



THE SIX HUNDRED FIFTY WORDS THAT CONSOLIDATED THE TWO THOUSAND YEARS OF LONGED-FOR DREAM

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Seventy years have passed since the incredible text that changed the course of the lives of the Jewish people, a text with which David Ben Gurion made history in only twenty minutes, ending so many years of exile. Previous days, however, were not simple. Arduous discussions took place among the "Assembly of Representatives" on whether or not to declare the independence of the impending Jewish State, and not less important, over what had to be said in this long-awaited moment. The discussion ended when Ben Gurion decided to go home with the text and make his own corrections. The following day, 5 of Iyar, 5708 on 13:45, the Jewish National Council's members met at the headquarters of Keren Kayemet L'Israel in Tel Aviv, and after much deliberation, finally approved the historical text. That same day, at 16:00 in the main hall of the Tel Aviv Museum, David Ben Gurion read the document that established the State of Israel. This proclamation provides biblical, historical and judicial explanations of the right of existence of a sovereign state in the Land of Israel for the Jewish people, as well as its relation toward citizenship.

"Megilat HaAtzmaut" (The Declaration of Independence) thus became one of the most important documents for Israel and the Jewish people; hence, it is essential for every chaver of Hanoar Hatzioni to be familiar with it. Therefore, I would like to raise in this article several issues that are presented in the Declaration of Independence and relate them to the ideological document of our Tnua, the Darkenu.

ISRAEL, THE NATIONAL HOME OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

The Declaration of Independence of Israel declares that, "The State of Israel will be open to Jewish immigration and the Ingathering of Exiles". In addition, it also appeals to the Jewish people throughout the diaspora "to join forces with us in immigration and construction."

As a Tnua "we consider the Aliyah to Israel to be the broadest and most profound material expression of Judaism and Zionism. The reasons that lead an individual to decide regarding his Aliya are diverse: education, economic situation, politics, personal security, etc. Medinat Israel was established as the national home of every Jew by the mere fact of being Jewish, regardless of the cause that led to his Aliya. Yet for us, the noblest cause for Aliya is the educational and ideological process which provokes an individual identification with the Zionist idea: the Hagshama Atzmit." (Darkenu, pp. 13-14).

ISRAEL, A COUNTRY WHICH PROMOTES EQUAL RIGHTS

Through this proclamation, the State of Israel commits to grant and respect the rights of minorities, granting full social equality to all its citizens. There are several minority groups within the "Jewish majority" (e.g., Ethiopians, Latin Americans, etc.) and within the non-Jewish sector (e.g., Israeli-Arabs, Muslims, Christians, Bedouins, Druze, etc.).



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It is worth mentioning that the Israeli society has lately been joined by foreign workers and refugees who, despite not having Israeli citizenship, impact the social dynamics in Israel significantly. While Israel attempts to grant them rights, there are protests by those groups claiming that there is still a large gap between the goal of achieving full equality with their fellow Jewish citizens and the reality in which they live. Unfortunately, even after seventy years, the serious problems of integration and marginalization are a common denominator among these minority groups.

As a Tnua, "the democratic system of government is the one which reflects our ideas and values. These values guide us to fight for equal rights for all of the citizens of the country, without distinction to belief, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, economic situation or intellectual or physical abilities. Therefore, we aspire for a tolerant society, free from injustices committed against its different groups." (Darkenu, p. 16).

ISRAEL AND THE PEACE WITH OUR ARAB NEIGHBORS

An integral part of the declaration is the call for peace with our Arab Neighbors: "We extend our hand to all neighboring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighborliness and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its land. The State of Israel is prepared to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East." Here we can clearly see how the State commits and offers an agreement of peace and good neighborliness with all the neighboring Arab countries.

Likewise, we chaverim of Hanoar Hatzioni seek to achieve this longed-for peace, not only due to the importance that this value has, but also because we believe that this peace "will serve as a guarantee for the security of the Israeli citizens while allowing the preservation of human rights."

ISRAEL, A JEWISH AND DEMOCRATIC STATE

The State of Israel must be Jewish and democratic as this document suggests. While this may sound like a simple task, the wide variety of ethnic groups within the Israeli society have led to the constant debate regarding what should be the character and the image of our country, especially in relation to these two central elements. For this reason, these ethnic groups have created different formulas where the levels of presence of these elements vary according to their worldview and values. A few examples are: "Halachic State"ⁱ, "National Cultural State"ⁱⁱ, "National Religious State"ⁱⁱⁱ, "The Jewish People's State"^{iv}, "Jewish State"^v and "a State of all its Citizens"^{vi}.

In Hanoar Hatzioni we believe that, "Based on the fundamental idea of Israel as the national home of the Jewish people, and considering the values stated in The Declaration of Independence, the state will have two fundamental foundations: Jewish and democratic. These foundations are of equal importance and represent the set of values and Jewish legacy. We believe that Israel must preserve its Jewish character since this is the reason for its creation and existence. Israel is where Jewish life is developed as a norm, based on the Hebrew calendar, the use of Ivrit as the official language and the Shabbat as the weekly day of rest.



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Some of our laws are contemplated in the spirit of our millenary creation as a people, as well as the national symbols. Moreover, we demand that the country ensure freedom of religion to all of its citizens. Based on our humanist perception, we consider that religious belief is subject to the discretion of each citizen. Considering the unique situation of the Jewish people and our faith in the democratic regime, we consider the separation of religion and state essential – two important spheres which should act separately." (Darkenu, pp. 16-17).

IN CONCLUSION

Seven decades ago, in 1948, the words expressed by David Ben Gurion formalized the return of our people to our historic homeland as a sovereign state. Judaism began that day, what we know as the Israelocentric stage: Israel became the material, national, spiritual and cultural center of the Jewish people.

Yom HaAtzmaut is an incredible opportunity in the Tnua, to rethink aspects of the past, relate and face them with the present and set new challenges for the future as a Jewish and Zionist youth movement. Let us make the most of it!

Yom Huledet Sameach Medinat Israel! L'chaim to these seventy years and those to come!

ⁱ "Halachic State" supports a theocratic state based on the Torah and Jewish religious laws. The Jewish citizens of the state must fulfill the mitzvot and disagree with the idea of a democratic system of government

ⁱⁱ This "National Cultural State" suggests a state whose character is based on the Jewish culture and heritage, a secular Zionist state with a Jewish majority. It advocates a complete separation between religion and state with modern and democratic laws. Based on this position, Judaism would be reflected through the state's national symbols and educational contents, leaving the fulfillment of biblical precept to the individual's discretion.

ⁱⁱⁱ The "National Religious State" is a more moderate idea of a Jewish state in which the laws of the Torah are the foundation. It considers the linking between democracy and religion possible. According to this position, rabbinic laws will be the central ones, but full social equality will be granted to all the state's citizens.

^{iv} "The Jewish People's State" refers to the State of Israel as a spiritual center that will spread culture to all the Jewish communities. For this, an essential connection with the Jewish diaspora must be developed, integrating and helping every Jew who is interested in building his life in Israel. The Knesset must consider the needs of the Jewish communities when defining state laws.

^v According to "Jewish State", Israel must have a Jewish majority. It opposes the idea of influencing and encouraging the concept of Aliyah within the Jewish world; those who want to live in Israel will be protected by the Law of Return. The foundations of this state would be democracy and secularism, with equal rights to all the citizens. It considers religion an individual choice.

^{vi} According to "a State of all its Citizens", the state is a political entity and is detached from the concepts of nation and religion. It offers full democracy for all the state's citizens. It believes that Zionism has already fulfilled its objective with the state's independence but that, from that moment, the country belongs to its inhabitants. It does not encourage Aliyah and advocates a Binational State.