



Responsa in a Moment
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Israel at 75: A Fifty-Year Retrospective¹

by Rabbi David Golinkin

In honor of Israel's 75th anniversary, I am publishing an essay this month in lieu of a responsum. D.G.

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The State of Israel was founded on May 15, 1948; I moved to Israel in September 1972. Thus, during the past few months, as Jews throughout the world began to speak more and more about “**ISRAEL AT 75**”, I realized that I have been living in Israel for two-thirds of its existence. Therefore, I thought it fitting to write a retrospective essay about my 50 years in Israel. This is not a memoir. Rather, I would like to discuss three topics:

- **The miraculous nature of the birth of the State of Israel in 1948;**
- **Where we have succeeded;**
- **and where we have yet to succeed. (1)**

¹ <https://schechter.edu/israel-at-75-rabbi-golinkin-offers-a-fifty-year-retrospective/>

I. The Miracle of 1948

After one pandemic, five elections, and three months of political turmoil and terror attacks, it's not surprising that many Israelis, myself included, are feeling depressed. At times like this, one must remember the saying of Rabbi Elazar in the Talmud (Niddah 31a): “*ein ba'al haness makir et niso* — a person involved in a miracle does not recognize his miracle”.

I believe that the rebirth of the State of Israel is a miracle. It defies logic. A people that had just lost one third of its members — 6 million men, women and children — declares a state after an Exile lasting 1,878 years. Both the United States and Russia approved that State. The UN approved that state. President Truman approved that State, thanks to his close Jewish friend and business partner Eddie Jacobson. And after the State was declared, 650,000 Jews, with insufficient weapons and few allies, withstood the onslaught of seven Arab countries.

The Jews who witnessed the founding of the State understood that it was a miracle. I would like to illustrate this by five vignettes presented in chronological order.

Dr. Gabi Barkay is a well-known Israeli archaeologist who discovered two small silver scroll amulets containing *Birkat Kohanim* from the 7th century BCE with the earliest quotation from the Torah. He is also the co-founder of the Temple Mount Sifting Project in Jerusalem which has spent 19 years sifting through 350 truckloads of dirt illegally removed from the Temple Mount by the Waqf and dumped in the Kidron Valley. They have discovered almost 600,000 artifacts from all periods of Jerusalem's history. He is also a longtime member of my synagogue, *Moreshet Avraham* in Jerusalem.

He was born in the Ghetto of Budapest in 1944, at a time when the Arrow Cross Party was murdering 80,000 Jews, many of whom they drowned in the Danube River. Most of the members of his family were murdered. He shared his crib in the Ghetto with a small Torah scroll which had belonged to his great-grandfather who had his own little synagogue in his courtyard. About twenty years ago, Gabi decided to repair and donate that *Sefer Torah* to *Moreshet Avraham* and I was privileged to read from the Torah at that event. It had a simple mantle with no inscription.

Racheli Bin-Nun, another member of our synagogue volunteered to make a new mantle and she wrote on it a verse from Ezekiel 37 (v. 14), which we read every year on Shabbat *Hol Hamoed Pesah*. She chose that verse not only because it conveys the miracle of the State of Israel, but also because it conveys the personal story of her mother Sabina Schweid, widow of Prof. Eliezer Schweid ^{z"l}, who spent 15 months hiding underneath a stable with her mother and others in order to survive.

In the spring of 1946, when Sabina was 15, she and her mother were part of a “Kibbutz” of survivors at Mainkofen, Germany. It was before Pesah and they were preparing for the Seder with their beloved teacher Moshe Friedrich, an *ilui* [Talmudic genius] who had been ordained at the age of 16, and who later died in the battle for *Gush Etzion*. Moshe for some reason did not teach them the traditional text of the Haggadah but rather the Vision of the Dry Bones (Ezekiel 37) which is read every year on *Shabbat Hol Hamoed*. As they were rehearsing for the Seder, when they got to the words “and it was filled with bones” someone began to wail and they all cried together with him. Sabina Schweid recalls:

Even I, who had spent the war in “deluxe” conditions, had been in that valley. Even I remembered the bones poking out of the mass grave, the grave where my father was buried, where all my classmates were buried, all our friends, the entire city...”

But Moshe would not let us cry. He continued:

“Thus said the Lord to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you and you shall live again! I will lay sinews upon you, and cover you with flesh, and form skin over you. And I will put breath into you, and you shall live again. And you shall know that I am the Lord!”. (Ezekiel 37:5-6). The Prophet Ezekiel was talking about us and to us in the voice of Moshe Friedrich, because Moshe – like all of us – was in the same valley filled with “very dry bones”... (2)

The second vignette happened a short time after the dry-bones episode, on April 23, 1948. It was recently recounted by Rabbi David Geffen in The Jerusalem Post. During the siege of Jerusalem, Rabbi Shlomo Goren, Chief

Chaplain of the Jewish forces, had requisitioned matzah and other provisions for Seders for soldiers throughout Jerusalem.

When the largest Seder got underway in Jerusalem, Goren announced that a special Elijah would be arriving so a cup was filled for the special guest. To everyone's surprise, David Ben-Gurion arrived, having been flown from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in a Piper Cub. The soldiers were overwhelmed – the leader of their country, soon to be the nation of the Jewish people, had not forgotten them. Rabbi Goren recalled a portion of Ben-Gurion's speech:

Tonight, this is the first time in the 2,000 years of Exile that the Jewish people are celebrating the festival of freedom and redemption as a free people back in its own land. The Seder concludes with the hopeful words "Next year in Jerusalem". You men are in Jerusalem fighting to liberate it and fulfill that destiny. Do not yield, but hold on to Jerusalem tenaciously.

He spoke with tears in his eyes until it was time to return to his headquarters in Tel Aviv. But the soldiers were so packed in to the hall that it was impossible for Ben-Gurion to reach the exit, so the soldiers picked him up and passed him over their heads so that he could exit the building and fly back to Tel Aviv. ⁽³⁾

The third vignette happened just three weeks later, on the night of May 14, 1948 just before Ben-Gurion declared the State of Israel. This is what Prof. Mordecai Kaplan wrote in his diary:

In fifteen minutes from now, a new Jewish state will officially come into being. The mental and physical agonies of birth are beyond those suffered by any people known to history. May God grant that it will not be stillborn. [He then copied Ezekiel 16:4-6 in Hebrew. וּמוֹלְדוֹתֶיךָ בְּיוֹם הַוֹּלְדָתְךָ אֹתָךְ ... ["... on the day you were born, you were left lying, rejected, in the open field. When I passed by you and saw you wallowing in your blood. I said to you: 'Live in spite of your blood!' "]]

No words of my own could possibly express any better the feelings that storm in my heart at this moment [...] Even the verse which precedes them has significance for me. אֲבִיךָ הָאֲמֹרִי וְאִמְךָ חִתִּית [your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite...]. The new state has been parented by the U.N. with the U.S. as its father, and the Soviet Republic as its mother; is

sent forth by them into the world as a castaway, but God will say to this state as he said to the one of old **בדמיון חיי** [Live in spite of your blood!].

[It] is 5:30 p.m. Judith and Ira [Eisenstein, his daughter and son-in-law] just phoned telling me Truman issued a statement at 6:01 p.m. recognizing the Jewish State. It is simply impossible for me to describe how I feel at this moment. Again and Again: **ברוך שהחיינו וקיימנו לזמן הזה** [Blessed... who has kept us alive and sustained us to this time.] ⁽⁴⁾

The final vignette is a letter written by my father Rabbi Noah Golinkin z"l in Yiddish on 3 Iyar 5711, May 9, 1951, the day before the third Independence Day of the State of Israel, which was observed that year on the fourth of Iyar because of Shabbat. My father was then serving as rabbi in Arlington, Virginia, next to Washington D.C. Since he was very active in Zionist organizations and in close contact with the Israel Embassy in Washington, he learned that the State of Israel was about to issue the first Israel Bonds. He bought a Bond in honor of the first birthday of his nephew Meyer Goldstein and sent him a letter in Yiddish explaining the importance of the matter. As one can discern from the letter, my father knew that he had bought one of the first Bonds, but he did not know that it was the first Israel Bond; this only became clear when the Bond arrived in the mail. An excerpt from the letter appears below in English translation:

B"H 3 Iyar 5711 [May 9, 1951]

Sweet Yisrael Meirke!

Tomorrow is your birthday...

Tomorrow, you will receive in the mail a "Bond" from our long-dreamt-of State of Israel. Today is the first day when Bonds of the Jewish State will go on sale throughout the world, and you will be one of the first to receive a holy Bond from the Holy Land, which will connect your young life with the great, fulfilled dream of tens of Jewish generations.

You were born in a great time and, as you grow up, let the "Bond" serve you as one of the symbols of your connection [to Israel] and of your growth.

Your Uncle Noah... ⁽⁵⁾



Dr. Gabi Barkay and Sabina Schweid who had survived the Shoah; David Ben-Gurion the founder of the State of Israel; Prof. Mordecai Kaplan, a major American Jewish leader; and my father Rabbi Noah Golinkin who escaped from Vilna in 1938 and spent the war years trying to save the Jews of Europe – they all understood that the State of Israel was a miracle. Do we?

II. Where have we succeeded?

I believe that there are eleven areas where the State of Israel has succeeded and has lived up to the expectations of the five distinguished Jews described above.

The Ingathering of the Exiles — *Mizug Galuyot*:

From 1948 to 1951, Israel's Jewish population more than doubled, from 650,000 to 1,338,000. Between 1948 and 2022, Israel has absorbed approximately 3,400,000 new immigrants.

Two typical stories.

In the 1980s, I did my basic training in the IDF; my unit consisted of 66 soldiers from 23 countries, including Iran, Ethiopia, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Russia, Canada and the United States. When I teach my course on the Haggadah at the Schechter Institute every other year and I want to know the customs of different *Edot* [ethnic groups], I don't just look in books. I simply ask my students what they and their parents do at the Seder. They proceed to share the customs of Morocco, Tunisia, Iraq, Iran, Yemen, Germany, France, Russia and so on. I believe that Israel's feat of *Mizug Galuyot* is unparalleled in human history.

The revival of Hebrew as a spoken language:

Jews always read and wrote Hebrew from the Destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70CE until the 19th century, but, for the most part, they did not speak it. ⁽⁶⁾ When Eliezer ben Yehuda and his wife Devorah began to speak Hebrew to their son Itamar in 1882, Itamar was probably the only native Hebrew speaker in the world. Today there are some 9,656,000 Hebrew speakers in Israel (including Israeli Arabs), even though 36 other languages are spoken in Israel. Every year approximately 8,300 new Hebrew books are

published in Israel. This revival of a “dead” language is also without precedent in world history.

The IDF:

The last time the Jewish people had an army in *Eretz Yisrael* was during the Bar Kokhba Revolt which ended in defeat in 135CE. When the State of Israel was founded, there were actually three different armies – the **Haganah**, **Etzel** and **Lehi**. They quickly became one army and won numerous wars. Today, the **IDF** is considered one of the best armies in the world and continues to defend the State of Israel against terrorists, Hamas in Gaza, Hizbollah in Lebanon and Iran. It also serves as a major instrument of Ingathering the Exiles as explained above.

Jewish Time and Space:

In the State of Israel, Shabbat and all the Jewish holidays are national holidays. People can go to synagogue, go on field trips or visit their families. Every public building has a Hanukiyah [Hanukkah Menorah] on top, there are hundreds of thousands of Sukkot, and if you drive around Israeli cities on Erev Pesah or Lag Ba’omer you will smell the hametz burning or watch the bonfires glowing. The IDF keeps kosher and when I used to serve in the army, one could not eat on Friday night before someone made *Kiddush* (it was usually me!). Cheese sales increase by 230% before Shavuot; Israelis consume 250 grams of honey per person during the month of Tishrei, 40% of their yearly consumption; and radio ads before Pesah are set to the tune of the Ten Plagues or *Ehad Mee Yodeah*.

Agriculture:

Before and after 1948, a large percentage of the Israeli economy depended on agriculture. Today, while farmworkers made up only 3.7% of the work force, **Israel produces 95% of its own food requirements**, supplementing this with imports of grain, oilseeds, meat, coffee, cocoa and sugar. Furthermore, since the 1950s, Israel has developed many important agricultural techniques and has taught them throughout the world, especially in poor countries in Africa and elsewhere.

Reforestation:

Since the JNF was founded in 1901, it has planted over 250,000,000 trees in Israel. It is the only country in the world that ended the 20th century with more trees than it had in 1900. In 1948, roughly 2% of Israel was covered in trees and this has now grown to around 8.5%. This too is without precedent.

Water:

Some 60% of Israel is desert. In addition, the population of Israel is 12 times greater than it was in 1948, not to mention millions of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza who also need water. In 2009, there were TV ads featuring Israeli celebrities warning people that they must conserve water or the Kineret would dry up. The government was seriously discussing bringing boatloads of water from Turkey. Israel dealt with this crisis in three ways:

- the JNF has built over 240 reservoirs and dams;
- close to 95% of wastewater is now recycled for agriculture;
- and Israel has built five major desalination plants, with two more to be completed soon.

The result is that **Israel now produces 20% more water than it needs** and that the level of the Kineret continues to rise. These methods are now being copied by many other countries in the world. (7)

Start-Up Nation:

As documented by Dan Senor and Saul Singer in 2009, 63 Israeli companies were listed on Nasdaq, more than those of any other foreign country, even though Israel is ranked No. 100 in the world in terms of population and no. 153 in terms of size (within the green line). Their book addresses the question: “How is it that Israel — a country of 7.1 million people, only sixty years old, surrounded by enemies, in a constant state of war since its founding, with no natural resources — produces more start-up companies on a per capita basis than large, peaceful, and stable nations and regions like Japan, China, India, Korea, Canada, and all of Europe?” They reply that this success stems from mandatory military service and immigration.

But it's not just the number of start-ups; it's the inventions themselves which have improved the lives of billions of people around the world. Among the inventions: Waze, Mobileye, USB drives, Check Point which created the first

Firewall, Watergen which produces clean drinking water from the air, Sniffphone and NaNose which can smell diseases, ReWalk which enables paraplegics to walk again, and PillCam, a medical camera which can be swallowed.

Medicine:

Israel has one of the best medical systems in the world. There is universal health coverage and every citizen belongs to one of the four *Kupot Holim* [medical plans]. It is also much cheaper than most of the countries in the Western world and, when you buy any approved drug, the price is very low. Despite the fact that Israelis complain about it all the time, the medical system is quite efficient. A number of years ago, I had a problem with my shoulder. I went to an orthopedist, who sent me for an X-ray and an ultrasound; all of this happened on the same day and cost me next to nothing over and above my regular fee. Finally, Israel ranks sixth in the World Index of Healthcare Innovation and Sheba Medical Center, Israel's largest hospital, was recognized among the best medical centers in the world, ranking 13th on Newsweek's "World's Smartest Hospitals for 2023".

Academia:

The number of academic institutions in Israel went from 2 in 1948 to 7 in the 1970s to 59 today. The number of students grew from 1,600 in 1948 to 56,000 in 1980 to 200,000 in 2000 to 342,000 in 2023. In other words, **while the population of Israel grew by a factor of 12 in 75 years, the number of students in academic institutions grew by a factor of 213!** Finally, Israel has produced 13 Nobel Laureates, which ranks us as No. 15 in the world, even though we rank No. 100 in terms of population.

Happiness:

In 2023, Israel was ranked No. 4 in the World Happiness Index. The top ten countries are: Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Israel, Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, Luxembourg, and New Zealand. This is not a fluke. Every year, since this Index was founded in 2012, Israel is found among the top fifteen in terms of happiness. The only difference is that some of the other countries have not been at war since World War II and some have never been at war, while Israel has been at war for all 75 years of its existence.

How can this be explained? Some of it stems from the list above. Another explanation is the emphasis in Israel on family and children and the feeling that *kol yisrael arevin zeh baze*, that all Jews are responsible for one another.

III. Where have we not yet succeeded

Yet, there are seven important areas where the State of Israel has not yet succeeded.

The Palestinians:

The first and most well-known dilemma is the Palestinian problem. I am hesitant to discuss this because I know that whatever I write will anger someone, but this too is part of Israel at 75.

Much of the Western World and especially the U.N. blame Israel for the fact that Palestinians are still living in refugee camps instead of in their own State. These claims are not born out by the facts.

Abba Eban famously said after the Geneva Peace Talks in December 1973:

“The Arabs never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity”.

This is true.

- In 1947, Israel accepted the UN partition plan while the Arab League and all Arab factions rejected it. After the Six Day War, many Israelis were interested in returning all or part of the territories captured in return for a peace treaty. The Arab League responded with the Khartoum Resolution of September 1967, which contained the “Three Noes”: “No peace with Israel, no negotiation with Israel, no recognition of Israel.”
- In 1993, Israel and the Palestinians signed the Oslo accords. Like many Israelis, I was in favor of the accords and I published a responsum explaining why it was permissible to give up some of the territories for the sake of a peace treaty.⁽⁸⁾ Unfortunately, within a short amount of time, the accords literally blew up in our faces. From 1993 until 2000, almost 300 Israelis were killed in terrorist attacks, including many horrific suicide bombings in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Bet Lid.
- In July 2000, at the Camp David Summit, Ehud Barak offered Arafat 92% of the territories; Arafat rejected this, and in September the Palestinians

began the Second Intifada which lasted for five years and led to the death of some 4,000 Israelis and Palestinians.

- In August 2005, Israel withdrew from Gaza; the Palestinians immediately burned down all of the synagogues and greenhouses of the Jews who had lived in Gush Katif. In June 2007, war broke out in the Gaza strip between Hamas and Fatah; Hamas emerged victorious after killing many Fatah supporters. Since 2001, Hamas and the other terror organizations have shot more than 20,000 missiles at Israel, which has forced Israel to wage 11 military campaigns against Gaza.

Some claim that the Palestinian leaders are the problem; the Palestinian people really want peace. This too is not supported by the facts. An in-depth analysis of 330 surveys conducted by four major Palestinian research institutes between 1993 and 2015 revealed that from 1993-2000, 42% of Palestinians favored armed attacks against Israeli civilians. From 2000-2015, a solid majority supported such attacks and, on occasion, specific suicide attacks on civilians were approved by 74% or 84% of Palestinians.⁽⁹⁾

A friend of mine lived for many years in a Jerusalem on a street which borders the Arab neighborhood of *Jabel Mukaber*. During the first and second Intifadas their house was attacked by stones and Molotov cocktails over 100 times. In 1989, she helped initiate a dialogue program with some of the Palestinian women. At the second session, which took place in *Jabel Mukaber*, she said: “Why not talk about making peace?” One of the Palestinian women replied: “As soon as there is a Palestinian State, there will be peace, but it might be a problem for you: Where will you live?”

I understand that many Americans and Europeans think that every problem has a solution. Yet we now know from the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan which costs trillions of dollars, 6,833 American soldiers who died and over 52,000 who were wounded that you cannot impose democracy on Arab societies which have never had a democracy and have no desire to have one. I do not know the solution, but **the overwhelming majority of Israelis believe that if Israel withdraws from more territories it will endanger the very existence of the State of Israel without leading to any solution.**

The Haredi dilemma:

When the State of Israel was founded, Ben Gurion gave some 400 Haredi yeshivah students an exemption from serving in the army. In 1977, when Menahem Begin and the Likud took over, they allowed over 8,000 such students; and they proceeded to exempt more and more students as part of coalition deals with the Haredi parties. Today there are over 60,000 such students, but in order to get an exemption, you must stay in a yeshivah. The result was that the State of Israel itself created a situation where up to 13.3% of the population who elect some 18 members of Knesset do not study the required core subjects in school, do not serve in the IDF, and do not start working, if at all, before the age of 30. Not serving in the army and studying Torah at the public's expense are diametrically opposed to Jewish law ⁽¹⁰⁾ and are not sustainable in the long term.

The Religious Zionists:

From 1948 until the early 2000s the *Mizrahi* or *Mafdal* party consisted of modern Orthodox Jews such as Yosef Burg, Zevulun Hammer and Zevulun Orlev who believed that observant Jews should combine work, IDF service and Torah study and did their utmost to co-exist with secular and traditional Jews. Yet, as Rabbi Yitz Greenberg stressed in a recent article,⁽¹¹⁾ the Religious Zionist Parties today, as exemplified by Smotrich, Ben Gvir and Avi Maoz, are almost the diametric opposite of classical religious Zionism. These politicians hate Arabs, Conservative and Reform Jews, and gay people; they want Israel to be governed by *halakhah*; and they want Israel to annex the entire West Bank. This trend began after the Six Day War as a result of the Messianism of Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah Kook and his disciples. Since then, it has morphed in various extreme directions. There is no easy solution to this problem, but this sector of the voting public will continue to have a big effect on Israeli politics.

Jewish Education:

Despite what I wrote above about the beauty of Jewish time and space in Israel, a lack of serious Jewish education is one of Israel's greatest failures.⁽¹²⁾ **Israeli Jews speak Hebrew and study the Tanakh as history, but most of them who attend the secular public schools in Israel have not received a**

serious Jewish education. They have not studied basic rabbinic texts such as *Pirkei Avot*, *Mishnah*, *Talmud*, *Midrash*, *Rashi*, the *Siddur*, or medieval Jewish history and philosophy. Even though as I explained above, most Israeli Jews observe the Jewish holidays in a culinary fashion, for the most part, their knowledge of the Jewish holidays is extremely superficial.

Here is one typical example out of hundreds.

On Hol Hamoed Pesah I was listening to a talk show on *Reshet Bet*, Israel's most popular radio station. One of the hosts has been a journalist, radio and television presenter for forty years and in 2017 she received a lifetime achievement award for outstanding journalistic work. She was discussing with her co-host and a guest the fact that it's difficult for many Israelis to understand the *Haggadah*. She said: "The *Haggadah* is written in Aramaic; it really needs to be translated into Hebrew so that Israelis will understand it!" It's not just that this statement is totally incorrect – only the *Ha Lahma* paragraph and the song *Had Gadya* are in Aramaic – but the two men involved in the discussion agreed with her!

Unlike some of Israel's other problems, this problem has a simple solution: make sure that every Israeli child and adult receives a Jewish education. Indeed, that is the goal of the Schechter Institutes and that is why we now run programs for over 125,000 Israeli children and adults every year.

Religious Pluralism:

As I have explained elsewhere, this too is one of Israel's greatest problems.⁽¹³⁾ The Chief Rabbinate and the religious establishment in Israel are a coercive bureaucracy without a constituency, primarily controlled by Haredi rabbis. They make life difficult for those who wish to make *Aliyah*, convert, get married or receive kashrut supervision. **This monopoly has not led to greater observance.** On the contrary, it has led to a situation where many Israelis dislike Judaism or simply find ways to work around this religious coercion. For example, approximately 25% of young couples, including some modern Orthodox couples, now get married in Israel by Conservative, Reform and secular rabbis and obtain a civil license in Cyprus or elsewhere. This problem too has a solution – religious pluralism. **Either the State should fund no rabbis or it should fund any synagogue and its rabbi, regardless of the**

denomination. It's not the State's job to define which rabbis and synagogues are "kosher".

Judicial Reform:

I have written elsewhere about Israel's current judicial crisis and stressed the need to maintain checks and balances between the Knesset and the Supreme Court on the basis of precedents from the Bible until today.⁽¹⁴⁾ **Our current crisis stems to a large extent from the fact that Israel has no constitution.** When the State was founded, Ben-Gurion was so preoccupied with other major challenges such as wars, food shortages and immigrant absorption that he decided not to deal with this challenge. This lack of a constitution has now come back to haunt us in a big way. I do not think that it's possible to write a constitution in the middle of our current crisis. But I hope and pray that President Herzog's mediation efforts will bear fruit and lead to a true compromise between the two main voting blocs in Israel.

Jewish Unity:

In a recent video in honor of Pesah, ⁽¹⁵⁾ I asked the question: What can we learn from the story of the Exodus that can help us weather the current storm in the State of Israel? I proceeded to compare the behavior of the Children of Israel in the desert for 40 years after the Exodus and the behavior of *Am Israel*, the Jewish people, in the State of Israel since 1948. I concluded that video as follows:

Since 1948, we have been privileged to witness the ingathering of the exiles — *Kibbutz Galuyot* — in the State of Israel, but that does not mean that we are one united people. Many of the politicians leading the so-called "Judicial Revolution" these past few months have stated very clearly that their motives are ethnic — to show the Ashkenazi elite that the *Edot Hamizrah* [the Jews from Islamic countries] are now in charge, or revenge for the disengagement from Gaza in 2005. I can only say to all of this: *Lo zo haderekh!* This is not the correct path. The correct path is that of President Isaac Herzog: to sit and to talk and to compromise — however long it takes.

Rabbi Yehoshua said in the Tractate of Rosh Hashanah (folio 11a): "In the month of Nisan we were redeemed [from Egypt]; and in the month of Nisan we are destined to be redeemed". And what will lead

to *Geulah*, what will lead to redemption? We have a very clear answer in Midrash Tanhuma (ed. Buber, Deuteronomy, pp. 48-49): “God will in the future shine upon you the light of the world... When? When you will all be one bundle... According to the custom of the world, if you take a bundle of reeds can you break them all at once? But if you take one reed at a time, even a child can break that reed. And so you find that the Jewish People will only be redeemed if they become one bundle...”.

The secret of redemption is that the Jewish People become *agudah ahat*, one bundle. The secret of redemption is for us to stop fighting with each other and start working with each other.

Of all the unfinished problems of the State of Israel, the last is the most crucial. We will only be able to solve our major problems if we work together as one united people.

The founders of modern Zionism and of the State of Israel wanted Israel to be an “*or goyim*”, “a light unto the nations”, in keeping with the prophecies in Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6. I hope and pray that we will have the wisdom to fulfill that dream.

Notes

In the notes below, I will refer primarily to my own writings and to the sources of specific quotations. Most dates and statistics are taken from Wikipedia and other internet articles without specific citations.

- Sabina Schweid, *Milhamah, Milhamah, Gevirah Nehedarah*, Jerusalem, 2003, pp. 254-255.
- David Geffen, *The Jerusalem Post Magazine*, March 31, 2023, pp. 26-27 quoting Rabbi Shlomo Goren, *With Might and Strength* and one other source.
- Mordecai Kaplan, *Communings of the Spirit, The Journals of Mordecai M. Kaplan, Volume III 1942-1951*, edited by Mel Scult, Detroit, 2020, pp. 330-331.
- For a photograph of the first Israel Bond and for my father’s letter in Yiddish, see David Golinkin, *Responsa in a Moment, Volume V*, Jerusalem, 2021, pp. 364-380, also available at schechter.edu. For biographies of Rabbi Noah Golinkin, see my eulogy in *Insight Israel: The View from Schechter*, Jerusalem,

2003, pp. 157-167 also available at schechter.edu; Rafael Medoff in the Encyclopaedia Judaica, second edition, 2007, Vol. 7, pp. 740-741; Rafael Medoff and David Golinkin, The Student Struggle Against the Holocaust, Jerusalem, 2009.

- See Eliezer Ben Yehuda, Milon Halashon Ha'ivrit, 1, New York and London, 1960, Introduction, pp. 80-254; Cecil Roth, Personalities and Events in Jewish History, Philadelphia, 1953, Chapter 9; William Chomsky, Hebrew: The Eternal Language, Philadelphia, 1957, Chapter 11; Shimon Federbush, Halashon Ha'ivrit B'yisrael U'ba'amim, Jerusalem, 1967, Chapter 27.
- This paragraph is based on Max Kaplan-Zantopp, "How Israel Used Innovation to Beat its Water Crisis", israel21c.org, April 28, 2022.
- David Golinkin, "Returning Territories for the Sake of Peace", Moment, December 1993, pp. 34, 89; reprinted in my book Responsa in a Moment, Jerusalem, 2000, pp. 31-36.
- Daniel Polisar, "What do Palestinians Want?", mosaicmagazine.com November 2, 2015. This is one of the most eye-opening articles I have ever read about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- Jewish law very clearly requires both men and women to serve in a milhemet mitzvah, a commanded war, which the Rambam defines as a war "to defend Israel against an enemy which attacks them". See Numbers 32; Deuteronomy 20:1-9; Mishnah Sotah 8:7, Maimonides, Laws of Kings 5:1 and 7:4; Robert Harris and Reuven Hammer in Teshuvot Vaad Hahalakhah Shel Knesset Harabbanim B'yisrael, Vol. 2 (5747), pp. 61-71, also available at reponsaofortoday.com (Hebrew and English summaries). Since all of Israel's wars have been wars of self-defense, all Jews, both men and women, are required to serve in the IDF. Jewish law also requires Jews to work and not study Torah at the expense of the community. See, for example, Avot 1:10, 2:2, 4:5; Berakhot 35b, Maimonides, Commentary to Avot 4:5 and Laws of Torah Study 3:10-11; Shulhan Arukh Orah Hayyim 156:1 and Yoreh Deah 246:21 in the Rema.
- Yitz Greenberg, "Smotrich's Religious Zionist Party is Becoming Anti-Zionist", The Jerusalem Post, January 6, 2023. Jerusalem Post
- See, for example, David Golinkin, "Wanted: a Jewish Education Revolution in the State of Israel", Insight Israel: The View from Schechter, second series, Jerusalem, 2006, Chapter 24, also available at schechter.edu

- David Golinkin, “Why the State of Israel Should Abolish the Chief Rabbinate”, The Jerusalem Report, December 16, 2013, pp. 6-7; reprinted in my book Responsa in a Moment, Volume III, Jerusalem, 2014, pp. 27-31, also available at schechter.edu
- David Golinkin, “The Proposed ‘Judicial Revolution’ in Israel: What Can we Learn from our Sources?”, available at schechter.edu; also appeared in an abbreviated form in The Jerusalem Post, March 7, 2023.
- See my video: <https://schechter.edu/israel-needs-to-unify-lessons-for-todays-state-of-israel-from-the-bible-and-rabbis/>

David Golinkin is President of The Schechter Institutes, Inc. and President Emeritus of the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies. For twenty years he served as Chair of the Va’ad Halakhah (Law Committee) of the Rabbinical Assembly which gives halakhic guidance to the Masorti Movement in Israel. He is the founder and director of the Institute of Applied Halakhah at Schechter and also directs the Center for Women in Jewish Law. Rabbi Professor Golinkin made aliyah in 1972, earning a BA in Jewish History and two teaching certificates from The Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He received an MA in Rabbinics and a PhD in Talmud from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America where he was also ordained as Rabbi. For a complete bio click [here](#).