

Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future
Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary

Yom Ha'atzmaut To-Go

5768

Featuring Divrei Torah from
Rabbi Kenneth Brander
Rabbi Josh Flug
Rabbi Meir Goldwicht

A fun and exciting packet of divrei
Torah and activities for families by
Aaron Steinberg





Dear Friends,

It is my sincere hope that the Torah found in this virtual ספר may serve to enhance your יום העצמאות (Israel Independence Day) and your לימוד (study).

We have designed this project not only for the individual, studying alone, but perhaps even more for a חברותא (a pair studying together) that wish to work through the study matter together, or a group engaged in facilitated study.

With this material, we invite you to join our *Beit Midrash*, wherever you may be, להגדיל תורה ולהאדירה (to enjoy the splendor of Torah) and to engage in discussing a matter that touches on a most contemporary matter, and which is rooted in the timeless arguments of our great sages from throughout the generations.

בברכת חג שמח
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The Mitzvah of Living in the Land of Yisrael: Is it a Biblical Commandment?

Rabbi Kenneth Brander

This essay will briefly analyze the opinions of the Ramban (Nachmanides) and Rambam (Maimonides) as it relates to codifying living in the land of Israel as a Biblical commandment.

The Opinion of Ramban

The Ramban codifies as one of the Biblical commandments the Mitzvah to inherit and settle the land of Israel:

The fourth mitzvah that we were commanded [is] to conquer the land that God gave to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and not to abandon it to the hands of other nations or to emptiness.

Ramban, Commentary on Maimonides' Codification of Biblical Precepts

מצוה רביעית שנצטוינו לרשת הארץ אשר נתן האל יתברך ויתעלה לאבותינו לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב ולא נעזבה ביד זולתינו מן האומות או לשממה. השגות הרמב"ן לספר המצוות שכחת העשין

The Ramban quotes the following verse as the source for this Mitzvah.

And you shall dispossess of the land and dwell in it, because I have given you the land to possess it.

Bamidbar 33:53¹

והורשטם את הארץ וישבתם בה כי לכם נתתי את הארץ לרשת אתה:
במדבר פרק לג פסוק נג

The Ramban brings a number of additional proofs for his opinion.

¹ See also Nachmanides' commentary on this verse in the Torah

A person should always live in Eretz Yisrael, even in a city that is mostly inhabited by non-Jews, and not in the Diaspora, even in a city that is mostly inhabited by Jews. For all those that live in Eretz Yisrael are as if they have a G-d, and all those that live in the Diaspora are as if they have no G-d. As it says (Vayikra 25:38) "[I took you out of Mitzrayim] to give you the land of Cna'an to be a G-d for you". And anyone that lives in the Diaspora has no G-d? Rather, it means that anyone that lives in the Diaspora is as if he worships idols, and similarly by David it says (Shmuel I 26:19) "for they have driven me out this day that I should not cleave unto the inheritance of G-d, saying: Go, serve other gods." For who told David to worship other gods? Rather, it means that anyone that lives in the Diaspora is as if he worships idols.

Ketuvot 110b

ת"ר: לעולם ידור אדם בא"י אפי' בעיר שרובה עובדי כוכבים, ואל ידור בחו"ל ואפילו בעיר שרובה ישראל, שכל הדר בארץ ישראל - דומה כמי שיש לו אלוה, וכל הדר בחוצה לארץ - דומה כמי שאין לו אלוה, שנא': (ויקרא כ"ה) לתת לכם את ארץ כנען להיות לכם לאלהים, וכל שאינו דר בארץ אין לו אלוה? אלא לומר לך: כל הדר בחו"ל - כאילו עובד עבודת כוכבים; וכן בדוד הוא אומר: (שמואל א' כ"ו) כי גרשוני היום מהסתפח בנחלת ה' לאמר לך עבוד אלהים אחרים, וכי מי אמר לו לדוד לך עבוד אלהים אחרים? אלא לומר לך: כל הדר בחו"ל - כאילו עובד עבודת כוכבים
מסכת כתובות דף קי:

The Ramban quotes a story from the Sifri, in which R' Yehudah b. Beteira, R' Mattiah b. Cheres, R' Chananiah b. Achi, R' Yehoshua and R' Natan were leaving Eretz Yisrael. At one point, they remembered Eretz Yisrael, raised their eyes, started crying and tore their clothes, quoting the verse *And you shall dispossess of the land and dwell in it, because I have given you the land to possess it*. They said that "living in Eretz Yisrael is comparable to the observance of all other mitzvot combine".

Additional proofs are brought from *Ketubot* 110b as well. The Talmud states that if one spouse wishes to move to Israel and the other does not, the one wishing to emigrate can demand a divorce of the other.

Yet the Rambam in his *Sefer haMitzvot* does not count living in the land of Israel as one of the 613 Biblical commandments. Why?

The Objections of the *Megilat Esther*

R. Isaac de Leon in his commentary, *Megilat Esther*, defends the Rambam for not codifying living in Israel as a mitzvah: In his defense of the Rambam, the *Megilat Esther* articulates the following position:

Position: The mitzvah of living in Eretz Yisrael was not given for all generations, rather it is a precept limited to those generations living before the exiles and during the Messianic era. The Rambam has 14 principles guiding which precepts are included in the list of 613. The third postulate is to only include commandments that are binding for all generations. Therefore it would not be fitting to include this precept of living in the land of Israel as a Biblical commandment.

The Megilat Esther brings a number of proofs to support the view that this is not a commandment for all generations:

1. Tosafot on *Ketuvot* 110b (s.v. *hu omer*) writes that the Talmud's statement permitting the forcing of a spouse to move to Eretz Yisrael does not apply today because of the danger of traveling to Israel. Tosafot continues with an additional reason, quoting Rabbeinu Chaim [haKohen] that there is no longer a mitzvah to live in Eretz Yisrael since we are unable to fulfill the *mitzvot ha'teluyot ba'aretz* (the agriculturally based commandments). It is for these reasons that the Rambam does not codify living in Israel as a mitzvah.

2.

<p><i>For Rav Yehuda said: Anyone that goes up from Bavel to Eretz Yisrael violates a positive commandment, as it says (Yirmeyahu 27:22) "They shall be carried to Bavel, and there shall they be, until the day that I remember them"</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ketuvot 110b</p>	<p>דאמר רב יהודה: כל העולה מבבל לארץ ישראל עובר בעשה, שנאמר: (ירמיהו כ"ז) בבלה יובאו ושמה יהיו עד יום פקדי אותם נאם ה'.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">מסכת כתובות דף קי:</p>
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If living in the land of Israel is a binding Biblical commandment for all generations how is it possible for the prophet Yirmeyahu to articulate a perspective contrary to the Torah? This is another reason why the Rambam does not codify living in Israel as a commandment.

3.

<p><i>What are these three oaths? One is that the Jewish people should not go up [to Eretz Yisrael] in force (on mass), one is that G-d made the Jewish people swear not to rebel against the nations of the world (to settle the land), and one that G-d made the other nations swear not to persecute the Jewish people more than necessary.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ketuvot 111a</p>	<p>ג' שבועות הללו למה? אחת, שלא יעלו ישראל בחומה; ואחת, שהשביע הקדוש ברוך הוא את ישראל שלא ימרדו באומות העולם; ואחת, שהשביע הקדוש ברוך הוא את העובדי כוכבים שלא ישתעבדו בהן בישראל יותר מדאי.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">מסכת כתובות דף קיא.</p>
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From this statement in the Talmud it would seem that conquering and returning to Israel en masse is forbidden. The Megilat Esther questions how then is it possible for the Ramban to suggest that it is a Biblical commandment?

4. R. Isaac de Leon continues to suggest that all the statements of Chazal describing the importance of living in Eretz Yisrael are applicable in a time to when the Beit Hamikdash is functional. He also suggests the reason the rabbis cried and tore their clothes in the Sifri as quoted by the Ramban, is because that after the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash, they could no longer fulfill the mitzvah of living in Eretz Yisrael.

Question: Let us evaluate the comments of R. Isaac de Leon in his commentary *Megilat Esther*. Do these arguments offer a valid rationale for the omission of the mitzvah of living in the land of Israel from the Rambam's roster of biblical commandments?

The Opinion in Tosafot of Rabbeinu Chaim

The use of Tosafot to suggest a reasoning for the Rambam's omission of living in Israel in his codification of biblical commandments can be challenged in a number of ways.

R. Joseph b. Moseh Trani in his *Teshuvot Maharit* (2:28) explains that there is a mistake in the opinion of Rabbeinu Chaim in Tosafot. Firstly, none of the codifiers of Jewish law among the Rishonim (Rabbinic personalities from the 10th -15th century) quote this opinion. Additionally, Rabbeinu Chaim in his responsa, explains the reason the commandment is no longer relevant is due to the dangers of travel not due to the inability to perform specific agricultural commandments. Further, the Mordechai (*Ketuvot* 313), the collector of the ideas of the Tosafists, and the *Shita Mekubetzet* (*Ketuvot* 110b, s.v. *hu omer*) also quote the opinion of Rabbeinu Chaim as found in his responsa, and not the reason found in Tosafot.

The Maharit continues, Rabbeinu Chaim's comments about not being able to fulfill the *mitzvot ha'teluyot ba'aretz* in our days is perplexing. He points out that one who wishes to fulfill the commandments can purchase a plot of land in Eretz Yisrael and fulfill all the agriculturally based commandments. Therefore, Maharit suggests that the opinion of Rabbeinu Chaim as quoted in Tosafot should not be relied as accurate and was the mistake of a student transcribing the opinion of his teacher.

The opinion of Tosafot that there is danger in the travel might suspend for that time period the responsibility to act upon the obligation of settling in the land, as danger suspends the majority of mitzvot. However, such reasoning is not sufficient for explaining the lack of codification of settling in the land as a Biblical commandment.

In R. Eisenstadt's collection of responsa on laws found in the *Shulchan Arukh* (*Pitchei Teshuvah, Even ha-Ezer* 75:6) he describes an incident in which three families wish to move to Eretz Yisrael with their families, and the Beit Din of their town wanted to prevent them from leaving because of the dangers of travel for the small children. However, it was determined that their plans could not be impeded and that the comments of Rabbeinu Chaim and Tosafot were viewed as non-binding.

Additionally we have clear evidence that in the early 1200's several Tosafists made aliyah, ignoring the position mentioned in the Tosafot (used by the Megilat Esther as a reason for the Rambam not including living in the land as a mitzvah). They include: R. Joseph of Clisson, R. Samson of Sens, and R. Yonatan ha-Kohen of Lunel. Some even suggest that the number of Rabbis who emigrated to Israel at that time was close to 300². Even the great codifier of Jewish

² See Kanarfogel, Ephraim. "The Aliyah of 'Three Hundred Rabbis' in 1211: Tosafists Attitudes toward Settling in the Land of Israel." *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. 76, no. 3, (Jan. 1986). pp. 191-215.

law, the Tosafists R. Asher b. Jechiel, writes that the halakhah of forcing a spouse to move to Eretz Yisrael applies at all times.

Finally even if Rabbeinu Chaim's opinion is correct, it cannot be used to substantiate the position of the Rambam. For the Rambam, like the Rosh, clearly argues on Tosafot, as he codifies unconditionally (*Hilchot Ishut* 13:20) that a man may force his wife to move to Eretz Yisrael, and vice versa. Therefore this proof of the Megilat Esther can not be used to validate the position of the Rambam of not counting the mitzvah of living in Israel as a Biblical precept.

The Prohibition of Moving from Bavel to Israel

R. Isaac de Leon claims that one observes from R. Yehuda's position in the Talmud that Yirmeyahu established a decree against moving from Bavel to Eretz Yisrael. Therefore it must be that the mitzva to live in Eretz Yisrael was not binding on all generations. Otherwise, how could a prophet, who may not add or detract from the precepts of the Torah, establish a decree impeding one from moving to Israel?

In the Pe'at haShulchan (*Hilchot Eretz Yisrael*, chapter 1) written by one of the distinguished students of the Vilna Gaon, R. Yisroel b. Shmuel Ashkenazi of Shklov discusses this opinion of R. Yehuda. He points out that the conclusion of the Talmud does not support R. Yehuda, since R' Zeira and many other tannaim and amoraim did move from Bavel to Eretz Yisrael, even after the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash³. The Rambam also does not endorse this component of R. Yehudah's opinion. As already indicated, the Rambam permits a spouse to force the other to move to Eretz Yisrael, regardless of their location in Diaspora. The Rambam (*Hilchot Melachim* 5:12) recognizes one dimension of R. Yehuda's position. During the period of time in which Bavel was the center of Diaspora Jewry he restricts leaving Bavel to settle in other locations in the Diaspora. However he explicitly permits one to leave Bavel to live in Israel⁴. Therefore this position of R. Yehudah cannot be used to substantiate a reason for the Rambam not including living in the land of Israel a Biblical precept.

The Rabbis of the Sifri

R. Isaac de Leon writes that if the mitzvah of Yishuv Eretz Yisrael was still in place, the rabbis would not be crying since they could still fulfill that mitzvah of living in the land. It would seem from his understanding of the story that the rabbis remained outside of Eretz Yisrael. This is indeed the implication of the story as it is related in a secondary text, the Yalkut Shimoni (Re'e 12:885). However, in the Sifri (Devarim 12:29), the original source of the story, it seems that the rabbis did

³ The Gemara has a number of instances of rabbinic personalities moving from Bavel to Eretz Yisrael they include: R. Yirmiyah (*Ketuvot* 75a), R. Zeira (*ibid* 111a), R. Elazar Ben Pedat, R. Chiya Bar Gamda, and R. Asi (*ibid* 112b), R. Chiya Bar Abba (*Shabbat* 105b), R. Abba (*Brachot* 24b) and R. Kahana (*Baba Kama* 117a).

⁴ One can speculate that the Rambam prohibited leaving Bavel to live in other Diaspora lands due to the fact that exile was a national tragedy for the Jewish people. In order to rebuild the national identity of the Jewish people, without a Temple at its epicenter, it was required to contain the surviving Jewish people in one place rather than being scattered among various lands.

not remain outside of Israel. Rather they tore their clothing upon their return to Eretz Yisrael proclaiming that living in the land is tantamount to observing all other mitzvot. Their tears were those of joy as they celebrated their ability to observe this unique commandment.

The Three Oaths

Perhaps the most central point in the argument of the Megilat Esther is the three oaths related in the Talmud imposed by G-d. Two of the oaths fall on the Jewish people and one on the nations of the world. How is it possible for the Ramban to ignore this Talmudic discussion?

There are a number of approaches to defending the Ramban against these three oaths

R. Abraham Bornstein of Sochaczew writes (*Avnei Nezer* 454:50) that we do not accept these oaths as binding in halakhah, since none of the codifiers of Jewish law, including the Rambam, codify them in any context. In fact, the Rambam at the end of his Yemen Epistle writes that the Talmudic discussion regarding these oaths is to be considered a parable, and is not meant to be taken literally.

Similarly, R. Ezekiel Landau in his *Noda bi-Yehudah* (*Yoreh De'ah* vol. II, 161 & 205) warns that Talmudic text that is aggadic in nature is to be studied only homiletically and cannot be used extrapolate Jewish law from its homily.

Therefore, it becomes impossible to support R. Isaac de Leon's defense of the Rambam with a text that the Rambam himself interprets as non-halakhic.

However, in light of the fact that some might view these comments as halakhic in nature how does one reconcile this Talmudic discussion with the reality of the modern state of Israel?

The Marhasha⁵ explains that the oaths are halakhic in nature but only binding when the nations of the world prohibit the Jewish people from conquering Eretz Yisrael. Rav Meir Simcha HaKohen of Dvinsk, the Or Sameach, writes that after the San Remo Conference of 1920, when Jewish sovereignty and settlement rights were recognized in Palestine, the mitzvah of Yishuv Eretz Yisrael once again became obligatory, and equal to all the other commandments combined.

R. Dovid Lebor of Yeshivat Sha'alvim once suggested to me another approach, based on a ruling in the Shulchan Arukh.

If two people made an oath to do a certain thing, and one of them violated the oath, the other is exempt from the oath, and doesn't need hatara.

Shulchan Arukh Yoreh Deah 236:1

שנים שנשבעו לעשות דבר אחד, ועבר אחד מהם על השבועה, השני פטור ואינו צריך התרה שולחן ערוך יורה דעה סימן רלו סעיף ו

⁵ Maharsha suggests (*Ketubot* 111a s.v. *she'lo yalu yisrael*) that this is only in reference to rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, such as when Nechemia needed to ask permission from Koresh to rebuild Jerusalem, but to simply live in Eretz Yisrael does not require any permission from the nations of the world.

R. Shabbetai ben Meir ha'Kohen in his commentary on the *Shulchan Arukh*, the *Nekudat Hakesef* (ad loc.), quotes Talmudic and Midrashic sources indicating that this law applies even when oaths are between Jews and Gentiles.

Therefore, since the nations of the world violated their oath of not persecuting the Jewish people more than necessary, as is evident from the Crusades, Inquisitions and the Holocaust, the Jewish people are also exempt from fulfilling their oaths and therefore these oaths have no halakhic significance.

Once again the Megilat Esther's suggestion that this Talmudic edict is the reason for the Rambam's lack of codification is not a valid rationale for its omission. How do we understand the position of the Rambam?

Understanding the Opinion of the Rambam

While the Rambam does not count the mitzvah of Yishuv Eretz Yisrael formally among his 613 commandments it is difficult to suggest that the Rambam does not consider it to be a Biblical imperative. How can the Rambam codify laws such as: allowing a spouse to compel the other to move to Israel; stating that it is better to live in Israel in a city full of idol worshippers than to live in the Diaspora in a city full of Jews; that leaving Eretz Yisrael is like worshiping idols; and forbidding one to depart from Eretz Yisrael, unless it is to learn Torah, marry or escape persecution - if living in the land is not a Biblical obligation.

R. Abraham Bornstein of Sochaczew suggests (*Avnei Nezer*, 454:5-7) the reason for the difference between the Rambam and Ramban is based on different paradigms on how they codify the 613 biblical commandments.

According to Rambam, when there are two commandments, and one is an enabler of the other - only the enabler is listed as one of the 613 Biblical commandments. The *Avnei Nezer* cites as an example the Rambam's codification of commandments in regard to the building the Temple. With the purpose of the Temple to create a physical space to house the Aron, the vessel from which the presence of G-d emanates the Rambam only lists the construction of the Temple as a positive commandment (commandment 20). He does not list the construction of the Aron and its cover. For if the entire purpose of the Temple is to create a location for the Aron then only the commandment that is the conduit enabling the function of the other is to be formally listed as part of the 613. Similarly, the *Avnei Nezer* suggests that when it comes to listing commandments dealing with living and settling the land the Rambam only lists the commandment of conquering the land of Israel (commandment 187) as one of the 613. It is the conquering of the land that enables one to settle and live in Eretz Yisrael.

On the other hand, the Ramban's formulation is that when there are two commandments which are of substance, even if one enables the other, both are to be counted. Therefore the Ramban mandates (commentary on commandment 23 of Maimonides) that both the building of the Temple and the building of the Aron are to be counted as two separate commandments of the

613. Similarly, when dealing with the commandments relating to the land of Israel the Ramban does not just list the conquering of the land as a commandment but he also counts settling and living on the land as a separate Biblical commandment.

There is another explanation as to why the Rambam does not count living in the land of Israel as one of the 613 mitzvot.

Even though I exiled you from the land, you shall be adorned with mitzvos, so that when you come back they should not be like new to you.

Sifri Devarim 43

אף על פי שאני מגלה אתכם מן הארץ לחוצה לארץ
היו מצויינים במצות שכשתחזרו לא יהו עליכם
חדשים

ספרי דברים פסקא מג ד"ה דבר אחר

The Sifri indicates that the observance of commandments in the Diaspora are not of the same intensity as they are in Israel. This Sifri also mentioned in the commentary Rashi and Rabbenu Bahye ben Asher (Devarim 11:18) accentuates the special dimension to the celebration of mitzvot in Eretz Yisrael. This idea is also found in the Rashbam (Baba Batra 91a, s.v. *ein yotzin*) where he suggests that leaving Eretz Yisrael causes a tragic loss in the capacity to observe all commandments.

The Rambam in the 4th principle that guides his codification of the 613 commandments writes that any commandment that contains overarching ideals for all of Judaism is not listed as a separate commandment. According to the Sifri, living in the land of Israel is a mitzvah of this magnitude. It enables all other commandments to be observed with a greater purpose and an extra dimension. Therefore, despite all of the halakhic references in the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah* to the commandment of living in Israel, listing it as a distinct commandment would violate the 4th principle established by the Rambam in organizing his list of 613.

Conclusion

We have reviewed the position of the Ramban regarding the mitzvah to live in the land of Israel. At first evaluation it seems that only the Ramban considers living in Israel a Biblical commandment. However, further reflection allows us to recognize that while the Rambam does not count living in the land of Israel as one of the 613 it is still part of his weltanschauung. Rather due to the structural tenets that determine which mitzvot are formally counted, the Biblical commandment of living in the land of Israel is not listed. Alternatively, it is not that the commandment is not ignored by the Rambam but rather its magnitude exceeds its being counted as just one of the 613 Biblical commandments.

Should One Recite a *Beracha* on the Recitation of *Hallel* on *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut*?

Rabbi Josh Flug

Yom Ha'Atzma'ut is Israel's Independence Day. It is celebrated every year on the fifth day of *Iyar*, corresponding to the Hebrew date of the declaration of independence and the foundation of the State of Israel on the fifth of *Iyar*, 5708 (May 14, 1948). One of the observances practiced on *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut* is the recitation of *Hallel*. In this article we will discuss the various opinions regarding whether one should recite a *beracha* on the recitation of *Hallel* on *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut*.

In order to analyze whether one should recite a *beracha* of *Hallel*, one must first determine the initial impetus to recite *Hallel*. We will present three different approaches to why *Hallel* should be recited and then analyze whether a *beracha* is applicable based on each approach.

Yom Ha'Atzma'ut as a Day of Savior from Persecution

R. Menachem Y. Ushpizai (former Chief Rabbi of Ramat Gan), in *Ohr HaMizrach* (Vol 36, pp. 241-247), suggests that the *Hallel* recited on *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut* is similar to the requirement to recite *Hallel* on Chanukah. The Gemara states:

Our Rabbis taught: Who uttered this Hallel? R. Eleazar said: Moses and Israel uttered it when they stood by the [Red] Sea ... But the Sages maintain: The prophets among them enacted that the Israelites should recite at every epoch and at every trouble — may it not come to them! —

תנו רבנן הלל זה מי אמרו רבי אליעזר אומר משה וישראל אמרוהו בשעה שעמדו על הים ... וחכמים אומרים נביאים שביניהן תיקנו להם לישראל שיהו אומרים אותו על כל פרק ופרק ועל כל צרה וצרה שלא תבא עליהם

and when they are redeemed, they recite it [in thankfulness] for their delivery.

Pesachim 117a (Soncino Translation)

לישראל ולכשנגאלין אומרים אותו על גאולתן.

פסחים קיז.

This phrase is a euphemism. It is meant to say that if G-d forbid, the Jewish People are in danger and they are saved from it, we say Hallel on the redemption, for example, Chanukah.

Rashi, ad loc., s.v. V'Al

ועל כל צרה שלא תבא עליהם - לישנא מעליא הוא דנקט כלומר שאם חס ושלום תבוא צרה עליהן ויושעו ממנה, אומרים אותו על גאולתן כגון חנוכה.

רש"י שם ד"ה ועל

According to the opinion of Chachamim (the sages), one recites *Hallel* on each of the holidays and when persecution of the Jewish People is prevented. Rashi specifically gives Chanukah as an example of *Hallel* that is recited for the prevention of persecution. R. Ushpizai notes that the Israeli Declaration of Independence also constitutes a prevention of persecution. Although the War of Independence began immediately after the Declaration of Independence, the establishing of the State of Israel enabled Jews from all over the world to come to Israel to escape persecution.

Nevertheless, there is a difficulty in comparing *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut* to Chanukah, based on the comments of Tosafot:

For even a community that does not comprise all of Israel is considered an "individual" for it is stated in *Arvei Pesachim* (the tenth chapter of *Pesachim*), 'the prophets [uttered it and] enacted that the Israelites should recite at every epoch and at every trouble — may it not come to them! — and when they are redeemed, they recite it [in thankfulness] for their deliver.' For this reason, the term "individual" is used because if the entire Jewish People [is not included in the miracle] one does not complete *Hallel*, unless it is one of the days listed [in the *Beraita*]. However, if the entire Jewish People is redeemed, we certainly recite *Hallel*.

Tosafot Sukkah 44b s.v. Kan

דאפי' צבור שאין שם כל ישראל יחיד קרי להו משום דאמרינן בערבי פסחים נביאים אמרוהו ותיקנו להם לישראל שיהו אומרים אותו על כל פרק ופרק על כל צרה וצרה שלא תבא עליהן וכשנגאלין אומרים אותו על גאולתן ולכך נקט יחיד דכי ליכא כל ישראל אין גומרים אותו אלא באלו הימים אבל לגאולת כל ישראל אומרים אותו לעולם.

תוס' סוכה מד: ד"ה כאן

According to Tosafot, the obligation to recite *Hallel* in response to prevention of persecution only applies when the threat is against the entire Jewish People. If only a portion of the Jewish People is threatened, even those who were threatened do not have an obligation to recite *Hallel* when they are saved.

A further difficulty arises according to Meiri:

Any individual who experienced trouble and was redeemed from it is permitted to establish [recitation of] Hallel for himself on that day each year, but he does not recite a beracha on it. This is the law for each community. This is the principle of the prophets that one should recite Hallel on every trouble that they are redeemed from.

Meiri Pesachim 117a

כל יחיד שאירעתהו צרה ונגאל הימנה רשאי לקבוע הלל לעצמו באותו יום בכל שנה אלא שאינו מברך עליו וכן הדין בכל ציבור וציבור כך היה יסוד נביאים לאמרו על כל צרה וצרה כשנגאלים ממנה.

מאירי פסחים קי"ז.

According to Meiri, if an individual or a congregation is saved from a threat, one may recite *Hallel*. However, Meiri rules that when an individual or a congregation is saved from a threat, one may not recite a *beracha* on that *Hallel*. R. Chaim Y.D. Azulai, *Chaim She'al* 2:11, notes the opinion of Tosafot and Meiri and states that there is no obligation to recite *Hallel* when a portion of the Jewish People is saved from persecution and if one does recite *Hallel*, it should be recited without a *beracha*.

R. Chaim Dovid HaLevi, *Dat UMedinah* (pp. 99-102), notes that at the time of the initial institution of *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut*, the two chief rabbis of Israel, Rabbi Isaac Herzog and R. Ben-Tzion Uziel, ruled that one should not recite a *beracha* on *Hallel* on *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut*. R. Chaim D. HaLevi suggests that their ruling is based on the comments of R. Azulai. R. Ovadia Yosef, *Yabia Omer*, *Orach Chaim* 6:41, also rules that one should recite *Hallel* on *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut* without a *beracha* based on the comments of R. Azulai. Nevertheless, R. Ushpizai contends that the limitation of Tosafot and Meiri only applies to an event in the Diaspora. If the redemption occurs in Israel, even if a portion of the Jewish People is saved, one recites *Hallel* with a *beracha*.

Yom Ha'Atzma'ut as a Yom Tov

R. Meshulam Roth, *Kol Mevaser* 1:21, suggests that the basis for reciting *Hallel* with a *beracha* on *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut* is based on *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut*'s status as a Yom Tov (holiday). R. Moshe Alashkar, in his responsa, no. 49, rules that a community can institute a holiday similar to Purim in response to a miracle that helped save the community. R. Alashkar's comments are codified by *Magen Avraham* 686:5, and subsequently by *Mishna Berurah* 686:8. R. Moshe Sofer, *Chatam Sofer*, *Orach Chaim* no. 191, includes *Hallel* as part of the celebrations of this Yom Tov.

Nevertheless, *Chatam Sofer* only allows institution of a holiday when the nature of the redemption is one where a communal life-threatening situation is removed. If the redemption is one where freedom is achieved and no lives were threatened, one cannot institute a new Yom Tov. Furthermore, *Chatam Sofer* only allows for such an institution on a communal level. He does not allow a holiday to be instituted on a national level.

R. Roth considers *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut* as day of redemption from a life-threatening situation as well as a redemption of freedom. Therefore, he rules that one should recite *Hallel* with a *beracha*.

There are a number of questions that R. Roth does not address. First, he does not explain why he does not follow *Chatam Sofer's* requirement that a national holiday cannot be instituted. Second, R. Roth does not explain why the fifth of *Iyar* specifically was a day that an immediate threat to Jewish life was removed. Ostensibly, the only redemptive element was freedom. If so, how can one establish a new holiday and recite *Hallel*? Third, R. Azulai, op. cit., notes that Rambam was once in a life-threatening situation and was saved. As a result, he instituted a holiday for his family, but he did not recite *Hallel*. This shows that minimally, there is a dispute whether one should recite *Hallel* on a newly ordained Yom Tov. Shouldn't one apply the principle of *safek berachot l'hakel* (one should be lenient on matters of doubt regarding *berachot*) to the question of reciting a *beracha* on *Hallel* when a new holiday is instituted?

R. Ovadia Yosef, op. cit., in addressing the question of whether to recite a *beracha* on *Hallel* on *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut* does not directly address R. Roth's position. His implicit rejection of R. Roth's position may be due to any of the three questions presented above.

Yom Ha'Atzma'ut as the Atchalta D'Geulah

R. Chaim D. HaLevi, op. cit., posits that one may recite a *beracha* on *Hallel* on *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut* based on *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut's* status as the *atchalta d'geulah*, the beginning of the Ultimate Redemption. He notes that even R. Azulai would agree that an event that represents a step in the rebuilding of the *Beit HaMikdash* warrants reciting *Hallel* with a *beracha*.

R. Ovadia Yosef, op. cit., questions this approach (without directly citing R. Chaim D. HaLevi's opinion) based on a statement of the Talmud Yerushalmi:

It is stated 'When men let their hair grow in Israel, when the leaders of the people offer themselves willingly, bless G-d' the leaders of the people offer themselves-when the Almighty provides miracles for you, you should recite songs of praise. One can object: What about the redemption from Egypt? That is different because that was the beginning of the redemption.

Talmud Yerushalmi Pesachim 10:6

כתיב בפרוע פרעות בישראל בהתנדב
עם ברכו ה' התנדבו ראשי עם כשהקדוש
ברוך הוא עושה לכם ניסים תהו אומרין
שירה התיבון הרי גאולת מצרים שנייא
היא שהיא תחילת גאולתן.
ירושלמי פסחים י:ו

The Talmud Yerushalmi states that when the Jewish People left Egypt they did not recite *shirah* (song, the Talmud Yerushalmi's equivalent of *Hallel*) because it was only the beginning of the redemption.

P'nei Moshe explains:

The exodus from Egypt [was different] because that was the beginning of the redemption. This is to say that at that point it was only the beginning of the redemption because they were not completely redeemed until the Egyptians drowned in the Sea as it states 'G-d saved the Jewish People from the hands of the Egyptians on that day,' until that day they were not actually saved and on that day they said songs of praise.

P'nei Moshe ad loc., s.v. Sh'nia

שנייא היא- יציאת מצרים שהיא תחלת גאולתן וכלומר דאכתי לא הוה אלא אתחלתא דגאולה שלא נגאלו לגמרי עד ששקעו המצרים בים כדכתיב ויושע ה' ביום ההוא את ישראל מיד מצאים שעד היום לא נושעו ממש והיום אמרו שירה.

פני משה שם ד"ה שנייא

R. Ovadia Yosef notes that the comments of the Talmud Yerushalmi indicate that an event that is considered an *atchalta d'geulah* does not obligate one to recite *Hallel*.

R. Hershel Schachter, *B'Ikvei HaTzon* no. 32 notes that the concept of *atchalta d'geulah* is significant in the context of the discussion of establishing a holiday on *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut*. As we mentioned above, *Chatam Sofer's* opinion is that one cannot establish a holiday for the entire Jewish People. R. Schachter notes that according to R. Ya'akov of Lisa, one can establish a holiday for the entire Jewish People to commemorate an event that is considered an *atchalta d'geulah*. R. Schachter rules that in such a situation, recitation of *Hallel* is optional. [He does not address the issue of whether one should recite a *beracha*.] Rabbi Schachter himself is an active participant in the *Hallel* said in the morning services in the Main Beit Midrash of Yeshiva University.

Summary

In this issue, we presented three different approaches mentioned by contemporary authorities to recite *Hallel* on *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut* with a *beracha*. We also presented various objections to these approaches. As a matter of practical Halacha, prominent Poskim have taken both sides of the issue, including members of the Chief Rabbinate. What is clear from this discussion is that whether one recites a *beracha* or not is not a reflection of his or her commitment to the State of Israel. However, everyone agrees that on *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut*, it is important to recognize the miracles that occurred and the gift that were given from the Almighty in the creation of the modern State of Israel.

Israel: The Land of Perspective Yom Haatzmaut 5768

Rabbi Meir Goldwicht

Transcribed by Robert Shur

Who is a wise person to keep all these things? The one that is mitbonen in Hashem's kindness.

Tehillim 107:43

מִי חָכֵם וַיִּשְׁמֶר אֱלֹהֵי נִיחְבוּנוֹ חֻסְדֵי ה':
תהלים קז:מג

Dovid Hamelech describes the wise person as one who can keep the special gifts given to him by Hashem through the perspective of having hitbonenut. Hitbonenut is commonly translated as to view, but actually there are three other words in lashon hakodesh that have a similar meaning – lir'ot (לראות), l'habit (להביט) and l'histacel (להסתכל). What is the difference between these similar terms?

From Tanach we find that lir'ot actually refers specifically to seeing something for the first time, and l'habit means to continue to watch.

See, Hashem, and consider, to whom You have done this! Shall the women eat their fruit, the children that are dandled in the hands? Shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord?

Eicha 2:20

רָאָה ה' וְהִבִּיטָה לְמִי עוֹלָלָתָ כִּי הֵאֵם תֹּאכְלֶנָה
נְשִׁים פְּרִיָם עַלְיִי טַפְחִים אִם יִהְרַג בְּמִקְדָּשׁ
אֲדָנָי כִּי הֵן וְנָבִיא:

איכה ב:כ

L'histacel, on the other hand, refers to looking at the details of something, as we find in Chazal.

Look at three things and you will not fall to sin: know where you came from, where you are going and who you eventually will answer to.

Avot 3:1

עֲקִבֵי אֲבֹתָנוּ בְּנֵי מַהֲלָלָאֵל אֹמְרֵי הִסְתַּכְלֵי בְּשִׁלְשָׁה דְבָרִים וְאֵי
אַתָּה בָּא לְיָדֶי עֲבִירָה דְּעַמּוּסָא דְּעַמּוּסָא בְּאֵת וְלֹאן אַתָּה הוּלָךְ
וְלִפְנֵי מִי אַתָּה עֲתִיד לִיתֵן דִּין וְחֲשׁבוֹן
אֲבוֹתָנוּ: א

Hitbonenut is a combination of the two, to look at the details of something while keeping the entire picture in perspective. Dovid Hamelech is saying in Tehillim that the wise one that knows

how to focus on the details without losing perspective of the big picture will be the one that will be able to keep the gifts from Hashem.

The day of the week that lends itself the most to having this perspective is Shabbat. During the rest of the week we need to be focused on the details, to accomplish the tasks that need to get done, as the Torah commands to do melacha during the first six days of the week. However, on Shabbat, we rest, we look back at the rest of the week with a bigger perspective and see the world in a way we can't during the rest of the week.

For this reason, every gift that Hashem gave us was given on either Shabbat or on a day which the Torah refers to as Shabbat, since only with the perspective of Shabbat can we hope to keep those gifts.

For instance, the Gemara Shabbat 88a says that Yitziat Mitzrayim took place on a Thursday, but the Torah refers to it as a Shabbat.

And count for yourselves the day after Shabbat from the day you bring the Omer which is waived, seven complete weeks.

Vayikra 23:15

וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמִּחְרַת הַשַּׁבָּת מִיּוֹם הַבִּיאָכֶם אֶת
עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה שִׁבְעַת שָׁבָתוֹת תְּמִימֹת תִּהְיֶינָה:
וַיִּקְרָא כַּגִּטּוֹ

Additionally, the Torah was given on Shabbat.

Everyone agrees the Torah was given to the Jewish people on Shabbat.

Shabbat 86b

ודכולי עלמא - בשבת ניתנה תורה לישראל
שבת פו:

The first place that the Jews captured in Israel after crossing the Yarden with Yehoshua was Yericho, and this too happened on Shabbat.

Since Yericho was captured on Shabbat, everything in it was consecrated to Hashem.

Bamidbar Rabba 14

ולפי שהיה יום שבת אותו יום שכבשו את יריחו לכך
החרים את יריחו קדש לה'
במדבר רבה פרשה יד

In our times as well, the first day of the founding of the State of Israel, May 15, 1948 (Iyyar 5), was on a Shabbat. When Hashem gives us a gift, He wants us to have the knowledge and skills to keep it, so when it is given on Shabbat, we are able to have the perspective of Shabbat, of hitbonenut of the big picture, to know what to do with it and treat it properly.

When Hashem created the world, we find that almost every day was finished with a statement of "ki tov" – it is good. However, on the last day of creation, we find a different statement.

And G-d saw everything he had created and behold it was exceedingly good.

Breishit 1:31

וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה טוֹב מְאֹד
בְּרֵאשִׁית א:לא

What is the difference between “tov” and “tov me’od”? At first glance, it would seem that while tov is good, tov me’od is very good, similar to the difference between getting an A and a B on a test grade. However, in lashon hakodesh, the two are very different, and the difference is quite deep and significant.

Tov refers to everything that was created during the six days of creation that exists within the natural order of the world that we see and are accustomed to. This order of the world is fixed and cannot change, as Shlomo Hamelech says:

<p><i>What was will be, what was created will be, for there is nothing new under the sun.</i></p> <p>Kohelet 1:9</p>	<p>מֵה שֶׁהָיָה הוּא שֶׁיְהִיָּה וּמֵה שֶׁנִּצְעָשָׂה הוּא שֶׁיִּצְעָשָׂה וְאֵין כָּל חֲדָשׁ תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם: קהלת א:ט</p>
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However, me’od is something beyond, something greater. Me’od refers to what is beyond the natural order of the world, that we can’t see with our own eyes. Only Man can be referred to as tov me’od, for only Man has the ability to go beyond this world and reach something greater. The very name of Man, Adam, is about going beyond the natural bounds of this world, because in lashon hakodesh the letters of Adam are the same letters as Me’od.

How does Man get to the point of me’od, of going beyond this world? The passuk itself, when describing man as tov me’od, gives the answer.

<p><i>And G-d saw everything he had created and behold it was exceedingly good, and was evening and day, the sixth day.</i></p> <p>Breishit 1:31</p>	<p>וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֵת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה טוֹב מְאֹד וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי: בראשית א:לא</p>
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<p><i>The sixth day [refers to] everything is in limbo until the sixth day with is the sixth of Sivan, which was prepared for the giving of the Torah.</i></p> <p>Rashi ibid.</p>	<p>יום הששי כולם תלויים ועומדים עד יום הששי, הוא ששי בסיון המוכן למתן תורה: רש"י שם</p>
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Through the acceptance and keeping of the Torah, Man can achieve this status of Tov Me’od.

We find the word me’od in another place in the Torah, when Yehoshua and Kalev describe the land of Israel to the Jewish people after the negative remarks of the other leaders of Israel.

<p><i>And they said to the entire Jewish people, the Land that we transversed to see it is exceedingly exceedingly good.</i></p> <p>Bamidbar 14:7</p>	<p>וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵל כָּל עַדְתֵּי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר עָבְרָנוּ בָּהּ לְתוֹר אֲתָה טוֹבָה הָאָרֶץ מְאֹד מְאֹד: במדבר יד:ז</p>
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What Yehoshua and Kalev were saying is not simply that the Land of Israel is a really great place, but rather that it a place that goes beyond the natural order of this world. It goes beyond the physical order of the world, in that it can hold the entire Jewish people from around the world

within its small borders, and its deserts can bloom in a way that nowhere else on earth can. It also goes beyond the spiritual order of the world, and our connection to Hashem there is like nowhere else on earth.

This year's Yom Haatzmaut celebration of 60 years of the State of Israel, which takes place on a Shabbat of a Shemitta year, carries with it an extra mission and challenge.

When we read the pesukim in the Torah about Maaseh Breishit, the creation of the world, we don't find the letter "samech" used at all. The letter samech is the one letter in lashon hakodesh which is completely closed on all sides.⁶ When Hashem created the world, He created it in a way in which nothing is ever completely closed, and we can always start again and renew ourselves.

There is one other place in the Torah where we don't find the letter samech, and that is the Parshat Bikkurim, the pesukim said when bringing the first fruits to the Beit Hamikdash. Bikurim teaches us the same lesson, that we can always start again from the beginning and we are never stuck to the circumstances that we have chosen for ourselves. Bikkurim are supposed to be 1/60 of the fruits in the field, to teach us that we can always break the closed bounds of samech. Even the basket that the bikurim are brought in, which the Torah refers to as a אַנָּב, teaches us this lesson, as the Baal HaTurim explains that אַנָּב has the numerical value of 60, to show that by bringing the bikurim we can break the bounds of the samech.

After 60 years of the State of Israel, we still see great miracles on a daily basis in the growth of Torah in Israel, as well as the success of business and technology in Israel. On the other hand, we know the situation in Israel remains as complicated as ever, and we never really know what will be. Nonetheless, the assessment of Yehoshua and Kalev that the land is Tov Meod still holds true today, that we always have the opportunity to break the natural order of the world in Israel and live a life that is beyond this world, with the ability to constantly renew ourselves and choose our own destiny. To do this, we need to understand the challenge of transitioning from tov to tov me'od, through the Torah. In this year's Yom Haatzmaut, we will hopefully have the skills of hitbonenut to combine the details with the big picture, and to see everything in the proper perspective. B'ezer Hashem, we hope that with this we will be zoche to the Geula Shleima Od B'zo Hashana.

Chag Haatzmaut Sameach.

⁶ Even though the mem sofit is also completely closed, it is simply an extension of the regular mem which is open on one side.

Dear YU Families,

Happy Yom Ha'atzmaut! It is so amazing to be able to celebrate our beautiful little country's 60th birthday. With much luck we will soon forget what it feels like to fear the loss of the State of Israel, and begin to celebrate the 5th of Iyar simply as a commemoration of a historic day. Until then, we must take advantage of this day to appreciate this precious gift we have been given.

As we celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut, this year more extravagantly than most, it is as crucial as ever that we explain to our children the importance of the State of Israel. While it may seem obvious to many of us that the survival of the Jewish people, and the flourishing of Jewish culture and Torah study, is largely due to the State of Israel, this is becoming less obvious to Jewish youth.

When our children think of Israel, they think of the Inbal Hotel instead of the Knesset. They think about Burger's Bar and Massov Schwarma instead of the sacrifices their ancestors used to bring on the Temple Mount. There is little to no appreciation of Israel's geography outside of Jerusalem, and for that matter out of Ben Yehuda Street. We are losing an appreciation for the Land of Israel, the State of Israel, and the Spirit of Israel.

It takes as little as opening up a Tanach to realize the rich history we have surrounding us when we spend time in Israel. The stories of wars fought, civilizations built, and history made, take place on almost every hilltop in Israel. From the boats that King Solomon sent from the ports in Eilat, to the battles that were waged between the Jews and Philistines in the North, the Bible comes alive in Israel.

The Rabbis throughout the ages also extolled the value and importance of the Land of Israel. Stories abound of people making pilgrimage to Israel despite the economic hardships involved. The Gemara in Gittin goes as far as to say that a spouse's refusal to move to Israel is grounds for divorce! It was taught by the Rambam that even if the majority of the Jewish people lived outside of Israel, those who were in Israel were considered the heart of Israel. The Chofetz Chaim expanded on that point to say that if ever there was a situation that there was not a single Jew living in Israel, even if there was Jewish life thriving throughout the rest of the world, it would be considered as if the Jewish people had been destroyed!

What these Rabbis did not dream of, nor witness, however, was the rebuilding of a modern Jewish State in Israel. Many of them could not conceive of a Jewish government ruling the Land of Israel unless it had shortly followed the arrival of the Messiah. The few who did, Rabbis Alkalai and Kalischer to name a few, were visionaries who shaped the Religious Zionist community we live in today.

These Rabbis wrote extensively about how the immigration of Jews to Israel marked the beginning of the eschatological return to Zion. The working of the land of Israel, and the building up of an infrastructure, was beginning the process of Redemption for the entire Jewish people. They believed in the importance of reviving Hebrew as a spoken language, and the value of the Jewish people taking control of their collective destiny by moving to Israel. Rav Kook crystallized these theories by directly connecting the settlement of the Jewish people in Israel with the arrival of the Messiah.

Thankfully, we live in a time when the claims of those who believe that Zionism is an abomination to God do not even have to be dignified with a response. It is clear to all God-fearing Jews that the State of Israel has contributed more to the Jewish people in the last 60 years than anything else, and that it is a true fulfillment of God's commandments to be a Nation of Priests and a Holy People. Anti-Zionist sentiments are ignored as being ignorant and anti-Torah.

Whether the State of Israel is truly a vehicle of the Messiah is not certain, and the question itself may simply be out of our hands as human beings. Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm, recent President of Yeshiva University once wrote,

My commitment to the State of Israel does not require Messianic presuppositions. That commitment was forged in the fires of the crematoria; in the hatred of and indifference to Jews by the "civilized" countries of the West; in a love of Eretz Yisrael and Am Yisrael which are the purpose of Medinat Yisrael; in the expectation that Torah has a better chance in Israel today than in the Diaspora. Therefore, especially because I can get along without a Messianic undergirding for my love of Israel, I will not risk premature Messianism which, history has taught us, can lead to psychological and spiritual disasters.

Our goal as parents and educators must be to instill in the hearts and minds of our children this importance of the State of Israel. Whether we choose to live in Israel or not, and whether we choose to believe in a Messianic connection with Zionism or not, the importance of the State of Israel must be a common denominator.

Take the time this Yom Ha'atzmaut, even if it is only 15 minutes, to sit with you children and talk about the importance of the State of Israel. To help you with this, we have provided three different activities you can conduct with your family to engage them with Israel. They are as follows:

- Aliyah Profiles – This includes three different stories of young people who are going through the process of moving to Israel, and asks questions to help understand what they are feeling throughout the process.
- Understanding HaTikvah – This explores the meaning of Israel's National Anthem, and gives you and your family an opportunity to write your own poem or song for Israel.
- Planning Your Next Trip to Israel – This activity helps you plan an imaginary (or actual) trip to Israel with your family. Use the internet to find pictures and descriptions of activities you would like to try in Israel.

Whether you use the tools in this packet or not, make sure that this important day does not slip by without recognition at home that it is Israel's birthday, and there is reason for celebration.

Chag Sameach!

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Yom Ha'atzmaut

Aliyah Profiles

Below you will find three stories of young people who were faced with a major life-changing event – moving to Israel. As you read through these stories with your family, think about what the characters of the stories are going through. Try to put yourself in their shoes, and get a sense of what they must be feeling.

After the stories are some questions that you can fill out as a family to really analyze and understand the stories.

Enjoy!

Max and Shira

Max and Shira Cohn were 23 when they got married. They had met in their senior year of college, after they both attended a lecture hosted by the Israel Club that was very active at their school.

They both loved Israel very much as they were growing up, and their parents had always stressed the importance of Israel. Both of them had gone on a number of vacations to Israel, and felt like it was their second home (even though they always stayed in hotels).

Before they knew each other, Max and Shira had spent the same year studying Torah in Israel after they graduated high school. They both felt very connected to the neighborhoods that their schools were in, and they always dreamed of moving back there when they were married.

After their one-year anniversary, Max and Shira announced to their parents that they would be moving to Israel the following year. They had thought about it long and hard, and they were ready to make the move. They had decided on the community they wanted to live in, and they were working with an organization called Nefesh B'Nefesh that could help them find jobs once they got there.

Even though it sounded like everything was taken care of, Max's parents were less than enthusiastic about the move. They were used to having Max near the family, and they didn't want to have to fly in order to see their eldest son.

Shira's parents weren't taking it much easier, and they were especially upset that their future grandchildren would be raised speaking a language that neither of them knew very well.

Max and Shira spent a lot of time explaining to their parents that it wouldn't be as bad as they thought. They would stay in touch by phone and video-chat on the computer, and family vacations could now be held in Israel (without having to stay in a hotel). They explained that their children would hopefully speak both English and Hebrew, and that the future grandparents shouldn't worry about being out of touch with the grandkids.

The problem was, however, that Max and Shira started having their own doubts because of these discussions. Would they be able to live so far away from the people and places they had grown up their whole lives around? Would they be able to handle the Hebrew as well as they had hoped? What were they going to do living in a land without any family and only a few friends?

It was a rough period for them. They had a lot of late night discussions, and there were days when it seemed that they would never move to Israel.

After speaking to some of their friends, Max and Shira decided to take a pilot trip to Israel – this was a short trip people take to find out if and how they want to make Aliyah.

After landing in Israel, they very quickly began to remember the things about Israel that had made them fall in love with it in the first place. They were enthralled with the idea of having a Jewish State. They visited the hallowed grounds that are the backdrop for much of Tanach, and they spent time in the community they thought might be their home. They felt comfortable, happy, and at home in Israel. Their minds were made up.

After a few months of difficult deliberation, Max and Shira informed their parents they had made up their minds, and had booked one-way tickets to Israel. It wasn't easy, but they were reassured that their families were always there for them, and both sets of parents made plans to visit Israel within the first year that Max and Shira would be there.

★ Where did Max and Shira get their love of Israel?

★ Why did Max and Shira suddenly get concerned about moving to Israel? What scared them?

★ How did Max and Shira's pilot trip suddenly make them feel more confident about moving to Israel? Why do you think that happened?

Anna Loeb

Anna Loeb grew up in Donyetsk, Ukraine. Her mother is an insurance saleswomen and her father is in real estate. Although she wasn't really raised in a "Jewish" home, Anna's grandmother told her she was Jewish when Anna was a young child.

Anna has two older siblings, a brother named Julian and a sister named Paulina. They are a both a couple of years older than her, and Anna was always much closer to her cousin Eve who is a year younger than her.

When she was 12 years old, Anna's grandmother told her about a Jewish Agency Youth Club that had started in their neighborhood. There were weekly meetings that they could attend, and they learned all about Israel.

Anna spent a lot of her time at the Youth Club with Eve, and they began to care a lot about what they were learning. They began to have a lot more Jewish friends, and were learning so many things about Israel and Judaism.

After a few years, Anna became a counselor at the Jewish Agency Summer Camp that was affiliated with their youth club. She just couldn't get enough of everything they were doing and learning. She felt so connected to the club that she began to feel more Israeli than Ukrainian.

When she was 17, Anna decided that she wanted to move to Israel. She didn't know how her parents would react to this, so she was a little concerned to approach them about her idea. She knew she was too young to just get on a plane and move to Israel, so she asked her parents if she could join a high school in Israel designed for teens that make Aliyah before their parents.

It wasn't an easy decision, but Anna's parents agreed to let her join the program. When she got there, Anna was one of 50 students at the school who came from the Former Soviet Union, so she had a good group of friends who understood her culture and background. It made it a little easier, but it was still so hard for her to be away from her family.

By the time she graduated from high school, Anna was fluent in Hebrew with just a slight Russian accent. She enrolled at the University of Tel Aviv, graduated with a degree in Political Science.

Anna, now 26, lives in Tel Aviv. She works at the Jewish Agency to help show Jewish youth living throughout the world how amazing Israel is. Last month, Anna's parents told her that they plan on moving to Israel over the summer.

★ Why did Anna want to move to Israel?

★ Why was it so hard for her to leave Ukraine?

★ Do you think Anna’s parents should have let her go to Israel on her own? Why or why not?

Joey Silver

Joey Silver was born and raised in Sunny California – Los Angeles to be specific. His Mom is a writer, and his Dad is a computer programmer. He is the older kid in his family; he has two younger brothers and a baby sister.

When Joey was 12 years old, his parents told him that they would be moving to Israel. It was Chanukah then, and they told him that over the summer they would be moving to their new house in Modi’in.

Joey was confused and outraged. He knew they had gone on a trip to Israel that previous summer, but he thought it was just a vacation. They had gone to the beach and had ice cream and they went to the Kotel. It was a fun trip, but how could he leave LA?

Joey was very upset. What about all of his friends? He didn’t want to leave them. His best friend Alex lived down the block. Since he was 8 years old he was allowed to run over there on Shabbat afternoon and play basketball in Alex’s backyard. Did they even have backyards in Israel?

Joey’s parents tried to make him feel better, but he was really mad. Everyone in school heard that he was moving, and it seemed like only the teachers and rabbis were excited. All of Joey’s classmates were confused and scared for him.

Miriam Pransky told him “the whole country was one big desert.” David Walter was convinced that “the only sports that kids in Israel played was soccer.” Rachel Kranz said that when she was there they ate cucumbers for breakfast instead of cereal.” Moshe Stein said “they had school on Sunday!”

This was too much for Joey to handle. He begged and pleaded with his parents not to make them move, but they wouldn’t budge. He tried to rally his brothers to help in his protest, but they were still too young to understand. Didn’t they realize their lives would be ruined if the family moved?

Finally the day came that the family was going to move. He slumped along on the way to the plane, and made sure his face was in frown-mode the whole day.

As it turned out, their house wasn’t so bad. It was a little smaller than their house in California, but it was nice. That summer his parents made Joey go to a day camp in the neighborhood, and at first he was really mad. When he showed up on the first day and saw the other boys playing basketball, things changed. When he started playing with them, it turned out that all of them understood English, and some of them were born in America like him!

It took time for Joey to really feel comfortable in Israel, but at the end of 7th grade, he was speaking Hebrew so well that even his parents had trouble understanding him sometimes.

Joey made a lot of new friends very quickly, but he did still miss his friends in America. His parents understood that, and helped Joey stay in touch by sending emails to his friends every once in a while. His parents also sent Joey to LA the following summer to spend a few weeks with his grandparents and hang out with his American friends.

★ Why was Joey so against moving to Israel? Did his fears make sense for a 12-year-old boy?

★ Why did Joey's parents make them all move even though Joey was upset? Was it the right decision?

★ What happened once Joey started at the summer camp? What do you think his feelings were about moving to Israel after that?

Understanding HaTikvah

Composed in 1878 by Naftali Herz Imber in Ukraine, *HaTikvah* has served as the unofficial National Anthem for the State of Israel since its founding. In 2004, the Knesset declared *HaTikvah* to be the official National Anthem of Israel. It had previously been the anthem for the World Zionist Congress before that, and the Hovevei Zion movement before that. Samuel Cohen who immigrated to Israel from Moldavia arranged the melody.

Below is the text of *HaTikvah* in both Hebrew and English. Read through one of them, or both, and think about what the song/poem is all about:

HaTikvah

**As long as within our Hearts
The Jewish soul sings,
As long as forward to the East
To Zion, looks the eye -
Our hope is not yet lost,
It is two thousand years old,
To be a free people in our land
The land of Zion and
Jerusalem.**



הַתִּקְוָה

כָּל עוֹד בְּלִבְּב פְּנִימָה,
נֶפֶשׁ יִהוּדִי הוֹמָה.
וּלְפָאֲתֵי מִזְרַח קְדִימָה
עֵין לְצִיּוֹן צוֹפֶה.
עוֹד לֹא אָבְדָה תְּקוּתָנוּ,
הַתִּקְוָה בֵּת שְׁנוֹת אֲלֵפִים,
לְהִיּוֹת עִם חֶפְשִׁי בְּאַרְצָנוּ,
אֶרֶץ צִיּוֹן וִירוּשָׁלַיִם.

Of course you will only get the full-effect of the anthem if you sing it, or hear it sung. So, if you know the tune and feel confident with the words, belt it out as a family! If you need a little help, check out this website which has a great rendition of the song:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjfFpFW9Oda>

Family Worksheet Page 1

Take the time to sit down with your family and think about some of the questions below. Fill out your answers in order to make it clear how you want to respond. You can have one sheet for the whole family, or give each person their own sheet to fill out.

What does *HaTikvah* mean to you?

★ How does singing *HaTikvah* make you feel?

★ What do you think about when reading the words of *HaTikvah*?

★ Does *HaTikvah* make you feel a closer connection to Israel and/or the Jewish people?

Family Worksheet Page 2

Take the time to sit down with your family and think about some of the questions below. Fill out your answers in order to make it clear how you want to respond. You can have one sheet for the whole family, or give each person their own sheet to fill out.

What do the words of *HaTikvah* mean?

★What is the “**hope**” we sing about in *HaTikvah*?

★Why is it important for us to “**be a free people in our land**”?

★The song/poem refers to the “**heart**” and the “**eye**,” why do you think that is?

Write Your Own Israeli Anthem

In both 1898 and 1900, competitions were held to come up with a good Zionist anthem. Although both competitions failed to find the right song, HaTikvah was settled upon when it was instinctively sung by all of the participants at the 7th Zionist Congress in 1905.

To continue in that tradition, try to see what sort of song or poem you would write to be the anthem for the State of Israel. Below are some tips for how to brainstorm and get started with your anthem. You can choose to have your anthem rhyme or not rhyme. You can put it to music, or just write the words. It's your anthem to compose! Send in your completed anthem to office@yutorah.org

★ Why do you think Israel is important?

★ What are the things you like most about Israel?

★ Use this space to get started with your anthem. Use extra paper if you need it!

Plan Your Dream Vacation in Israel



This 60th anniversary of the State of Israel is the perfect time to start planning your family's next trip to Israel. The only real problem is that since there are so many places you will want to visit, you could end up staying a month and not see everything you want to see! Below is a list of activities to help you plan a ten-day trip in Israel, maximizing your experience as much as possible.

Do some extra research to learn about places you would like to visit, and feel free to add them to the list below in the blank spaces by each category.

Set the following goals for your trip itinerary:

- ✓ Try to do something from each of the categories below
- ✓ Try to travel to different parts of the country
- ✓ Let everyone in the family pick at least one activity
- ✓ Make sure to do something you have never done before

You should pick nine major activities, and up to five minor activities for your family to do. It might help to pull out a map for this. Try www.eyeonisrael.com. For more information, check out the Israeli Ministry of Tourism website at www.goisrael.com

Religious sites (major activities)

- Ma'arat Hamachpela:** The final resting place for most of our Patriarchs and Matriarchs, located in the city of Hevron.
- Sfat:** This Holy City located in Northern Israel is home to a number of famous sites including the Ari's Mikveh, the Ari's Synagogue, and is considered by many to be the Kabbalah capitol of the world.
- Jewish Quarter of the Old City:** This Jewish section of the Old City in Jerusalem has a number of sites including the Ramban's Synagogue, the Hurva Synagogue, the Temple Institute, and the Cardo.
- Katzrin:** This reconstructed Talmudic village will give you a taste of what life was like back in the age of the Talmud.
- _____ (Use this space for your own ideas!)

Shopping Attractions (minor activities)

- Machane Yehuda Shuk:** This outdoor shopping bazaar, also known as a Shuk, is best known for its fresh produce and baked products, low prices, and variety of stalls. Make sure you haggle for a lower price!
 - Azrieli Center Mall:** This modern shopping mall is one of the largest in Israel, and is also located in one of the tallest buildings in the Middle East. Take a few minutes to travel to the 49th floor of the Circular Tower for a view that can go as far as Hadera to the north, and Ashkelon to the South.
 - Antique Shopping at the Jerusalem Old City Cardo:** This ancient street mall is now an underground hub for judaica and antique shopping.
 - Art Shopping in Zichron Ya'akov:** This early settler town founded by the Baron de Rothschild is now home to a number of boutique galleries and art studios. While there, check out the Carmel winery.
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Food/Dining (minor activities)

- Falafel and Schwarma:** This local cuisine is easily found in every Israeli city and town. Stuff your pita full of vegetables and sauces before you devour this amazing sandwich.
 - Kosher American Fast Food:** While in Israel, why not try the Kosher versions of McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and Pizza Hut? Make sure to check the hechsher and make sure it is one of the kosher franchises!
 - Ethiopian Cuisine:** Find one of Israel's many Ethiopian cuisine restaurants to try dishes such as Lamb Soup with Injera bread and Waat sauce. Bring extra napkins, because traditional Ethiopian meals don't come with silverware.
 - Turkish Coffee:** This traditional Middle Eastern drink is made by boiling finely powdered roast coffee beans in a pot with sugar, and serving it into a cup, where the dregs settle. Needless to say, leave some left at the bottom of your cup.
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Hiking (major activities)

- Arbel Reserve:** Mount Arbel is near the Galilee, and was once the stomping ground of the Hasmonians. This trail follows the Arbel stream, and offers a great opportunity to spot rare birds.
- Hula Valley:** Until the 1950s, large swaths of the Hula Valley were covered with swamps. Today it is a settled area with a large Nature Reserve in the center. It is home to a wide array of flora, fauna and animal life.

- Ein Gedi:** Ein Gedi has been described as “an oasis in the desert and a green Garden of Eden in the wilderness.” Enjoy this hike into some of the most beautiful parts of Israel.
- Mount Meron – Pisgat Trail:** Mount Meron is the final resting place of the Kabbalistic sage Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. Explore this beautiful forested region as you hike a 3000 foot high mountain.
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Water Recreation (major activities)

- Floating in the Dead Sea:** Popularly known as the lowest point on Earth, this is the only place in the world where you can simply float on the water. Enjoy a mud bath with the sea salt minerals while you’re at it!
- Surfing in the Mediterranean:** Enough said. Catch some waves body-surfing on one of the nicest beaches of the Mediterranean.
- Kayaking in the Jordan:** Drive up to the North and spend a few hours navigating the tributaries of the Jordan river in inflatable kayaks. Break for lunch on the side of the river, or keep going to the mini-falls at the end of the route.
- Scuba diving in the Eilat:** The clear blue water to the Red Sea is perfect for snorkeling and Scuba diving. You will love the beautiful coral reefs that can be found under the water.
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Adventure Activities (major activities)

- Paragliding in the Galil:** It’s as simple as it sounds. Climb up somewhere high with a kite attached to your back. Take a jump, and fly like a bird as you slowly descend to the ground!
- Skiing on Mount Hermon:** At 2,814 meters, Mount Hermon is the highest point in Israel. While it serves as a great hiking destination in the summer, it is one of the few places in the Middle East with wintertime skiing.
- Biking through the Ramon Crater:** The Ramon Crater is a natural phenomenon that was created over a very long time. Biking trails lead through this desert region, so make sure to bring lots of water!
- Camel Rides in the Negev:** Travel like they used to back in biblical times. Get a boost and jump aboard a real camel for the slowest ride of your life. Be careful – these huge animals really do spit a lot!
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Ancient Historical Sites (major activities)

- Masada:** Masada is a lofty plateau in a spectacular desert setting overlooking the Dead Sea. This historical site marks a standoff between Jewish rebels and the Roman army.
 - Caesarea National Park:** Caesarea was once a bustling city built by Herod to include ports, entertainment amphitheatres, and bathhouses. Today it has a beautiful beach loaded with archeological masterpieces, and is in the shadow of the old roman aqueduct.
 - David Citadel:** The David Citadel is the hallmark of the wall surrounding the Old City of Jerusalem. Explore this famous tower that guards the entrance to the city, and appreciate some of the rich history Jerusalem has to share.
 - Bet She'an National Park:** Visit Beit She'an, the biblical mound where the Philistines hung Saul's body. Explore the ruins of Talmudic and Byzantine cities from centuries ago.
 - The Burnt House:** This Jerusalem house used to be home to the Katros family, a Priestly family that is mentioned in the Talmud. Rooms from the basement were found, and artifacts from their lives are on display.
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Recent Historical Sites (major activities)

- Knesset/Supreme Court:** These government landmarks are amazing structures that symbolize the democracy upon which Israel was founded. The recent renovations to the Supreme Court building are not to be missed.
 - Latrun:** Home to the Israel Tank Museum, this is a landmark of some of the most amazing battles to take place in the efforts to reach Jerusalem in the War of Independence.
 - Sde Boker:** This Kibbutz in the Negev is best know for being the home, and ultimate resting place, of Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben Gurion.
 - Har Herzl:** Har Herzl is a national cemetery that is the final resting place for many of Israel's fallen soldiers. It is also the final resting place of Theodore Herzl, Golde Meir, Yitzchak Rabin, and a number of other Israeli leaders.
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Museums (major activities)

- Israel Museum:** Israel's National Museum is home to a number of treasures including the Dead Sea Scrolls, rare manuscripts, ancient Judaica, and treasures from around the world.
- Ulam Ha'atzmaut:** Originally known as the Dizengoff House, Independence Hall is the location where David Ben Gurion declared the State of Israel's Independence at 4pm on May 14, 1948.

- Mini Israel:** This miniature park contains miniature replicas of hundreds of sites across Israel. If you don't have time to do much touring, cross a lot off of your list by seeing the mini versions in this museum near Latrun.
 - Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Museum:** Israel's Holocaust Museum is unparalleled in its exhibits on the darkest point in Jewish History. Established in 1953, it is a must-see for every Jew.
 - Western Wall Tunnels:** These tunnels discovered after the six day war run the entire length of the Western Wall. Explore underground gates that once led to the Temple Mount, and gain a greater appreciation of the scale of the Western Wall.
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Shabbat

For Shabbat, sit down as a family, and decide what sort of Shabbat you would like to spend in Israel. If you're lucky, you may get two Shabbatot over your trip!

Think about what you would want to get out of your Shabbat, and where you would want to spend it. Are you looking for a particularly spiritual Shabbat? Something very different than what you're used to? Do you want to see family? Are you interested in more sightseeing? Do you want to check out a community you could see yourself moving to?

Book the flight!

After all of that hard work, you're ready to book your flight.

It's never a bad time to visit Israel, and a family vacation to Israel will stick with your children for a long time to come. Check out deals for flights to Israel at any of the following airlines: El Al, Israir, Arkia, Air Canada, Alitalia, Air France, Austrian Airlines, British Airways, Continental, Delta, Iberia, KLM, Lufthansa, Lot, Malev, Swiss Air, Tarom, and Turkish Airlines.

Enjoy your trip, and send pictures to office@yutorah.org!