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Ruach Hiddush - רוח חידוש

רבנים וחזנים למען חופש דת ושוויון

Rabbis and Cantors for Religious Freedom and Equality in Israel

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Introduction

April 19, 2018 - 4 אפריל 5778

Friends,

I hope you receive this on
Yom HaAtzmaut יום
העצמאות.

The State of Israel was born 9 months before me, so we have a long history together. I met David ben Gurion while studying at Midrashah Sde Boker in the summer of 1969, the location that summer of Hebrew University's ulpan beginning our year abroad. In those days few people discussed Israel as the fulfillment of God's promise. It's *raison d'etre* was Herzl's idea of a refuge from anti-Semitism. The State was considered essentially secular, and it was a shock to hear the theory in sociology class



Israel's Declaration of Independence and the Biblical Right to the Land

by Prof. Nili Wazana

Israel's Declaration of Independence defends the right of Jews to the land, invoking the ancient connection between the people of Israel and the land of Israel going back to biblical times. But does Ben-Gurion's Declaration conform to biblical thought?

contending that the Diaspora communities and the Israeli community were developing along separating paths, and would ultimately face a crisis. Little did I understand that the seeds of change were planted in the Six Day War, as Yossi Klein Halevi describes in his excellent book, **Like Dreamers**.

We all know the importance of 70 years as a marker: it's a lifetime, a cycle. But during those years we have seen the demographics in Israel and the zeitgeist change dramatically. I was told during that year abroad that Israelis thought of rabbinics as "galut mentality," because it led to subjugation and destruction of the Jewish people. In ben Gurion's lifetime no one would have seriously considered a ban on commerce in Tel Aviv on shabbat as public policy. Ben Gurion's Tanakh emphasis in order to rebuild the Jewish people, explained in the first article, no longer represents Israel's Jewish life. But perhaps the change helps us remember how far we have come.

Of course, as BaMidbar teaches, there are times propitious for a census, and this is one of them.



David Ben-Gurion (First Prime Minister of Israel) pronounces the Declaration of the State of Israel

At 4 PM in the Tel Aviv Museum, on the 5th of Iyyar 5708 (May 14, 1948), David Ben-Gurion, the Executive Head of the World Zionist Organization and Chairman of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, stood up and solemnly read aloud the Israeli declaration of Independence (מגילת העצמאות), announcing the establishment of the State of Israel.

The actual declaration is found only halfway through the statement and is preceded by a ten-paragraph long historical prologue justifying the claim of the Jewish people to an independent state in the land of Israel. This justification differs from the major biblical presentation in a number of key respects.

[FULL ARTICLE >>>](#)

At 70, Israel's population is 8.842 million, 43% of world Jewry

By Times of Israel staff

On the eve of Israel's 70th Independence Day, its population stands at 8,842,000, of whom 74.5 percent are Jewish, according to figures released on Monday by the Central Bureau of Statistics.

But taking a census is not so easy, as we Americans know. Who counts and who does the counting? Our second article gives a rough idea of Israel's past, present and future growth, and the relative size of its communities. But the comments on the article are just as interesting if not moreso: the definition of who is a Jew is in part guiding the fulfillment of the Herzlian dream of a refuge for the Jewish people. After all: if Israel does not allow freedom for Jews, why make Aliyah? If I believe I am Jewish, but I or my children cannot live fully Jewish lives, how am I fulfilling Jewish history by living in the Jewish state?

Simultaneous to forces attempting to increase female suppression, a history of suppression is being uncovered and reversed in efforts to discover the women who helped to found and develop the State. The irony, of course, is that in the first decades of Israel, American Jewry took enormous pride in the equality of women in Israeli society, as we were told was displayed particularly in the IDF and on kibbutz. See Uri Regev's bulletin from Hiddush earlier this week

The Jewish population stands at approximately 6.589 million, while Arabs number some 1.849 million, 20.9% of the population.

Mark Levin notes: *"When you read this, you might want to read the comments for their political bias: who precisely is a Jew in Israel and in the Diaspora, and why? Should our entire liberal Jewish population be counted out of amcha because the Prime Minister and others claim that we are destined to assimilate?"*

[FULL ARTICLE >>>](#)

The Forgotten Story of the Women Who Built Israel – and Their Fight for Equality

By Allison Kaplan Sommer

There have generally been three ways in which women have entered Israel's history books: as artists, martyrs or grieving mothers. Feminist historians are working for the state's hidden figures to get the recognition they deserve. Will the fight over women's involvement, past and future, change the mounting exclusion of women in some aspects of military life and in the Haredi world?



A female Israeli officer giving a demonstration at a Women's Corps

for more on the suppression of women, as well as our newsletter from January 25, 2018, for how separate might be equal in education and military life, and enable Orthodox women to thrive.

We include the Imber poem that became Israel's National Anthem, *Tikvateynu* תיקוֹתֵנוּ, not just for nostalgia or patriotism, but to again confront the ideals of ben Gurion and the Founders, and to measure whether Israel is pursuing their dream, or whether the State has been derailed onto another track that denies the reason for Israel's existence.

And finally, a 30 minute seminar followed by a Q&A, by Prof. Ruth Halperin-Kaddari, of Bar-Ilan University and Prof. David Kretzmer of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Their presentation of a case of exclusion of haredi women from running for office from an Orthodox perspective is challenging. In particular, Prof. Halperin-Kaddari's analysis of the interrelation of the issues of female exclusion and control of women's power give context to the debate we continue to follow in

camp near Tel Aviv on how to handle a Sten gun, June 1948. Credit: Associated Press

From the earliest days of the state, images of women have played a central role in Israeli myth-making: from shapely girls in shorts tilling the kibbutz fields and fearless female soldiers wielding guns, to the nation's iconic fourth prime minister, Golda Meir, holding forth at high-level government meetings.

But from the start, the gap between the illusion implied by such images of empowered Israeli women with equal rights and the far less attractive reality has always been broad and deep.

[FULL ARTICLE >>>](#)

Tikvateynu: The Poem that Inspired Israel's National Anthem, Hatikva

By Dr. Rabbi Dalia Marx

The Official version of *Hatikva*: A Revised Form of the First Two Stanzas

Only two of the original nine stanzas of *Tikvateynu* comprise Israel's national anthem, and even these were revised a few times, including reversing the order of the stanzas. The following is the official version of *Hatikva* as it appears in the Israeli Flag and Emblem Law:

כָּל עוֹד בְּלִבְךָ פְּנִימָה
נִפְשׁ יְהוּדִי הוֹמֵיָה
וּלְפָאַתֵי מִזְרַח קִדְמָה
עֵינַי לְצִיּוֹן צוֹפֵיָה.

*As long as in the heart within,
The Jewish soul yearns,
And toward the eastern edges, onward,
An eye gazes toward Zion.*

these pages. (start at 23:00 minutes on the youtube presentation)

In his comments earlier this week, Uri Regev wrote, "... as we are getting ready to celebrate Israel's independence, let us recommit to the genuine meaning of the founding vision of the State of Israel, which promises religious freedom for all ..." I agree with Uri, but I am arguing slightly differently here. Demographics have changed, borders have changed, lands of origin have changed, religious concepts and national concepts have all shifted. We are not fighting all of the changes, but Herzl's vision of an inclusive Jewish State gave Israel its right to exist among the nations as a democratic State for the entire Jewish people. To alter that dream, would be to destroy both the past's dream and the future's hope.

הג שמח,

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עוד לא אבדה תקותנו
התקנה בת שנות אלפים
להיות עם חפשי בארצנו
ארץ ציון וירושלים.

*Our hope is not yet lost,
The hope that is two thousand years old,
To be a free nation in our land,
The Land of Zion, Jerusalem.*

Click the following link for the poem, *Tikvatenu*, as it originally appeared in Imber's book:

[FULL ARTICLE >>>](#)

Religious Parties, the Exclusion of Women and Freedom of Religion and Press

A lecture given by Prof. Ruth Halperin-Kaddari, of Bar-Ilan University and Prof. David Kretzmer of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The lecture was given during the International Conference on Religion and Equality, held jointly by Journal of Law, Religion & State and Bar-Ilan University's Faculty of Law, and sponsored by The Romie and Esther Tager Fund for Jewish Law.

"Being a women in any community does not allow you the same resources as others in society." "[In contemporary Israeli society examples of]... pervasive and systematic exclusion of women from the public sphere." -Ruth Halparin-Kaddari.

[LECTURE ON YOUTUBE >>>](#)

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Ruach Hiddush is a network of Rabbis and Cantors working to fully realize the promise of Israel's Declaration of Independence, which guarantees religious freedom and equality. The fulfillment of this promise is vital for strengthening Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, and for maintaining the solidarity of world Jewry.

מיזם של הַדְּרוּשׁ a project of Hiddush

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