its leaders, ministers, and advisors, and grace them with Your good counsel. Strengthen the hands of those who defend our holy land, grant them deliverance, and adorn them in a mantle of victory. Ordain peace in the land and grant its

inhabitants eternal happiness.

<sup>182</sup> Chaim Stern, ed., *On the Doorposts of your House* (New York: Central Conference of Rabbis, 1994), 143.



### Blessings from *Birchot Hashachar*

בָּרוּךְ יְיָ יֵי־וָנוּךְ עִמָּנוּ, עֵינֵי מַצֵּעַ עַד־יְגֵבְרָה  
תָּהּ לְהַיָּלֵךְ תָּהּ לְהַיָּלֵךְ  
מִן הַיָּמִים

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, hameichin mitzadei gaver.*  
Praise to You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who strengthens our steps.

בָּרוּךְ יְיָ לְהֵינֹךְ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, עִמָּנוּ, אוֹזֵר שֶׁכֶּר  
תָּהּ לְהַיָּלֵךְ תָּהּ לְהַיָּלֵךְ  
מִן הַיָּמִים

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, ozeir Yisrael big'vurah.*  
Praise to You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who girds Israel with strength.

בָּרוּךְ יְיָ לְהֵינֹךְ שֶׁרִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, עִמָּנוּ, עוֹרֵץ שֶׁכֶּר  
תָּהּ לְהַיָּלֵךְ תָּהּ לְהַיָּלֵךְ  
מִן הַיָּמִים

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, oteir Yisrael b'tifarah.*  
Praise to You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who crowns Israel with splendor.

### Psalm 122:6-9:

יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ; יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ.  
לֹא יִהְיֶה לָנוּ יִלְדָּה; יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ.  
יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ; יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ.  
יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ; יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ.  
יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ; יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ.  
יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ; יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; may those who love you prosper! Let there be peace in your homes, safety within your borders. For the sake of my people, my friends, I pray you find peace.  
For the sake of the house of the Eternal our God, I will seek your good.

*Adapted from the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism's siddur.*

### Psalm 128: 5-6

יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ; יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ.  
לֹא יִהְיֶה לָנוּ יִלְדָּה; יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ.  
יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ; יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ.  
יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ; יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ.  
יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ; יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ.  
יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ; יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ.

Adonai blesses you out of Zion; and you see the good of Jerusalem for all the days of your life;  
And you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel!

### Prayer for Separation (From Havdalah)

בָּרַךְּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ, הַלִּינוּ לָךְ, בְּדִיל קֹדֶשׁ לְלוֹחַ, וְאֵר, יִפְרֹ לְעַ, יֵן  
 אֵתָה אֵתָה מֵתָה עַמְּלוֹ מֵתָה בֵּין בֵּין לְשֶׁשֶׁת יָמֵי בֵּין אֵתָה לְמֵימָם בֵּין  
 יוֹם אֵתָה, לְשֶׁשֶׁת יָמֵי יָעַ: רָחוּ יְיָ, בְּדִיל קֹדֶשׁ לְלוֹחַ  
 מֵתָה בֵּין מֵתָה בֵּין מֵתָה מֵתָה בֵּין מֵתָה בֵּין

*Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam, hamavdil bein kodesh l'hol, bein or l'hoshech, bein yom hashvi'I l'sheishet yamei hama'aseh. Baruch ata Adonai, hamavdil bein kodesh l'hol.*

Praise to You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe; who distinguishes between the holy and ordinary, between light and dark, between Israel and the nations, between the seventh day and the six days of work. Praise to You, Adonai who distinguishes between the holy and ordinary.

## Ritual, Travel to Israel: Songs

### Hatikvah by Naftali Hertz Imber (1878)

As long as deep within the heart The soul of a Jew	Kol od balevav penimah	כָּל דּוֹעַ בְּבַ מָה בַּפֶּנִּים
yearns	Nefesh Yehudi homiyah	נֶפֶשׁ יְהוּדִי הוֹמִיָּה
And toward the East An eye looks toward Zion,	U'la'fa'atei mizrach kadimah Ayin le-Tzion tzofiyah	וְלִפְנֵי אֲתֵי מִזְרָח קִדְמָה מֵעֵינִן קֹצוֹפִיָּה
Then our hope is not lost The hope of two thousand years To be a free people in our land The land of Zion and Jerusalem.	Od lo avdah tikvateinu Hatikvah bat sh'not alpayaim Lih'yot am chofshi be'artzeinu Eretz Tzion v'Yerushalayim.	דּוֹעַ אֵל בִּשְׁטוֹן תִּקְוָתֵנוּ תִּהְיֶה תִּקְוָה אֶל פִּיֵּם לְהִיטוֹ עַל הָאֶרֶץ וְעַל יְרוּשָׁלַיִם

Naphtali Herz Imber (1856-1909), an English poet originally from Bohemia, wrote this poem –Tikvateinull in 1877 while living in Romania. It eventually became the national anthem of the State of Israel.

***T'Filat Haderech* by Debbie Friedman**

May we be blessed as we go on our way.

May we be guided in peace.

May we be blessed with health and joy.

May this be our blessing, Amen.

May we be sheltered by the wings of peace.

May we be kept in safety and in love.

May grace and compassion find their way to every soul.

May this be our blessing. Amen.

## Ritual: While in Israel Handout

### While in Israel

*Below please find some readings, prayers and meditations to use during your stay in Israel. We encourage you to print this page and take it with you so that when you arrive in Israel you can say a blessing, as well as when you reach these other important moments during your stay. The blessings not only mark these special moments, but connect you to other Jews across time and space who have also said these prayers when they reached these experiences. The modern readings and poetry help balance the ancient Israel with the modern Israel – blessings for small and large miracles perhaps said by b'nei Yisrael during biblical times blended with poetry that makes am Yisrael stop and think about the world we are creating together today.*

### Upon Arrival

**Shehechiyanu** *Words from Jewish Liturgy; Music by Tzvika Pick*

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, שהחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu, Melech ha'olam shehechiyanu v'kiymanu v'higiyanu lazman hazeh. Amen.*

### Prayer

Blessed are You, Eternal, our God, Ruler of the universe, who gives us life, sustains us, and has brought us to this occasion. Amen.

On this soil sacred to memory, in the millennial home of our people, we pray for the welfare of this land:

Eternal God, our Rock and Redeemer, grant blessing to the State of Israel, created as a haven for the oppressed and as the fulfillment of a dream. Inspire its leaders and citizens with faithfulness to the aims of its founders: to develop the land for the benefit of all its inhabitants, and to implement the Prophetic ideals of liberty and justice. May they live in harmony with one another and in peace with their neighbors. Help our people to realize the ancient vision, that 'Out of Zion shall go forth Torah and the word of God from Jerusalem.'<sup>183</sup>

Isaiah 2:3 | יְהוָה יֵצֵאן הָרוֹת, וְדַעַת יִשְׂרָאֵל-יִהְיֶה  
מִיֵּרוּסָלַיִם  
מִצִּיּוֹן  
מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם

### Meditations for the First and Last Shabbat in Israel

#### Psalm 137:1-6

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<sup>183</sup> Chaim Stern, ed. *On the Doorposts of Your House*, (New York: Central Conference of American

Rabbis, 1994), 143.

קלז    תִּתּוֹר    פֶּל,    מִי    נו    פֶּ    פִּינוּ;    יִרְנוּ,    ת־וֹטֵצ  
עֵל    נ־    פֶּ    פֶּ    גֵּם־    פֶּ    פֶּ    מִז־

עַרְבִים בָּיִם; לִינוּ, רְוִינֵנוּ<sup>2</sup>  
עַל-בֹּתֶת, תָּתֶת

3  
 ירֹוּ      וְיָבִינוּ      יִרְיֶיךָ      יִלְבְּנוּ      יִמְחֶה;      יִרְוּ  
 לֹוֹנוּ      כֶּדֶף      סִלּוֹת      שֶׁמֶץ  
 אֶ

שִׁיר, לָנוּ  
מֶ, צָחוֹט

וְיִרְיֶהוּ; מֵת נִפְרָ: 4  
אֲדִי, אֶת־עַל, אֵד

אֶם-אֵלִים, יִמְיֹנִי׃  
תִּהְיֶה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם

6 אַ עֵלָה      דִּי      מִלֵּא      דְּפִי  
אִמֵּלֵא      דְּ      אִ      תְּ  
                  זֵא      שְׁ

עַל־יָדָם; רָא יְהוָה תִּי:  
אֶת־יְיָרוּ עַל, שׁ מ

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My heart is in the East, and yet I languish in the uttermost west.  
How can I taste what I eat? How can it be pleasing to me?  
How can I fulfill my vows and pledges  
While yet Zion is shackled to Edom,  
And I am in Arab chains?  
I'd gladly give up all luxuries of Spain,  
If only to see even the dust and rubble of the Holy Sanctuary.

## My Place by R. Nachman of Bratslav

Wherever I walk,  
I am walking to the Land of Israel.

www.jpeoplehood.com

## **Special Blessings**

\*These blessings are not commonly recited, or known, by Reform Jews. They are a nice way of integrating Hebrew and Judaism to the land of Israel and the moment.

### Seven Species

For Adonai your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of streams, or springs and underground waters flowing out in valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig

trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey...And you shall eat and be satisfied, and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land God has given you. (Deuteronomy 8:7-10)

*Ki Adonai Elohecha m'vi'ahcha el eretz tovah, eretz nachalei mayim ayanoṯ ut'homot yotz'im babik'ah u'bahar. Eretz chi'tah us'orah v'gefen u't'enah v'rimon, eretz zait shemen u'd'vash. V'achalta v'savata u'veirachta et Adonai Elohecha al ha'aretz hatovah asher natan lach.*

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech haolam, borei p'ri ha'etz*

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech haHolam, borei p'ri ha'gafen*

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech haHolam, hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz*



Upon Seeing Beauty in Nature

בְּדוֹר יְיָ לֵהֲנוּךְ עִמּוֹ, כִּי וְכִי בְּעוֹמוֹ.  
תִּהְיֶה לְךָ מִן הַמְּלָכִים

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam, shekahcha lo baolamo.*

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, whose world is filled with beauty.

For the Seas and Oceans

בְּדוֹר יְיָ לֵהֲיִנוּ עֵלֹה, שֶׁ הָיָה תִּמְנוּתָהּ גָּדוֹל.  
תָּהָא אֵלָּהּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam sheh-a-sah et ha-yam ha-gadol.*

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, for the life-giving waters of the sea.

Upon Seeing a Rainbow

בְּדוֹר יְיָ לֵהֲיִנוּ עֵלֹה, וְזֶכֶר בְּרִיתוֹ, מִן הַיָּם וְהַיָּבֵשׁ.  
תָּהָא אֵלָּהּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam, zocher habrit, v'ne'eman bivritoh, v'kayam b'ma'amroh.*

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, You remember your covenant with creation.

When in the Place of Where a Miracle Occurred

בְּדוֹר יְיָ לֵהֲיִנוּ עֵלֹה, שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ  
תָּהָא אֵלָּהּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam, she'asah nissim la'avoteinu bamakom hazeh.*

Blessed are you Adonai, Sovereign of the universe, who made miracles for our ancestors in this place.

Upon seeing wonders including lightening, shooting stars, vast deserts, high mountains and a sunrise:

בְּדוֹר יְיָ לֵהֲיִנוּ עֵלֹה, הַשּׁוֹעַ הַיָּם וְהַיָּבֵשׁ.  
תָּהָא אֵלָּהּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam, oseh ma'aseh breishit.*

Acknowledged are you, Almighty our God, Ruler of the Universe, Source of Creation.

Upon hearing thunder or seeing a storm:

בְּדוֹר יְיָ לֵהֲיִנוּ עֵלֹה, חֹזֶן גְּבוּרָתוֹ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ  
תָּהָא אֵלָּהּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam, she'kocho u'gvurato maleh olam.*

Acknowledged are you, Almighty our God, Ruler of the Universe, whole power and might fill the whole world.

Upon smelling the fragrances of trees and shrubs:

בְּדוֹר יְיָ לֵהֲיִנוּ עֵלֹה, אֲרוֹב צִי וְשֵׁם מִים.  
תָּהָא אֵלָּהּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ שֶׁ אֵלֵינוּ

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei atzei v'samim.*

Acknowledged are you, Almighty our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates fragrant trees.

Upon seeing trees of great beauty:

בְּדוֹר יְיָ לֵהֲנוּךְ עֲמִלּוֹ, חֹזֵק וְגִבּוֹתֵינוּ מִלֹּא מְלֹא  
תְּהִי שְׁלֵמָה לְעַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וְלְאַרְצֶךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam, she'kocho u'gvurato maleh olam.*

Acknowledged are you, Almighty our God, Ruler of the Universe, whose power and might fill the whole world.

For Your New Home in Israel

אֵל-יִי בְנֵה – וְבִנְיָיו זָבַח  
אֶם-יִהְיֶה, יֵת עֲמִלּוֹ  
יְיָ

*Im Adonai lo yivneh bayit, shav amlu bonav bo.*

Unless the Eternal One builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Psalm 127:1

In this awareness we pray that our home be blessed by the sense of God's presence.

We offer thanksgiving for the promise of security and contentment this home represents, and express our resolve to make it a temple dedicated to godliness. Let it be filled with the beauty of holiness and the warmth of love. May the guest and stranger find within it welcome and friendship. So will it ever merit the praise: 'How lovely are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel!'

For all who are assembled here, and for all who will enter these doors, we invoke God's blessing:

יְיָ יִשְׁמֹר וְצֵתְכָא וּבְאִזְרְךָ – תְּהֵא, יְעֵד-עַמְלֹךְ.  
יְיָ הָהוּא, מְרַ- מְעֵי

*Adonai yishmor tzetecha u'vo'echa m'atah v'ad olam.*  
May the Eternal One guard your going out and your coming in, now and always. Amen. [Psalm 121:7]<sup>184</sup>

## Poetry for Thought

**Tourists** by Yehuda Amichai (Translated by Glenda Abramson and Tudor Parfitt)<sup>185</sup>

Visits of condolence is all we get from them.

They squat at the Holocaust Memorial,

They put on grave faces at the Wailing Wall

And they laugh behind heavy curtains

In their hotels.

They have their pictures taken

Together with our famous dead

At Rachel's Tomb and Herzl's Tomb

And on Ammunition Hill.

They weep over our sweet boys

And lust after our tough girls

And hang up their underwear

To dry quickly

In cool, blue bathrooms.

Once I sat on the steps by agate at David's Tower,

I placed my two heavy baskets at my side. A group of tourists

was standing around their guide and I became their target marker. "You see

that man with the baskets? Just right of his head there's an arch

from the Roman period. Just right of his head." "But he's moving, he's moving!"

I said to myself: redemption will come only if their guide tells them,

"You see that arch from the Roman period? It's not important: but next to it,

left and down a bit, there sits a man who's bought fruit and vegetables for his family."

**An Arab Shepherd is Searching for his Goat on Mount Zion** by Yehuda Amichai

(Translated by Glenda Abramson)<sup>186</sup>

<sup>184</sup> Chaim Stern, ed. *On the Doorposts of Your House*, (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1994), 142.

<sup>185</sup> Yehuda Amichai, "Tourists," in *Poems of Jerusalem*, trans. Glenda Abramson & Tudor Parfitt (Tel Aviv: Schocken Publishing House Ltd., 1987), 177.

<sup>186</sup> Yehuda Amichai, "An Arab Shepherd is Searching for His Goat on Mount Zion," in *Poems of Jerusalem*, trans. Chana Bloch, (Tel Aviv: Schocken Publishing House Ltd., 1987), 143.

An Arab shepherd is searching for his goat on Mount Zion  
and on the opposite mountain I am searching  
for my little boy.

An Arab shepherd and a Jewish father  
both in their temporary failure.

Our voices meet  
above the Sultan's Pool in the valley between us.

Neither of us wants  
the child or the goat to get caught in the wheels  
of the terrible *Had Gadya* machine.

Afterward we found them among the bushes  
and our voices came back inside us, laughing and crying.

Searching for a goat or a son  
has always been the beginning  
of a new religion in these mountains.

## Resources: Peoplehood in Print

### *Articles*

[Bialik, Ha yim Na chman. –J ewish Duali sm,|| \*Jewish Frontier\* Vol. LXVI, No. 3 & 4 \(Summer 1999\): 13-17.](#)

[C ohen, S teven M. –W hatever H appened to t he J e wish P eople? || \*Commentary\* 121,6:33-37.](#)

[Halkin, Hillel. –J ewish Peoplehood Denied, W hil e Isra el's Fo es Applaud,|| \*The Jewish Daily Forward\*, June 12, 2009.](#)

[Hartman, Donniel. –R ethi nking the Partne rship Be tween Isr ael and W orld J ewr y,|| Jerusalem: Shalom Hartman Institute, 2008  
\[http://www.hartmaninstitute.com/Holidays\\\_Article\\\_View\\\_Eng.asp?Article\\\_Id=114\]\(http://www.hartmaninstitute.com/Holidays\_Article\_View\_Eng.asp?Article\_Id=114\).](#)

[Tucker, Ethan. – Britis h Cou rt, J ewish Dil emm a,|| \*The Jewish Daily Forward\*, December 23, 2009.](#)

### *Magazines*

[Eretz Acheret – A Different Place](#)

These magazines contain articles from various sectors of Israeli society. Articles written from multi-dimensional perspectives, the magazine represents diverse values, political views, and beliefs. The articles address issues affecting Israel and around the world – from European immigration to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### *Books for Adults*

Brown, Erica and Misha Galperin. *The Case for Jewish Peoplehood*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2009.

This book explores the meaning of Jewish peoplehood and why it is important in terms of building Jewish identity. Using peoplehood as a unifying concept of community, the book brings in historical data, sacred texts and contemporary scholarship to build the case for Jewish peoplehood. The authors outline the obstacles which challenge a shared idea of peoplehood such as personal choice, membership and boundaries, and generational divides. They also offer practical tools and recommendations for how you can help create a sense of peoplehood in the work that you do.

Gordis, Daniel. *Saving Israel: How the Jewish People Can Win a War that May Never End*.

Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2009.

Gordis offers a defense for a Jewish state by tackling important issues such as —why Israel is necessary today.‖ By attempting to answer these questions he discusses what Israel must do in order to survive, and how the Jewish people play a role in this endeavor. The State and state of Israel affects Jews around the globe and the Jewish people need Israel for our survival.

London, Charles. *Far from Zion: In Search of a Global Jewish Community*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009.

Rawidowicz, Simon. *State of Israel, Diaspora, and Jewish Continuity*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1986.

Salkin, Jeffrey K, Ed. *A Dream of Zion: American Jews Reflect on Why Israel Matters to Them*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2007.

This book is a compilation of narrative works by scholars, rabbis, educators, business leaders, authors, community leaders and politicians about their thoughts on the question —Why Israel matters to me?‖ Through their personal stories the authors share their feelings, thoughts, hopes and dreams about Israel to help the reader feel more connected. Not all of the authors are Jewish and they present a diverse set of views regarding Zionism in the past and of today based on their personal relationship with Israel.

The book is divided into four sections: Identity and Heritage, Refute, Faith and Covenant and *Tikkun Olam*. Each section contains writings from authors who simultaneously deal with issues of peoplehood while articulating their feelings about Israel. Under the [Synagogue Programming](#) section of this site you can find a Teacher’s Guide to use with this book with fourth to sixth graders or high school students.

Sarna, Jonathan. —A Projection of America as it Ought to Be: Zion in the Mind’s Eye of American Jews.‖ In *Envisioning Israel: The Changing Ideals and Images of North American Jews*, edited by Allon Gal, 117-148. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996.

See Appendix B — “Peoplehood In Story‖ for a listing of children’s stories that relate to Jewish peoplehood.



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## Synagogue Programming

*Below you will find links and explanations to online study guides and programs for synagogue educators, lay leaders, and clergy to use in the congregational setting. We hope your congregational community will donate your resources to make this site a collaborative collection of work. Please post a comment below if you have a resource to share.*

### Congregational Peoplehood Audit (See Appendix A)

How does Jewish peoplehood fit into your congregation's mission and values? Use this audit to map the areas where it is present and where it is not. Then analyze the document to see what positive changes could be implemented to bring Jewish peoplehood to the forefront of your synagogue's agenda.

#### ["Programs and Curricula for Jewish Schools." Haifa, Israel: Lokey International Academy of Jewish Studies, at the Leo Baeck Education Center, 2008.](#)

Based on the center's ideals of grappling with spirituality, faith and God as well as Jewish peoplehood, the Academy prioritizes creating relationships between learning groups of Jews in Israel and the Diaspora based on shared values. This curriculum offers five programs for synagogues to use in their schools in partnership with the Lokey International Center. They include:

- "Yachdav: School-to-School Israel-Diaspora Virtual *Mifgash* Program" for fifth and sixth graders.
- "Tzmatim: A Dynamic Jewish History Curriculum" for high school students.
- "The *Tefilah* Curriculum" for fifth and sixth graders.
- "Israel Counts: A Community Israel Curriculum" for all age groups.
- "Six T" a program for all ages of six *tikkumim* in honor of Israel's sixtieth year.
- "Young Ambassadors" for tenth and eleventh graders.

The center also offers professional development seminars in Israel for Jewish educators and educational student missions to Israel. Email [Yael Katz Ben Yakov](#), Director, for more information.

#### [Nelson, David W. "Reform Zionism in Search of Clarity and Choice." New York: ARZA 2008.](#)

This adult study and resource guide is a curriculum (which does not necessarily need to be used in sequential order) to help foster a dialogue about what it means to be a Reform Zionist, have a relationship with Israel, and be part of the Jewish people in this endeavor. Through a creative text entitled "An Open Conversation about Reform Zionism" designed to look like a *daf* of Talmud, –Ten Commandments, or enduring understandings, are set forth about what it means to be a Reform Zionist. Almost half of them frame this within the context of Jewish peoplehood. Commentaries added to the document by scholars, Jewish professionals, and lay leaders are used



to enhance the document and create a vibrant dialogue offering questions and criticisms. This serves as the core text for the five brief study units, each of which focus on a particular issue and provide study questions to spark a conversation in a synagogue setting.

**“One Heart Two Homes: Israel and the Sacred Identity of American Jews.”  
New York :  
ARZA, 2007.**

This booklet contains a curricula consisting of five units for adults to engage in discourse about Israel within a congregational setting. These units attempt to engage the learners in thinking about how Israel might be meaningful in their Jewish lives. The goal of the curriculum is not to answer this question, but to start the dialogue. The materials serve as a guide and resource for this discussion to take place. The curriculum opens with “Some Thoughts on Anti-Semitism” and continues to spark conversations about home and homeland, spatial metaphors, Jews as the majority, bodies and souls, and the meaning of memory. Nelson, David W. and Regina Stein, eds. —One Heart Two Homes: Israel and the Sacred Identity of American Jews. New York: ARZA, 2007.

**“Our Israel: A Reform Response.” New York : ARZA, 2006.**

This guide, created by the staff of ARZA (Association of Reform Zionists of America), served as a congregational resource for the High Holidays during the time of conflict with Lebanon in the summer of 2006. The Worship Supplement section contains musical selection ideas, prayers, and poems. The Torah study, on Parshat *Ki Tavo*, provides an example of how to highlight Israel-oriented dimensions of a weekly *parasha*. The guide also includes talking points for clergy written by a congregational rabbi and a facilitator’s guide for an adult learning session. Additional educator resources are included on how to teach Israel focusing on the areas of building social connections and Jewish history to show how Israel enriches the lives of all Jews.

## Media and Music

### VIDEOS

Take a ride on a 120 year journey in seven minutes. Explore the astounding start up that is the State of Israel, a remarkable product of collaboration among the Jewish people from around the world. Fast-paced and thought-provoking with terrific graphics and heart-stopping emotion, this short film will stir conversation, dialogue, and a passion for belonging to the Jewish people. From [Beth Hatefutsoth, The Museum of the Jewish People](#), and the Center for Educational Technology (CET). For more information and accompanying teaching materials, go to [www.israventure.com](http://www.israventure.com).

[Be'chol Lashon](#) (in every tongue) strives to grow and strengthen the Jewish people through inclusivity, whether ethnic, cultural or racial. This film demonstrates the organization's views about pluralistic and multicultural expressions of Judaism. Be'chol Lashon seeks to create a Jewish community that welcomes its differences by advocating for diversity amongst Jewish people that has been part of our heritage in addition to our modern story, through intermarriage, conversion and adoption.

[Shared Responsibility Kol Yisrael Areivim Zeh Lazeh \(Jewish Partnership Online\)](#)

Jewish Partnership Online, the Partnership 2000 eZine hosted by Professor Gil Troy, highlights Jewish values in the Partnership setting. This week's edition focuses on the Modiin – Rochester Partnership's Friends Across the Sea project, where Modiin 5th graders learn to identify with their Rochester peers.

### MUSIC VIDEOS

Pass The Candle, a Hannukkah celebration around the world, is a music video by Michelle Citrin and William Levin to spark unity among the Jewish people. Visit the [site](#) to download the song and read the lyrics.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is going on in this video?
2. What is your reaction to this song?
3. How can a holiday like Hanukkah be an expression of Jewish peoplehood?
4. What does this song say about the Jewish people?

Rak Po רק פה by Hadag Nachash is a critical look at Israel from within. These Israeli rap stars note that while there are Jewish people around the world, there is also corruption and societal illnesses everywhere. However, –only here! in Israel do they feel they belong, because these problems are their home's problems. Even though it would be easier to escape a land filled with terror and corruption, –only here! is where they feel they belong. While the song never mentions

Judaism or the Jewish people, it is filled with allusions of peoplehood because it is —only here!! in Israel where one hears Hebrew, Russian, English and Arabic, even if it is when people swear.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. What is your reaction to this song?
2. What do thoughts/feelings do the words elicit for you? How do the images affect your thoughts and feelings?
3. What does this song say about the Jewish people?
4. What does this song say about the role Israel in terms of its relationship with the Jewish people?

#### **Elohai by Kobi Oz and Rabbi Nissim Messika** אלוהי – קובי אוז עם קולו של סבא ניסים מסיקה

This video of [Kobi Oz 's](#) late grandfather, Rabbi Nissim Messika, takes place at Oz's *bar mitzvah*. Rabbi Messika, a paytan, sang *piyyutim* (liturgical hymns) and recorded many on cassette tapes. Oz has taken these and infused his modern sound and lyrics about faith, bridging words of the past with the present – his personal struggles with Judaism, and the struggles of Israeli society and the Jewish people. He speaks of a loss of *Sephardi* culture, but how people are becoming more tolerant and willing to work together. Click [here](#) to view the song on YouTube with an English translation.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. What is your reaction to this song?
2. To what is Oz referring? What is he saying? What is the message for us?
3. Is this a prayer or a song? Are there any aspects you relate to more than others?
4. –I don't know what to call you!! – do you know how to address God? –This great synagogue called Israell – is this how you see Israel? And if not, what image would be more appropriate to you? (Is it the synagogue you never attend?)
5. Where does this song fit in terms of *Torah*, *Avodah*, and *Gemilut Chasidim*? (or in all three?)

## MUSIC

This song list, subdivided by themes such as Israel, God, Shabbat, social justice, *Am Yisrael*, Bible, ethics, memory, prayer and world Jewry, includes lyrics in Hebrew and English and links to songs online. This is a wonderful resource for any music teacher or cantor and contains music appropriate for all ages. Below are a few popular Jewish modern folk songs from this list. Many of these, and more, can be found [here](#).

#### **Am Yisrael Chai by Noam Katz**

[Noam Katz](#) wrote this melody for 'Am Yisrael Chai' after meeting J.J. Keki, a leader of the Abayudaya Jewish community of Uganda. The Abayudaya speak Luganda, a local language in which a vowel sound is often placed at the end of words. The Abayudaya have adopted this speech pattern in their pronunciation of modern Hebrew (e.g. –Adoni Olamul). According to

Noam, this song reflects that melding of two cultures, two languages interacting with each other to reveal one universal message — that the strength of God and the Jewish people will live on forever.

**Anachnu M'vorachim by Rick Recht**

[Rick Recht](#) sings about the many blessings we have in life, from the personal to the collective.

**B'tzelem Elohim by Dan Nichols and Rabbi Michael Moskowitz**

Originally written for a 7th and 8th grade *Madrachim* (training) program, [Dan Nichols](#) and Rabbi Michael Moskowitz sought to explore ways in which we interpret how people are made in God's image. Noting that something divine is within all of us, when we share this with each other God becomes present in our lives.

**Kehilah Kedoshah by Dan Nichols and Rabbi Michael Moskowitz**

[Dan Nichols](#) and Rabbi Michael Moskowitz, inspired by the *parasha* detailing when the Jewish people were just about to receive the Torah, wrote this song emphasizing Moses' statement: –You stand here this day, all of you, before God. According to Dan Nichols we are, still standing as a holy community today, a *Kehilah Kedoshah*, remembering this incredible moment, just as our ancestors were in ancient times. Read the lyrics [here](#).

**We are One (Am Echad, Panim Rabot) by Noam Katz**

[Noam Katz](#) wrote this song to express the unity as one Jewish people with many faces.

**When We Were Young by Yom Hadash (Music & Text: Jon Nelson)**

Jon Nelson of [Yom Hadash](#) wrote this song based on his childhood experiences of attending *shul* (synagogue) with his grandfather. This song, loosely based on the meaning of the prayer *l'dor vador* (from generation to generation) reminds everyone of our shared responsibility to pass on our traditions and history. Community, and continuity, binds us together as the Jewish people.

**ARTWORK**



[Adi Nes](#), an Israeli photographer, was born in 1966 in Kiryat Gat to Iranian and Kurdish immigrants. The models in his works are staged actors portraying Israeli life in Biblical scenes. He has exhibited his work around the world.

#### Discussion Questions

1. What title would you give this picture? What is it about? What is going on here?
2. This photograph is by a Jewish photographer about a Biblical text. Which text does it bring to mind?
3. This photograph is by Israeli photographer Adi Nes. Does this change the way you view it or the text you might relate to it?
4. Are these two Israeli women? Jewish women? Are they doing an act of social justice or helping themselves?

## **Blog**

### **December 2009**

["Together, Falling Apart" by Lisa D. Grant, 12/30/09](#)

### **January 2010**

[What the Women of the Wall Want by Anat Hoffman, 1/13/10](#)

[Women of the Wall - Open Letter by Anat Hoffman to friends of the Israel Religious Action Center, 1/18/10](#)

["At the Wall, which side is the right one?: The Kotel belongs to the entire Jewish people" by Rabbi Eric Yoffie, 1/21/10](#)

## About

### Goals of the Envisioning Jewish Peoplehood **בית כנסת ישראל** Website Envisioning the Place of Am Yisrael in the Lives of North American Reform Jews

- To make the notion of Jewish Peoplehood compelling and meaningful to the life of the congregation and its members.
- To integrate a sense of *Am Yisrael* into the synagogue curriculum of each stage of Jewish learning in congregations, from pre-school, through religious school and into adult education.
- To provide congregational leaders who are committed to the Jewish people resources for thinking about Jewish peoplehood in creative ways.
- To generate models for Jewish peoplehood education that serve as an inspirational vision for congregants.
- To build a cadre of trained and passionate congregational leaders committed to ensuring a common destiny for the Jewish people.
- To chronicle, analyze and evaluate Jewish peoplehood research and resources in a free and accessible platform.

This website is submitted to fulfill a senior Capstone Project in fulfillment of the requirements for Rabbinical Ordination. It is a continuation of the work that I began in the Master's of Religious Education Degree program by incorporating the research and curriculum project completed as the final work for that degree. The project I completed, entitled –Beit Knesset Yisrael – An Israel Engagement Initiative in Reform Congregations,<sup>1</sup> set forth a curriculum to engage congregations in an organizational change process around the issue of Israel engagement and advocacy. The curriculum primarily focused on the first year of a two-year process where the congregation looked critically at their own Israel engagement in order to develop strategic initiatives for deepening their engagement with Israel. For this new Capstone Project, research was conducted and analyzed to help create a site for congregational lay leaders and professionals to think about their Israel engagement within the larger framework of Jewish peoplehood. In other words, what it does it mean for members of the congregation to think and act as part of the Jewish people and where is Israel in the midst of their thinking? In addition to the research analysis, new Reform rituals were created to honor a family or individual visiting Israel and for an individual or family making *Aliyah*. Also current Reform lifecycle events have been analyzed to see how elements of Israel education can be infused within the ceremony.

The Hebrew component of the project included review of research conducted by Israeli scholars (in Hebrew) who have explored the issue of peoplehood and Israel-Diaspora relations in order to compare how American scholars and Israeli scholars view this topic in order to analyze the similarities and differences.

A special thank you to the many mentors, colleagues and friends who helped me with the research of this project. I am blessed to know so many talented professionals who are gracious with their time and creative resources. To the staff at [Makom](http://www.makom.org), especially my colleague Rabbi Reuven Greenvald, thank you for taking a risk and bringing me on to pursue the endeavor of increased Israel engagement in North America – especially when my time has been so fragmented.

A hearty *todah rabbah* to my thesis advisor, Dr. Lisa D. Grant, for her ongoing support; not only on this creative project, but for the past five years as my rabbinical school advisor, mentor, colleague and friend.

And, lastly, thank you to my supportive family, and especially my husband David, who encouraged me to pursue my high school dream of becoming a rabbi.

### ***Contact Us***

We are always happy to receive your questions, comments, and submission ideas.

Email us at [makominstitute@gmail.com](mailto:makominstitute@gmail.com) or reach us at (914) 361-9331.



## Sidebars

### Twitter Feed-www.twitter.com/makomisrael

This feed maintains posts to the twitter account from the past five –tweets. Twitter is a microblogging platform, similar to texting that allows for messages to be posted in 140 characters or less. The over 200 followers of @makomisrael include many influential rabbis, Jewish educators and Jewish organizations.

Recent posts include:

- follow Makom on Tuesday as we visit the RAVSAK: The Jewish Community Day School Network conference to talk, teach... <http://bit.ly/4CFzGn> 24 minutes ago
- is excited to see everyone tweeting from #jdsn. We arrive Tues to engage and learn with you about Israel. [1 day ago](#)
- The Hot Topic on the Makom Haaretz site - Humiliation of the Turkish Ambassador <http://digs.by/1CIh> @haaretzonline 3 days ago
- RT @mzs: If you created a Peoplehood Playlist on your iPod what songs would you include?

## Links

### *Bible*

- [G-dcast](#) The Torah portion in a 4 minute video with a different narrator each week. The format is cartoon with creative music.

### *Blogs*

- [Boundless Drama of Creation](#) Wondering where the Jewish community is headed.
- [Bryfy.net](#) A blog by Jewish educator David Bryfman on all sorts of Jewish educational information – from Israel to innovation.
- [Far From Zion](#) Charles London grew up in Baltimore and studied Philosophy at Columbia University. My writing has appeared in various magazines and newspapers, including the O:The Oprah Magazine and The New York Times Magazine. My first book, ONE DAY THE SOLDIERS CAME: V
- [JAFI Partnership 2K](#) The Jewish Agency's Partnership 2000 program (P2K) has become the paradigm for successfully partnering global Jewish communities directly with Israeli communities—the majority of which are in national priority areas.
- [Jewish Peoplehood Index](#) The Peoplehood Index (PI) Project was conceived by Professor Yoav Shoham of Stanford University and Nimrod Goor, who in a nutshell, set out to create the Dow Jones of Jewish Peoplehood. The Peoplehood Index operates at two parallel axes – the general P
- [Makom Haaretz Website](#) MAKOM invites you to join an ongoing conversation about hugging and wrestling with Israel. Includes a blog.
- [Peoplehood.org](#) The uncensored rants of Yossi Abramowitz
- [Talking Israel](#) An HUC Education Professor's take on her Israel sabbatical.
- [The Jewish Peoplehood Hub](#) A unique partnership of the UJA – Federation of New York, the NADAV Fund and the Jewish Agency for Israel.

### *Israel*

- [Makom](#) Makom seeks to change the communal conversation about Israel.
- [MASA](#) enables thousands of Jewish youth to spend a semester or a year in Israel in any of over 160 programs, helping them build a life-long relationship with Israel and a firm commitment to Jewish life.

### *Jewish World*

- [eJewish Philanthropy](#) The face of Jewish philanthropy is changing and only time will tell if we are in the midst of evolution or revolution. Philanthropy, which has long been a powerful force in the Jewish community, is witnessing a significant shift in both perception and man
- [Jewcy](#) JEWICY is an online media outlet/blog, social network, and brand devoted to helping Jews and their peers expand the meaning of community by presenting a spectrum of voices, content, and discussion.

- [Presen Tense](#) PresenTense's mission is to engage and inspire the most creative minds of our generation, investing their ideas and energy to revitalize the established Jewish community.

### ***Progressive and Reform Judaism***

- [Ameinu](#) Ameinu, Hebrew for –Our People!, is a national, multi-generational community of progressive American Jews. Recognizing the unbreakable bond between the Jewish people and Israel, as well as the commitment to make our own country better, we mobilize America
- [ARZA](#) The Association of Reform Zionists of America
- [The Lokey International Center for Jewish Education](#) The Lokey International Center for Jewish Education is committed to Klal Israel – Jewish Peoplehood, bringing non-orthodox Israeli Jews closer to Judaism and their Jewish identity, and to strengthening their ties with Jews throughout the world.
- [Union for Reform Judaism](#) The Union for Reform Judaism's website offers educational and worship resources, in addition to articles about happenings in the Jewish world.

### ***Ritual***

- [Ritual Well](#) This website offers unique rituals and readings for all sorts of holidays and lifecycle events.

## Congregational Peoplehood Audit

Area of Congregational Life	What to look for	Evidence	Analysis
<p><b>Mission Statement:</b> Is there a reference to the Jewish people in the mission statement?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the Jewish people an important and a unique value of the congregation?</li> <li>Is peoplehood, or some version of <i>am Yisrael</i>, a subdivision of another value in the congregation's vision?</li> <li>Is there a mention of the WUPJ (World Union of Progressive Judaism)?</li> <li>Is there mention of a twinned (sister) congregation in Israel or somewhere else in the world?</li> </ul>	Cite the elated statements and attach a copy of the entire mission.	<p>What does the inclusion or exclusion of peoplehood in the mission/vision say about your congregation? If you have a twinned congregation how are they described? i.e. Are you "committed" to helping them? Do you have a "relationship" with them? Is there an "exchange" between you? How do these different wordings change the way your congregation views your work with them?</p>
<p><b>Congregation's History</b> (often on the website): Is the congregation's history tied to Jewish peoplehood at all?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the congregation's history tied to significant events in the history of the Jewish people or Israel (e.g., 1948, etc.)</li> <li>Are congregational Israel missions, or visits to other Jewish communities around the world, part of the congregational history?</li> </ul>	Cite the relevant passages from the history. Attach a copy of the entire history.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If connections to Israel and the Jewish people are made in the history, what does that say to you about the congregation?</li> <li>If there no connections, how should that be understood?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Governance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examine board minutes for the previous 12-18 months. See how often Israel or the Jewish people are mentioned and in what context.</li> <li>Search the current budget for expense categories related to Israel or other Jewish communities in the world.</li> <li>Examine the congregation's committee structure for Israel or "Peoplehood" activity.</li> <li>Logos and letterhead: Is the name of the congregation written in Hebrew letters?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Board minutes:</b> Look for the following possible contexts: Philanthropy, Advocacy, Missions, Youth (scholarships for service programs, study abroad programs, Israel programs), cultural programs, community-wide Israel events and celebrations.</p> <p><b>Budget:</b> Look for Israel-designated budget lines such as: Israel programming, scholarships for Israel trips, etc.</p> <p><b>Committee structure:</b> Does the congregation have an Israel committee? An ARZA committee? A World Union committee?</p>	<p><b>Board minutes:</b> Cite the meeting date and the language of the minutes pertaining to Israel, other Jewish communities around the world, or various allusions to the Jewish people. Attach the meeting agenda.</p> <p><b>Budget:</b> Record the budget lines and the projected outlays.</p> <p><b>Committee:</b> Who chairs the committee? Is it a board committee? What is its mandate?</p>	<p>If the mission/vision is entrusted to the board, is appearance of Israel and Peoplehood activities in the meetings, budget, and committee structure a reflection of the board's fiduciary responsibility? Does the board's activity regarding Israel and efforts towards building a sense of Jewish Peoplehood exceed what is written in the mission/vision?</p>

*Adapted from the Congregational Israel Audit developed by Rabbi Reuven Greenwald of Makom for the Beit Knesset Yisrael Initiative, 2007.*



## Congregational Peoplehood Audit

Area of Congregational Life	What to look for	Evidence	Analysis
<p><i>Communications:</i> Examine the congregational communications vehicles (print and e-mail, announcement sheets from worship services) for the last year and see how many times mentions of Israel, <i>kial Yisrael, am Yisrael</i>, and the Jewish people appear and in what context.</p>	<p>Look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information about supporting <i>tzedakot</i> in Israel and other Jewish communities.</li> <li>• Columns written about Israel and other Jewish communities.</li> <li>• Information about upcoming trips and reports on trips that occurred.</li> <li>• Cultural programs.</li> <li>• Calls to advocacy.</li> <li>• Announcements about meeting visiting Jewish delegations from around the country or world.</li> <li>• Pieces in or about modern Hebrew.</li> <li>• Announcements about war dead, fallen soldiers, victims of terror.</li> </ul>	<p>List all the references and attach the copies of the relevant pages.</p>	<p>Based on the evidence, are the Jewish people and Israel a living part of the congregational "lifecycle"?</p>
<p><i>New member packets:</i> Are the Jewish people mentioned in the new member packet? Is Israel?</p>	<p>Look for mention of sister congregations, overseas partnerships, ARZA dues, information about programming/education/missions to Israel, other countries, or other communities in the US.</p>	<p>List the relevant references in the packet and attach hard copies.</p>	<p>Is a certain posture regarding this work or these places suggested through the membership packet?</p>
<p><i>Schools:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is peoplehood or the Jewish people mentioned in the Religious School handbook and/or calendar?</li> <li>• Is Israel mentioned in the Religious School handbook and/or calendar?</li> <li>• What about the Early Childhood program handbook and/or calendar?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• References to the curriculum.</li> <li>• Celebrations and programs.</li> <li>• Plans for Israel trips or to visit other Jewish communities locally or internationally</li> <li>• Connections to bar/bat mitzvah preparation &amp; celebration.</li> <li>• Confirmation program.</li> <li>• Rationale for learning Hebrew language.</li> </ul>	<p>List the relevant references and attach the appropriate pages.</p>	<p>From the evidence could one say the religious school program has a stated or unstated goal of increasing a child's connection to the Jewish people? To Israel?</p>

*Adapted from the Congregational Israel Audit developed by Rabbi Reuven Greenwald of Makom for the Beit Knesset Yisrael Initiative, 2007.*

## Congregational Peoplehood Audit

Area of Congregational Life	What to look for	Evidence	Analysis
<p><i>Design:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the artwork in the synagogue represent a sense of Jewish peoplehood?</li> <li>Does the artwork in the synagogue represent Israel?</li> <li>Do architectural features suggest Israel?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Artwork:</i></p> <p>Look for signs that explain the connections to Israel, other communities or the Jewish people. (Or is the connection obvious?)</p> <p><i>Building design:</i> Look for features that connect to Israel e.g., Jerusalem stone, orientation of the sanctuary, biblical garden, the presence of a <i>mitzrach</i>, Israel specific donation plaques, <i>tzedakah</i> boxes etc.</p>	<p><i>Artwork:</i></p> <p>List the themes and artists of the artwork. Take digital pictures if possible.</p> <p><i>Design:</i> List the features that suggest Peoplehood and Israel and take digital photos if the feature tells a compelling story.</p>	<p>Does the artwork/architecture suggest to visitor a sense of belonging to the Jewish people? A sense of Israel? The feel of Israel? Does it attempt to teach something about these themes?</p>
<p><i>Posters:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are posters for service trips found in any public areas of the synagogue?</li> <li>Are Israel posters found in any public areas of the synagogue?</li> </ul>	<p>Look for posters in the different wings (classroom wing, etc.). Look for posters in classrooms and central office areas.</p>	<p>List the types of posters you found, locations, and if they are individual or a part of a series.</p>	<p>Do the posters convey a current or historical message about the Jewish people? About Israel? When were the posters created? Were they made to last (laminated or framed well)?</p>
<p><i>Flag of Israel and other National Symbols :</i></p> <p>Are there Israeli flags anywhere in the congregation? Israel Bonds and other govt. projects? Declaration of Independence of Israel?</p>	<p>Look on the <i>bimah</i>, in classrooms, and outside.</p>	<p>List the locations if any. Note if a Canadian or American flag appears along side and note if there are Canadian or American flags without Israeli flags.</p>	<p>Does the presence or lack of Israeli flags represent a policy of the congregation? If so, when was that discussed? Does the congregation interact with the Israeli flag or other nationalistic symbols when, for instance, <i>Hatikvah</i> is sung? At ceremonies? When and how often?</p>
<p><i>Professional offices:</i> Are there any artifacts of Israel or Jewish communities in other countries in the offices of the professional staff?</p>	<p>Objects made in Israel, or by Israelis or Jews, art depicting Israel or Jewish people, books about Israel, pamphlets or other informational guides (that are accessible) about programs in Israel, etc.</p>	<p>List the artifacts you found, and in what locations you found them.</p>	<p>Does the presence or lack of these related artifacts tell you something about how the professional staff choose to showcase (or not) Israel? Are these artifacts up to date? Do they depict only one way to be Jewish? Do they depict religious, historical, political, or mythical visions of Israel?</p>

*Adapted from the Congregational Israel Audit developed by Rabbi Reuven Greenwald of Makom for the Beit Knesset Yisrael Initiative, 2007.*



## Congregational Peoplehood Audit

Area of Congregational Life	What to look for	Evidence	Analysis
<i>Signage:</i> Is Modern Hebrew incorporated into the standard signage of the building?	Sanctuary as <i>beit k'nesset</i> , classroom as <i>kita'h</i> , restrooms as <i>she'rutin</i> , etc.	List the signs you found and their locations.	If there are Hebrew signs, what were the original reasons for their placement? Are the signs used (i.e. do people refer to those rooms in Hebrew or in English on a daily basis?) What does having or not having Hebrew signs tell you about the effort of the community to engage members in the language of modern Israel and the shared language of the Jewish people? Were they made to last (laminated etc.)?
<i>Music:</i> Is Jewish and/or Israeli music played when someone is put on hold or played in other public (non-programmatic) settings?	Call the general number of the synagogue, and ask to be put on hold. If you have a lobby with speakers, check what music is played. If there is a radio or CD player in the office, see if there are Israeli CDs played or if they are tuned into a station with Israeli music (if one exists in the area).	List the music and where you found it. Try to find out what specific songs are played.	What message do you send if the phone lines play Jewish or Israeli music on hold? If it's not this kind of music, what kind of music is it? If this music is played around the synagogue, have you seen evidence that your congregants more comfortable with this music in a programmatic setting?
<i>Website:</i> How and does the notion of belonging to the larger community of the Jewish people appear on the website? How and does Israel appear? Congregational content, calendar, and/or as links to other Jewish organizations, Jewish communities, Israeli news, Israel related organizations, etc.	Images of the Jewish people or Israel in the background, articles on other Jewish communities or Israel in a newsletter, messages from the staff about other Jewish communities or Israel (politically or otherwise), mentions of fundraisers for other Jewish communities or Israel, pictures of congregational trips to Israel and other Jewish communities, various links related to Israel, past sermons, etc.	List your findings of images, and print out the mentions from the website.	By browsing the website to you get a sense of the congregation belonging to the larger collective of the Jewish people? Is Israel immediately visible on your website, or do visitors have to search to find it? What kind of message about Israel or other Jewish communities are you sending? What message does a lack of Israel or the Jewish people convey to those web visitors from both within and outside your community, especially those trying to learn about the congregation?

*Adapted from the Congregational Israel Audit, developed by Rabbi Reuven Greenwald of Makom for the Beit Knesset Yisrael Initiative, 2007.*

## Congregational Peoplehood Audit

Area of Congregational Life	What to look for	Evidence	Analysis
<p><b>Displays:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does your congregation have a museum? If so, is the story of the Jewish people or Israel a part of the permanent story told by the exhibition?</li> <li>Does your congregation have a Shoah memorial? Is Israel connected to this memorial in any way?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Museum:</b> Artifacts from ancient Israel, artifacts and Judaica from modern Israel and other Jewish communities, items that are significant to the history of modern Israel.</p> <p><b>Memorials:</b> For the 6 million, fallen Israeli soldiers.</p>	<p>List the general categories of Israel related artifacts. Describe the memorials and their connection to the Jewish people and Israel. Take digital photos if possible.</p>	<p>What image of the Jewish people is told? What image of Israel is portrayed? How are Jews described – as victims? As survivors? Does Israel appear only through its ties to the ancient? Is the story of Israel only connected to tragedy? Only connected to heroism?</p>
<p><b>Library &amp; Media Center:</b></p> <p>Do stories or music about the Jewish people being together or working together have a visible place? Does Israel have a prominent and visible place?</p>	<p>Books about the Jewish people, modern Israel, literature written by Jews around the world, modern Hebrew literature from Israel (in the original and in translation), Jewish music and Israeli CDs.</p>	<p>Describe the size and prominence of the collections as compared to the collection as a whole.</p>	<p>Would the attention of a library/media center user be immediately drawn to the Israel related items? To the peoplehood related items?</p>
<p><b>Gift Shop:</b> Is Judaica from Israel for sale? Items made by Jews from elsewhere? Jewish items made in Israel by non-Jews?</p>	<p>Judaica, jewelry, items (clothing, mugs, etc.) with Hebrew writing. Interesting pieces not commonly seen in the US.</p>	<p>List the general categories or items being sold and displayed.</p>	<p>How prominent are the items from Jews from around the world or items from Israel for sale?</p>
<p><b>Worship:</b> Are references to the Jewish people and to modern Israel part of the congregational liturgy on a regular basis?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is a prayer for the State of Israel recited weekly or on special occasions? (Which version? In what language? Along with a prayer for Canada or the US?)</li> <li>Is Hatikvah ever sung at a worship service?</li> <li>Are prayers said to wish travelers well on a visit to Israel or other country where they will visit a Jewish community?</li> <li>Are prayers recited for the IDF and/or for soldiers taken hostage?</li> <li>Does the congregational <i>mi sheberach</i> include Israelis wounded in attacks?</li> </ul>	<p>Cite the relevant evidence in a list form. Include supplementary sheets created by the congregation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What seems to be the timing of when and why Jewish people and modern Israel appears in the worship service? Just in the <i>d'var Torah</i>?</li> <li>How is the mentioning of Israel juxtaposed to the mentioning of Canada/US? Are they viewed in equivalent terms?</li> <li>In what context are the Jewish people mentioned. In ancient terms? In modern terms?</li> </ul>

*Adapted from the Congregational Israel Audit developed by Rabbi Reuven Greenwald of Makom for the Beit Knesset Yisrael Initiative, 2007.*



# Congregational Peoplehood Audit

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is contemporary Hebrew poetry incorporated into the liturgy?</li> <li>• Are there special handouts used to add Israel into the service?</li> <li>• Does your congregation hold a service for Yom Ha'atzmaut? For Yom Hashoah?</li> </ul>		
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*Adapted from the Congregational Israel Audit developed by Rabbi Reuven Greenwald of Makom for the Beit Knesset Yisrael Initiative, 2007.*

## Appendix B: Peoplehood In Story

### Themes:

Bible

God

Israel

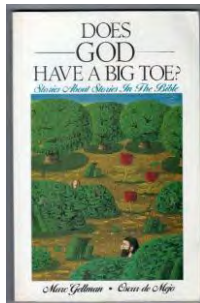
Holidays

Lifecycle

Shoah

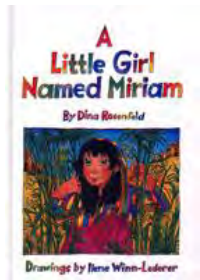
World Jewry

### *Bible*



Gellman, Marc. *Does God have a Big Toe?: Stories about Stories in the Bible*. New York: Harper & Row, 1989.

This humorous collection of short stories is geared toward children ages four to eight. The author creates his own *midrashim* for 21 of the most well-known stories of the bible, enabling children to connect with the stories of their people in a totally unique way.



Rosenfeld, Dina. *A Little Girl Named Miriam*. Brooklyn, NY: Hachai, 2001.

This story was written based on the idea that every Jew is responsible for the well-being of the Jewish people. This book combines biblical fact with Talmud and Midrash and is about Moses' sister, Miriam, as she stands up to Pharaoh and helps lead the Jewish people out of slavery. This book is appropriate for children in preschool and primary grades.

### *Israel*



**Dietrick, Ellen. *It's Israel's Birthday!* Minneapolis: Kar-Ben Publishing, 2008.**

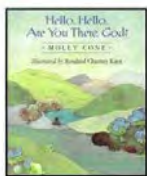
Learning about the celebration of Israel's birthday on *Yom Ha'atzmaut* this book follows a group of preschoolers on an imaginary trip to Israel while they experience Israeli food, music, and even swimming in the Dead Sea. The children are discovering the true meaning of what it feels like to be a group of Jewish people in their own homeland. This book is appropriate for children, ages four to twelve, in preschool and primary grades.



**Steiner, Connie Colker. *On Eagle's Wings and Other Things*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1987.**

Four children from different countries immigrate to Israel after World War II. Their stories are told as representative of the larger ingathering of Jews from around the world. This book is appropriate for children in preschool through elementary school.

## ***God***



**Cone, Molly. *Hello, Hello, Are You There, God?* New York: URJ Press, 1999.**

This collection of stories seeks to demonstrate to Jewish children their connection with God and the Jewish people. One such story is about a fish that is in search of water – and discovers that it is all around him. This book is appropriate for children ages three to eight.



**Salkin, Jeffrey. *Putting God on Your Guest List*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1998.**

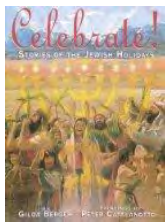
Writing from a Rabbi's perspective, this book asks children who are about to have their Bar or Bat Mitzvahs and become Jewish adults to perform customs and *mitzvot* which will ultimately connect themselves to their communities and strengthen their relationship with God. This book is appropriate for elementary and middle school-aged children.



**Sasso, Sandy Eisenberg. *In God's Name*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1994.**

After the world is created, all of its inhabitants call God by different names and cannot agree on what the correct name is. Eventually, by learning to accept the validity of each other's names for God, they are able to come together to rename God as —One. This book is appropriate for preschool through elementary school, ages four to eight.

## ***Holidays***



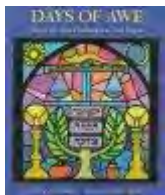
**Berger, Gilda. *Celebrate! Stories of the Jewish Holidays*. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1998.**

For eight different Jewish holidays the author has written a short story, the meaning of the holiday, and the ways in which it can be celebrated. This book focuses on Jewish values such as, joy, commandments, and peoplehood. This book is appropriate for children in primary and elementary grades, ages five to eleven.



**Heiligman, Deborah. *Celebrate Hanukkah with Light, Latkes, and Dreidels*. Des Moines, IA: National Geographic School Publishing, 2006.**

Not only does this book describe the miracles of Hanukkah in a simple and accurate way it also follows the celebration of the holiday by Jewish People all around the world. Pictures from Uganda, Kenya, Poland, Peru, Israel, Italy, Canada, and the United States fill the book showing the ways in which they commemorate the joyous holiday. *Celebrate Hanukkah* even gives step-by-step directions on how to light the menorah. This book is appropriate for children, ages three to eleven, in preschool and elementary grades.



**Kimmel, Eric A. *Days of Awe: Stories for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur*. New York: Viking, 1991.**

The author uses the pillars of the Jewish High Holidays – charity, prayer and repentance – as the focus for this book. Each of the three retold and adapted tradition tales are illustrated with luminous paintings by Erika Weihs, and are preceded by a brief paragraph that provides some background and insight to the holidays and tales selected. This book is appropriate for children ages eight to twelve.



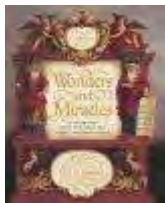
**Kimmel, Eric A. *A Hanukkah Treasury*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998.**

The compilation of stories, songs, history, recipes, and traditions, makes this book a great resource for everyone during the celebration of the holiday of Hanukkah. This book exemplifies the importance and the meaning of gathering together as one to celebrate the festival of lights. This book is appropriate for children in primary and elementary grades.



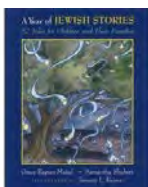
**Kimmel, Eric A. *The Jar of Fools: Eight Hanukkah Stories from Chelm*. New York: Holiday House, 2000.**

In this collection of traditional folklore and original stories from Chelm, the fabled town of fools in Poland, the author brings Hanukkah-themed tales. The stories of Chelm, appropriate for children seven to twelve years old, are humorous and meaningful – an important addition to a child's greater understanding of Jewish culture and tradition.



**Kimmel, Eric A. *Wonders and Miracles: A Passover Companion: illustrated with art spanning three thousand years*. New York: Scholastic, 2004.**

This beautiful, comprehensive treasury is a compilation of stories, songs, recipes, artwork, prayers, and commentary on the Passover Seder, embracing both traditional and modern practices. Starting with the seder, Kimmel walks readers through every step of the holiday, using artwork spanning 3,000 years to illustrate its rich history and tradition. This book is appropriate for all ages.



**Maisel, Grace, and Samantha Shubert. "The Perfect Seder," in *A Year of Jewish Stories: 52 Tales for Young Children and Their Families*. New York: URJ Press, 2004.**

In this story, geared toward elementary school-aged children, a rabbi becomes aware of what it would mean to have a truly perfect *seder*. A perfect *seder* does not necessarily mean saying every word of the *hagadah* and following every law perfectly, but remembering that God freed the Israelites from Egypt and acknowledging that poverty and injustice remain all around us.



**Singer, Isaac Bashevis. *The Power of Light: Eight Stories for Hanukkah*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 1990.**

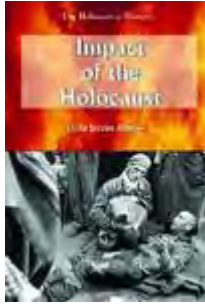
The Noble-prize winning author brings a collection of thoughtful, poignant, and heartwarming stories -- one for each night of Hanukkah. This book is appropriate primary and elementary school-aged children.



**Weber, Elka. *The Yankee at the Seder*. Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press, 2009.**

Immediately following the Civil War, a Jewish Yankee seeks a Passover *Seder*. A Confederate family opens their home, keeping in mind the words of the Haggadah, –let all who are hungry come and eat. The story of the Exodus becomes a metaphor for events that took place during the War and allows for dialogue and debate for each side. A friendship develops between the soldier and the family as their learn more about one another. This book is appropriate for children in elementary school.

## ***Shoah***



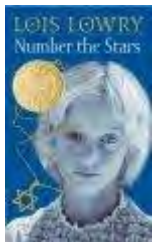
**Altman, Linda Jacobs. *Impact of the Holocaust*. Berkeley Heights, NJ: Enslow Publishers, 2004.**

This book shows the enormous impact that the Holocaust had on the world focusing on topics such as the struggle for a Jewish homeland, survivors' stories, the -de-Nazification program in Germany, the establishment of the holiday of *Yom Hashoah* and Holocaust memorials set up all around the world. This book is appropriate for elementary and middle school-aged children, ages seven to fifteen.



**Bitton-Jackson, Livia. *My Bridges of Hope: Searching for Life and Love After Auschwitz*. New York: Knopf Publishing, 1999.**

The author describes her experience as a teenager held captive by the Nazi regime in Auschwitz and her ability to rebuild her life that was destroyed during the Holocaust. The importance of family relationships, loving one's fellow Jews, and peoplehood are all used to share her life experiences. This book is appropriate for elementary and middle school-aged children.



**Lowry, Lois. *Number The Stars*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young Readers, 1989.**

On September 29, 1943, hours after word got out that Danish Jews were to be detained and sent to the death camps, the Danish resistance, population and police arranged for 7,000 Jews to escape to Sweden. Lois Lowry brings this courageous tale to life in a fictionalized account of 10-year old Annemarie and her family's efforts to smuggle her friend Ellen Rosen and the Rosen family out of the country. *Number the Stars* won the Newbery Award for the most distinguished contribution to American Literature for Children in 1990. This book is appropriate for children ages ten to fourteen.

## *Lifecycle*



**Kimmel, Eric. *Bar Mitzvah: A Jewish Boy's Coming of Age*. New York: Viking, 1995.**

Eric Kimmel has created a volume which discusses and describes the ritual of bar mitzvah from many different points of view. He uses rabbinic stories, folktales and anecdotal material to both clearly explain the history and beliefs of the Jewish religion as well as the religious and cultural aspects of the bar mitzvah. The reason for the ceremony, what happens before and during it, and how it has changed through history are all discussed. This book is appropriate for middle school aged children, especially ages eleven to thirteen.



**Wilkowski, Susan. *Baby's Bris*. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben Publishing, 1999.**

Eight days after her baby brother was born a young girl named Sophie learns about a *Brit Milah*. Wilkowsky's book uses illustration and storytelling to teach the young readers about the Jewish ceremony of a circumcision while highlighting peoplehood and the continuation of the Jewish religion and its tradition. This book is appropriate for children in preschool and primary grades.

## *World Jewry*



**Schrier, Jeffrey. *On the Wings of Eagles: An Ethiopian Boy's Story*. Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press, 1998**

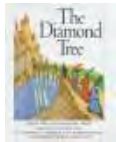
An Ethiopian boy's story of his family's journey from Ethiopia to Israel encompasses courage, peoplehood, and the right to be free in the Jewish homeland. This book is appropriate for children in elementary school.





**Sasso, Sandy Eisenberg. *God Said Amen*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000.**

In this story, a stubborn prince and princess from different kingdoms learn, with the help of other children from their lands, how to share their precious resources. This book is appropriate for ages four to eight, or early elementary school, and establishes the themes of having strong moral values and a sense of community.



**Schwartz, Howard, and Barbara Rush. *The Diamond Tree: Jewish Tales from Around the World*. New York: HarperTrophy, 1998.**

This delightful collection of Jewish folktales spans from Eastern Europe, Morocco, Yemen, and Germany and over 15 centuries. *Midrash* on biblical stories, as well as Jewish version of well-known folklore (like –Hansel and Gretell), comprise some of the stories. This book is appropriate for elementary and middle school-aged children.



**Seidman, Lauren. *What Makes Someone a Jew?* Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2007.**

This colorful, rhyming book explains that Jews can look like anyone and be from anywhere in the world. Appropriate for students in preschool and early elementary school, this book can be particularly relevant for children adopted into Jewish families. The book teaches that to be a part of the Jewish people, one does not have to look a certain way.



**Zemach, Margot. *It Could Always Be Worse: A Yiddish Folk Tale*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 1990.**

A poor man, living in a crowded shack with his wife, mother, and six children goes to his rabbi to ask for help. The rabbi instructs him to bring all of his animals inside the shack, as well. This retelling of a classic Yiddish folk story examines how a person needs to learn to be content with his own lot. Others will always have more, and yet some others will always have less. This story is appropriate for preschool through late elementary school-aged children.

*This list was compiled by Laura Held, Laura Martin, Bari Mimoun, Lisa Rosenberg and Melissa Zalkin Stollman.*