



Volume 2

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### Or Lagoyim: From Inside or Outside?

David Baruch '10

One of the more complex tenets of our religion is the idea that, as Jews, we are supposed to be a “Light unto the nations.” The simple meaning of this phrase is that we are supposed to serve as an example to the world. More complicated, however, is how having our own state contributes to this goal. Would it not be easier to be role models to the global community if we were dispersed among the nations we are supposed to be helping? Borders by nature are very restrictive; they also might restrict the flow of our ideas.

An examination of Rabbi Shlomo Aviner’s analysis of this phrase may offer some clarification. Rabbi Aviner suggests that the Jews can be a true example to the world only after we have a state. We would lack the influence and power to serve as examples if we did not. He uses as his proof an example from the time of King Solomon. When Solomon completed the Temple, the text in Kings I 10:5 says that the Queen of Sheba was so impressed that “she had no spirit left.”

I think, though, that Rabbi Aviner’s answer ought to be taken a step further.

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### Celebration and Responsibility

Talya Presser '11 and Zahava Presser '13

Every spring, Zionists all over the world celebrate Yom Haatzmaut, the anniversary of Israel’s independence. The happiness and pride in the Jewish homeland is both tremendous and very real. However, while many Jews make great efforts and sacrifices to visit the land for short periods of time, the vast number remains comfortably outside of Israel. While it is without question that we most genuinely cherish and value our country, a land we call our home, we often wonder whether our encouragement from abroad is really enough. Does our support and love for our country really mean anything, if so many of us make too many excuses for why we don’t live there?

Rabbi Zev M. Shandalov, in an article explaining his family’s decision to make aliyah, says, “Our decision to make aliyah is, simply put, returning home. From the historical and spiritual perspectives, it is the land that Hashem promised our forefathers and gave to them as an inheritance for all of their children. As a descendant of the Patriarchs, we are entitled, nay, obligated, to accept this gift from Hashem

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RAMAZ

ישיבת רמז



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## Independence From or Independence For?

Ms. Miriam Krupka, Tanakh Faculty

Yom Ha'atzmaut. Simply translated, it is the Independence Day of our country, Eretz Yisrael. On "Independence Day," most nations celebrate the beginning of a national self-government, the start of their autonomy, or their emancipation from some dominant power. Independence Day? As I sit down to write this, I know that there is more to Yom Ha'atzmaut than that.

I have just returned from accompanying the seniors on their weeklong trip to Poland. Due to a number of factors, for the first time in the history of this annual Ramaz experience, we did not continue to Israel afterwards, but went the direct route from the Warsaw airport back to our "homes" in America. How difficult that was! After spending a week exploring ruined Batei Knesiot, desolate Jewish communities, and broken graveyards and after walking through a place where we could sense the blood of our Jewish brothers soaking the ground under every step we took, all we wanted was to get on that plane in Warsaw and take the flight to survival, to rebirth, to freedom. To walk the streets of the place that lives and breathes the failure of the Nazis. And, I'll admit, as we sat there on our last morning in Warsaw, the desire to go to Israel, and the disappointment that we were not, was palpable.

And as we waited, finishing our breakfast and packing up our last minute things before leaving for the airport, one of the seniors made a comment that has stayed with me. "I don't know," he said. "I know this trip centered a lot on death. But, for me, I think it was a celebration of life. The lives of the survivors, who I am absolutely in awe of: how they did everything they could to hold on to and rebuild their lives and their religion. But it is also a celebration of my own life. I feel like I appreciate, that I now have a pride in, being Jewish, in a way that I never really had before. It is something

I will carry with me to college and through the rest of my life."

I don't think I will ever forget this comment, because it taught me something. All of a sudden, I no longer felt depressed that we were not headed to Israel. Look around you. The State of Israel is many extraordinary things. But I realized on that day that, among other things, Israel is a symbol, a microcosm, for something truly remarkable. In a place where most would have expected stagnation and death, it is a symbol for movement. It represents the strength of a people who moved forward, who did not let a brutal cruelty destroy them. People who survived years of the harshest conditions, the most callous treatment at the hands of others, starvation, the deaths of their loved ones, and so much more. But those survivors walked out with their heads held high and went to the shores of Israel, England, the US, Canada, and scores of other places and proceeded to rebuild what they'd lost. They continued to hold on to what they'd kept with them all along and what the Nazis could never take away: their identity, their pride, and their will to pass that along to their millions of future children. Future children who, sixty years later, stood in their grandparents' original "hometowns" and davened from their siddurim in those shuls, in a country that now watches this living proof that Jews are anything but weak.

So we weren't going to Eretz Yisrael that day. But I looked around and saw "Israel" right there in that room – on the faces of the students who believed in who they were and took pride in their nation's existence, potency, and survival. Students who were willing to go home and work even harder to continue to move forward, to continue their grandparents' journey, to build that legacy by making Torah and Yiddishkeit an ever-growing part of their lives.



Yom Ha'atzmaut is so much more than an Independence Day. It is our own personal Lech Lecha. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, chief rabbi of England, points out that it is no coincidence that the first words said to the first Jew were "Go. Set out on a journey". Move. Don't be happy with a status quo. Don't just allow yourself to melt into the easy life that surrounds you. But like the Jewish survivors of every generation, use your will and your strength and your belief in who you are so that you are con-

stantly moving forward, constantly building and constantly growing. Yom Ha'atzmaut is not just a celebration of a date, an event, a past. It is a representation of one of the greatest characteristics of who we are.

The day is also our challenge to continue to grow, to move towards our future and the kind of Judaism we will build for ourselves and for our children. And ultimately, this day is also our challenge to continue to grow, to move towards our future.

## Do You Believe in Miracles?

Rabbi Jay Goldmintz, Headmaster

It has been said that Pesach is the "father of the 12 months" of the Jewish calendar (חג אב י"ב). What this means is that if you know which days of the week Pesach falls out in any given year, you can then figure out on which days of the week other holy days will occur. About seven hundred years ago, the Tur codified it using a mnemonic known as at-bash (א"ת ב"ש). The way it works is that the first letter of the aleph bet (א) corresponds to the last letter of the aleph bet (ת), the second letter (ב) corresponds to the second last letter (ש), etc. Following this logic, the pattern below emerges:

ת"א- if the first day (א) of Pesach falls out on, say, a Thursday, as it did this year, then the first day of Tisha B'av (which begins with the letter ת) will be on Thursday.

ש"ב- if the second day (ב) of Pesach is on Friday, then Shavuot (which begins with the letter ש) will be on a Friday.

ר"ג- going forward in our scenario, since the third day is on Shabbat, then the following Rosh Hashanah will be on Shabbat.

ק"ד- the fourth day of Pesach was on Sunday, which means the day we celebrate the reading of the Torah, Simchat Torah, will be on Sunday as well.

צ"ה- the fifth day was on Monday, which means Tzom Kippur will be on Monday.

ו"ו- the sixth day was on Tuesday, which means that the previous Purim was on Tuesday. (This one reverts backwards to a holiday which already took place, because Purim is just that kind of upside down holiday.)

And there the mnemonic ended and unfortunately so, since this only takes us through six days of Pesach and not through the entire seven days mandated by the Torah. Therefore, there was no ז"ז combination, which would have been next in the pattern. Or at least it did not exist for many centuries until the 5th of Iyyar 5708, when the State of Israel was established and the cycle was miraculously completed:

ז"ז - whatever day of the week is the seventh day of Pesach (Wednesday this year) always will be the same day of the week as עצמאות, Yom Haatzmaut! Works every time. A miracle or a coincidence?

It pays to consider the unique character of the seventh day of Pesach - it is, after all, a yom tov that commemorates the splitting of the Red Sea. What's the connection with Yom Haatzmaut? There are any number of possibilities, not least of which is the fact that while the splitting of the Sea was a supernatural miracle, the creation of the State can be seen to be a natural miracle, one that operated within the seemingly natural unfolding of human history. And yet how "natural" was



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that birth, really? And how natural has been its continued existence in light of all of the challenges Israel has faced? One recalls the character in a book who suggested that in 500 years, people will look back and say that the threats facing Israel at the time of its inception and throughout its many wars were really all exaggerated in order to make a point. It wasn't really that the population was outnumbered 40 to 1 or that the standing army was outnumbered 8 to 1; these were the kinds of numbers one finds in a fanciful midrash in order to exaggerate the point. Israel couldn't possibly have survived those odds. Yet for the religious observer, Israel's creation, survival, and flourishing have been the contemporary equivalent of seeing the waters of the Yam Suf split.

Of course, reading the newspaper headlines every day and seeing the internal challenges that Israel faces on a regular basis can sometimes make it difficult to keep one's eye on the miraculous na-

ture of the State. But, then, that is the challenge of living in the midst of an ongoing miracle. Rav Shimon Schwab z"l recalled that as a youth he had the privilege of meeting with the Chafetz Chaim, who suggested to him that the messianic times were near. In the desert, said the Chafetz Chaim, the manna had any flavor that one could imagine. But what of someone who did not know that the manna had that power? What did it taste like for him or her? The answer is that it had no taste at all; it had a miraculous power only for those who understood its power. And so it is, he said, with any spiritual matter - its power, and taste and value, will not be felt unless one first looks at it in that light and understands that it has spiritual, as well as physical properties. To see Israel through those lenses requires one to see her in the context of Jewish history and the Jewish calendar. To borrow a quote from David ben Gurion, when it comes to Israel, "to be a realist, you must believe in miracles."

## Strength in the Face of Adversity

Avital Szulc '09

Throughout its history, Am Yisrael always has had enemies, such as the Egyptians, Amalek and many of the inhabiting nations of Canaan. Unfortunately, the present follows the trend of the past, and the Jewish people living in Israel are facing threats from neighboring nations once again.

Rabbi Yehuda Amital of Yeshivat Gush Etzion once compared the threat the Israelis and the Jewish people as a whole face from the Arab nations to the attack of Amalek at Rephidim. He said that in the war against Amalek, our survival was not at stake: Amalek succeeded in hurting many of our people and, in return, we "weakened them." So, too, in our struggle with the Palestinians, the enemy often succeeds in harming many of our people, but, in return, we weaken them and have no intention of annihilating them.

I would like to take Rav Amital's comparison

even further. Just as Am Yisrael was successful in the battle with Amalek when Moshe's hands were raised and they were looking towards Hashem, so, too, should we see that all of Israel's triumphs are due to the help of Hashem. We always must keep the might of Hashem in mind, and know that he will help us in our time of need.

Furthermore, after the war with Amalek, Bnei Yisrael entered Eretz Yisrael to conquer it and make it their own. This is very similar to what happened right after the Holocaust, another fight with another enemy; The Jewish people were able to build a Jewish homeland just a few years after the Holocaust ended.

So, though we still are confronted by many enemies, we must persevere and let old habits continue: hopefully, through effort, determination and high morale, we will fight and land on top this time, too.



## הפרשת חלה

Rabbi Kenneth Schiowitz, Talmud Faculty

והיה באכלכם מלחם הארץ תרימו תרומה לה' וגו'  
מראשית ערסתיכם תתנו לה' תרומה לדרתיכם.  
(במדבר פרק טו, יט-כא)

לשונו: "הנה בכל זה אמרו אמת והשיבו על מה שנצטוו והיה להם לאמר שהעם היושב עליה עז והערים בצורות, כי יש להם להשיב אמרי אמת לשולחם, כי כן צוה אותם 'החזק הוא הרפה הבמחנים אם במבצרים', אבל רשעם במלת 'אפס', שהיא מורה על דבר אפס ונמנע מן האדם שאי אפשר בשום ענין, כלשון 'האפס לנצח חסדו' (תהלים עז ט). 'ואין עוד אפס א-להים' (ישעיה משה יד) והנה אמרו לו, הארץ שמנה וגם זבת חלב ודבש והפרי טוב, אבל אי אפשר לבא א-ליהם כי עז העם והערים בצורות גדולות מאד וגם ילידי הענק ראינו שם", עד כאן לשון הרמב"ן. כלומר, עומק חטא המרגלים לא היה בעיקרו על גוף הארץ, אלא על מניעת יכולת האדם להפיק ממנה את מעלותיה ושבחיה הטבעיות והסגוליות. לאור דברי הרמב"ן יש לפרש כי דיבת המרגלים בהעלילם כי "ארץ אוכלת יושביה", אין הכוונה על עצמותה של ארץ ישראל, רק כוונתם היתה להצביע על אפסות כוח האדם להתמודד עם הקשיים הצפויים בארץ, ועל חוסר האפשרות להתפרנס מן הארץ הזאת, דמלאכתה מרובה ושכרה מועט. לפיכך ניתנה מצות חלה כאן בפרשת שלח – כדי לסתור ולתרץ את דיבת המרגלים, ללמדנו שיש שכר לפעולתנו, וכי בכוחה של ארץ ישראל להשפיע שפע ברכה ממרום על יושביה, וברכת הארץ חלה על מעשי האדם לראות ברכה בעמלו, וכפי שהדבר בא לידי ביטוי במצות חלה המסמלת את קדושת הארץ וברכתה החלה על הגברא, ואשר ברכת ה' שורה וחופפת על מעשי ידי יושבי ארץ ישראל ומקיימי מצוותיה התלויות בה.

נלקח מהקדמתי לספר

"שיעורי הרב יוסף דוב סולוביציק זצ"ל  
על מסכת חלה ומצוות התלויות בארץ".

מצוה זו, להפריש חלה מן העיסה, מופיעה בנפרד בסוף פרשת שלח, ולא בפרשת קורח ביחד עם שאר מצוות התלויות בארץ, ולכאורה הדברים צריכים ביאור, וכי מדוע לא כללה התורה ציווי זה ביחד עם שאר מצוות התלויות בארץ, הלא מצות חלה מן התורה גם כן אינה אלא בארץ ישראל בלבד (אף שתיקנו החכמים להפריש אף בחוץ לארץ).

ושמעתי בשם הגרי"ד סולוביציק זצ"ל, שאמר כי למרות שמן התורה חובת מצות הפרשת חלה אינה חלה אלא בארץ ישראל, בכל זאת ישנו חילוק יסודי והבדל מהותי בין מצות חלה לשאר מצוות התלויות בארץ. והוא, שחיוב תרומות ומעשרות נובע מקדושת הארץ ומצוות הפרשתם נקבעת על הפירות משעת הבאת שליש בגידולם, בעודו מחובר לאדמת ארץ ישראל טרם עבודת האדם בגידולי השדה ובפירותיה, וכל זאת יען כי מצות הפרשת תרומות ומעשרות יסודה מחמת עצם קדושת הארץ, וכוונתה לעורר ולהצביע את קדושתה הרוחנית כמו גם את שבחה הטבעית הטבועה באדמת קודש ארץ ישראל. אך לא כן מצות הפרשת חלה, שחלות חיובה נקבעת דווקא בשעת גלגול העיסה, והיינו לאחר התעסקות האדם בעבודת התבואה ובעיסה. וזה בא ללמד ברכת ה' השורה על מעשי ידי תושבי ובני ארץ ישראל, אשר עמלם אינו לריק, ועבודתם מניבה פרי רב מתנובת הארץ ופריה.

ואכן לא בכדי – ביאר הרב סולוביציק זצ"ל – מצות חלה מופיעה דוקא בפרשת שלח, לאחר פרשת המרגלים, שהרי המרגלים בדיבתם הרעה על הארץ, הדגישו את חולשת האדם להתמודד עם הבעיות הקשות שעלולות להתעורר בארץ, וכפי שכתב הרמב"ן על דברי המרגלים: "אפס כי עז העם וגו'" (במדבר י"ג, כח) וזה



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## Or Lagoyim: From Inside or Outside? (continued from page 1)

We as Jews are responsible not only for the individual spiritual well-being of mankind, but we also are responsible for its communal well-being. When we create our own state, we don't glorify just the Jewish individual, we also glorify the Jewish community. We show the world how a government should run and how individuals should exist in the fabric of a greater community with shared goals. We can set an example for individuals by dispersing ourselves throughout the world. The only way we can teach the world how a community should run is by creating our own community. First, Christianity tried to borrow the idea of "Light unto the nations" and incorporate it into Christian culture. In the Book of Matthew, Jesus tells his disciples that "you are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden." Almost two thousand years later, the Pilgrims made this their reason for fleeing to America. John Winthrop, the colony's Governor, called his community "a city on a hill" to stress the idea that they were examples to the world. Winthrop and the Pilgrims, however, had it all wrong. The Pilgrims fled from England. They

knew they were an example, but, nonetheless, the Pilgrims withdrew and formed a new community.

The Jewish idea is radically different. We do not believe in withdrawing from the world. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi of England, often talks about the idea of "Faith as protest." Our faith is a protest against the world as it is now. While science attempts to explain away free will and choice, we, as Jews say that this world is ours to change and that we can choose to do so. We believe in embracing the world and impacting it.

Our state is a protest against totalitarian governments that infringe on the rights of the individual. By having our own state, we teach the rest of the world how a proper state should run. Yes, Israel certainly is a haven for Jews all over the world. This haven, however, is not a place where we retreat and avoid the problems of modern society. We must use it as a springboard to protect the dignity of all human beings everywhere in the world. This is the ideal Jewish state.

## Kibbutz Galuyot

Tamar Gold '09 and Merav Gold '12

Kibbutz Galuyot, the Messianic promise of the return of the exile, is not only a dream, but is a core value of Judaism and is in fact an obligation. The State of Israel is arguably responsible for the safe return of more Jews than anyone or anything else. Throughout its short but significant existence, it has acted as not only a spiritual and religious center for Jews around the world, but also as a haven for Jews who were victims of anti-Semitism. Created in 1948 by Zionist Jews and others, some of whom had

escaped war-torn Europe, Israel has always protected its people, whether they were citizens of the state or not.

After the fall of the USSR, Israel invited the Jews of the Former Soviet Union into its borders with open arms. Another group of people saved from persecution was Beta Yisrael, or the Ethiopian Jews. They finally decided to immigrate to Israel when a civil war in Ethiopia made living there extremely difficult, especially for the Jews. Many rescue operations organized by the



Israeli government took place in the 1980s and the 1990s, saving more than one hundred thousand Ethiopian Jews. Some of the most famous that we know of are “Operation Solomon” and “Operation Moses.”

The State of Israel has served as a place of refuge for thousands of others. These acts of kindness help to fulfill the mitzvah of *kibbutz*

*galuyot*- the return of all Jews to Israel. But not only is Israel a shelter for the victimized, it also is a great homeland. Thousands of Zionists who make *aliyah* every year help to build the Jewish homeland as well. Israel’s importance to Jewish communities around the world is quite evident, and that is why we all must do everything we can to support it in all its endeavors.

## Hallel

Michael Feder '09

Yom Haatzmaut is quite similar to Purim in numerous ways. Both celebrate the miraculous defeat of enemies of the Jews; they involve various forms of public celebration, and they are, of course, celebrated here at Ramaz. The two holidays even occur in the same season. Yet we do not say Hallel on Purim, while we at Ramaz, as well as many others, do say Hallel on Yom Haatzmaut. Why is this so? To understand this phenomenon, we must inspect the differences between the two Chagim. Purim has its own *megillah*, while Yom Haatzmaut does not. Purim involved Jews living outside Israel, while Yom Haatzmaut celebrates the return of Jews to Eretz Yisrael, as a first step towards the coming of Mashiach.

Chazal relate that Hallel is not said on Purim because it occurred outside Israel. The Jews were ruled by a mortal king, so we could not truly call ourselves *avdei hashem*, which is an integral part of Hallel. In addition, *Megillat Esther* can be considered an equal replacement for Hallel. Since Yom Haatzmaut celebrates the Jewish return to Israel, as well as our ability to rule ourselves in our own land, it becomes clear that we must say Hallel on Yom Haatzmaut. This idea is strengthened by the fact that Chazal also

say that “there is no difference between this world and the days of Mashiach, except for the servitude to the nations.”

By creating our own government in Israel, we have taken a critical first step towards bringing the days of Mashiach. The Rambam also adds that it is only because there are Jews in Israel that the Jewish calendar, and by extension all the Chagim, can exist and continue to occur each year. Yom Haatzmaut guaranteed the constant survival of a Jewish population in Israel. This further proves that we are required to say Hallel on Yom Haatzmaut. The question remains, however, whether a bracha should be recited on Hallel or not. Rav Shlomo Goren notes that while Rabbeinu Tam feels a bracha is recited only if a miracle occurred to all of the Jews in the world, the Jews living in Israel are so central to the world that they can be considered equivalent to all of the Jews in the world, regardless of how many Jews actually reside there.

Yom Haatzmaut is a critical holiday for the Modern Orthodox Zionist movement. We believe that this holiday has religious significance in addition to historical significance. Our saying Hallel on this festive day manifests this belief. Chag Sameach!



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## Celebration and Responsibility (continued from page 1)

and to settle in the land that He chose for us.” He compares Hashem’s gift of Israel as a wrapped present given to someone by a king. By not living in Israel, we are ignoring the present, peeking at it only every once in a while, without ever actually opening the gift.

However, while the concept of every Jew living in the State of Israel is both moving and ideal, it is not always obligatory for every individual to make aliyah, according to many rabbis, including Rav Moshe Feinstein (Igrot Moshe E.H. 1:102, explained at: [koltorah.org](http://koltorah.org)). According to Rav Feinstein’s interpretation of the Rambam, it is not pro-

hibited to live outside the Land of Israel. Though the option of making aliyah definitely should be considered, every Jew has the right to choose for himself how he relates to our homeland. Undeniably, Israel is a gift from Hashem that cannot be completely disregarded, but every contribution a Jew makes to the land, be it tzedakah, a visit, or general support, has the necessary and deeply meaningful value that every Jewish Zionist should strive to possess.

On this Yom Ha’atzmaut, each one of us should make every effort to give back to our true home in any way we can.

## שירים מוקדשים למדינת ישראל

Rabbi Mayer Moskowitz, Tanakh Faculty  
Excerpted from “Memoirs of Sanctity”

The Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein Upper School of Ramaz

60 East 78th St. New York, NY 10075

Phone: 212-774-8070

[www.ramaz.tv](http://www.ramaz.tv) [www.ramaz.org](http://www.ramaz.org)



by Sandra Rubinchik