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# Facilitator Guide

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JEWISH  
NATIONAL  
FUND

*Your Voice in Israel*

## **FACILITATOR GUIDE**

On April 19<sup>th</sup> 2018, ה' באייר, we celebrated the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel.

This year we travel back in time, to the magical moment of the establishment of the State of Israel, when David Ben-Gurion read Israel's Declaration of Independence (or as we will refer to it in this program in translation from Hebrew "the Independence Megillah", or "The Megillah") in Independence Hall in Tel Aviv. By reading this declaration aloud to the world, David Ben-Gurion spoke the State of Israel into existence.

The Megillah establishes the foundation for the guiding principles and values of the State of Israel. The Megillah provides us with many insights into:

- The history of the Jewish people and their connection to the land of Israel
- The character of a Jewish and Democratic state
- The relationship between the Jewish people and the Arab people
- The connection between the Jewish people who live in Israel and those living in the Diaspora.

In this program we are going to use the Megillah as a platform to talk about the vision of the State of Israel, and connect it to our values in a way that will be relevant to our participant's lives.

We hope that you will find this program meaningful, topical, and interesting for you and your participants.

## **PROGRAM**

This is a text-based interactive program designed to engage participants with meaningful conversation surrounding the values of the State of Israel. We have divided the Declaration of Independence into 6 sections based on themes the authors wove throughout the text.

Each section has three questions on the back: the first is factual to ensure the participants have understood the text, while the second and third questions delve into the more philosophical aspects of the text.

We have also included pictures to accompany each section both to help guide the conversation, and to provide opportunities for those who learn better visually.

## **YOUR KIT INCLUDES**

1. Israel's Declaration of Independence divided into 6 puzzle pieces. On one side we will have the text of the declaration itself and on the other side are guiding questions to serve as launching points for discussions.
2. 18 photos (3 photos for each section of text and the photos are numbered with their corresponding section).

3. 5 posters of the original Megillah.
4. This facilitator guide INCLUDING:
  - a. The full text of the Megillah for the facilitator's reference.
  - b. The amazing story of the declaration's history and why it almost didn't arrive in time!

## **FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Start with a short explanation about Israel's Declaration of Independence and its background (please see page 12 of this guide).
2. Show a 3-minute video of the miraculous moment when David Ben-Gurion read the declaration aloud. (There are several versions available on YouTube).
3. Divide the class into 6 small groups. Each group receives a piece of the puzzle with the text in English on one side, questions on the back, as well as the corresponding photographs (3 photographs for each section and the photos are numbered to match the section).
4. Each group will have a period of time to read the paragraph of the Megillah that they received and discuss the guiding questions and the meaning of the inspirational photographs.
5. Bring the 6 groups together and ask each group to present their paragraph and their main thoughts about it.
6. Close the discussion and show the following video:  
<https://vimeo.com/246119994>
7. Gather the class together to sign the poster of the Megillat Ha'atzmaut (in Hebrew) and hang it in the class. You may want to read the text in Hebrew aloud and then read the English translation. (We sent you 5 posters of the Megillah in Hebrew to be signed by the participants, in order to enable you to repeat this program in different classes).
8. We highly recommend that when celebrating Yom Ha'atzmaut in your school, synagogue or community, that you include a ceremony where you read aloud sections of the Megillah- thereby starting a new Jewish ritual of reading Megillat Ha'atzmaut on Yom Ha'atzmaut.

## **SUGGESTED TIMELINE**

Assuming a 45 - 60 minute class we suggest the following timeline:

- 5 Minutes: Introduction and video.
- 10-15 Minutes: Discussion in small groups.
- 25 Minutes: Each group shares their paragraph.
- 5 Minutes: Facilitator Wrap Up.

## **MAIN THEMES AND GUIDING QUESTIONS**

For your reference, below you will find the questions for each section of the Declaration of Independence, as well as some additional information that may be helpful.

## SECTION 1

The first paragraph describes the historical and spiritual connection of the Jewish people to the land of Israel. The students should use this paragraph to discuss their personal connection to Israel.

Here are the questions that the students have on the back of the puzzle piece:

1. Based on the first two paragraphs, what connections do the Jewish people have with the land of Israel?
2. Do you personally connect with any of these elements?
3. If you could list one thing that connects you to Israel, what would it be?

These are the inspirational photographs the group received:



Questions for additional class discussion:

- How can you identify with the types of connections that David Ben-Gurion describes?
- Do you have family in Israel?
- Have you ever visited Israel?
- Do you care about Israel?
- Are you involved with Israel activities?
- Why do Jews pray facing east?
- What things in your daily lives are connected to Israel? For example, reading the bible, learning Torah stories, using Israeli products (technology), watching Israeli tv shows, etc.

## SECTION 2

The second paragraph speaks about the beginning of the Zionist movement with Theodore Herzl, the Balfour Declaration, and the Holocaust.

Here are the questions that the students have on the back of the puzzle piece:

1. What is the connection between the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel?
2. How do you think the Holocaust should impact our ethical and moral values in terms of the way we treat others?
3. Considering our history as victims of persecution, should Israel have a moral or ethical obligation to help others who are in similar situations?



Those are the inspirational photographs the group received:



Questions for additional class discussion:

We would like the students to discuss the connection between the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel.

- Is there a connection between the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel?
- Would we have the State of Israel if the Holocaust had not occurred?
- Does the fact that Jews were a minority that were often persecuted affect the way we help other minorities?

## SECTION 3

In this paragraph Ben-Gurion added two additional justifications that give the Jewish people the right to have their own state (in addition to the spiritual and historical connection). The first was that the Holocaust survivors who came to Israel after the war greatly contributed as part of the Jewish effort to fight the Nazis, and second was the recognition of a Jewish State from the world through a vote at the UN.

Based on all these rights, Ben-Gurion declared the State of Israel.

Here are the questions that the students have on the back of the puzzle piece:

1. According to these paragraphs, what gives the Jewish people the right to have their own state?
2. What does it mean to be a “master of our own fate” in Israel?
3. Do the Jewish people need to live in Israel to be “masters of their own fate?”

Those are the inspirational photographs the group received:



Questions for additional class discussion:

- When else in history were people not the “master of their own fate?” (e.g. African Americans during slavery, etc).
- Are the Jewish people required to live in Israel in order to be “masters of their own fate?”

- What does that mean for our community living in the United States?
- Are we masters of our own fate? If so how? If not, why not? What do we have to do in order to be “masters of our own fate?”

## SECTION 4

This paragraph speaks about Israel’s values and vision and describes its character as a democratic and a Jewish state.

Here are the questions that the students have on the back of the puzzle piece:

1. What are the values that the state of Israel is based upon?
2. Is there anything that surprised you reading this paragraph?  
Is there anything that you would add to this paragraph?
3. Given this paragraph, is the State of Israel a Jewish state, or a democratic state?  
Can it be both?

Those are the inspirational photographs the group received:



Questions for additional class discussion:

- When you read this paragraph, how would you describe the character of Israel?
- Do you see conflicts in the text? (The word democracy is not there, but the ideas of democracy are there.)
- Is there a contradiction between a Jewish and a democratic state? (To answer this question, look at the symbols and flag of Israel. The flag and the seal of the state of Israel are inherently Jewish symbols, the flag is based on the traditional Tallit, and the seal of the state of Israel is the Menorah.)
- How should Israel balance between being a Jewish and a democratic state? Can you give examples of conflicts between these two ideas (being a Jewish state, being a democratic state)? What do you think should be the balance? (e.g. public transportation running on Shabbat, shops open on Shabbat, the Law of Return that allows any Jew to make Aliyah, etc.)

## SECTION 5

This paragraph speaks about the State of Israel striving for peace. Israel called for peace for the Arab residents of the State of Israel and for the Arab countries around Israel.

Here are the questions that the students have on the back of the puzzle piece:

1. What kind of different calls for peace are in these paragraphs? What was unique about Israel's circumstances at the moment of declaration that required them to call for peace?
2. How do you think that Israel can share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East?
3. What does it mean to be part of "the family of nations?"

Those are the inspirational photographs the group received:



Topics for additional class discussion:

- We have to remember that David Ben-Gurion read this document in the middle of the struggle for independence that started right after 11/29/47 (the vote for partition of the land into two states at the United Nations).
- Having just resolved World War II, the US was afraid the Declaration of Independence for Israel shall provoke a new war.

## SECTION 6

This paragraph speaks about the relationship between the Jewish people living in Israel and those living in the diaspora.

Here are the questions that the students have on the back of the puzzle piece:

1. What does it mean to "rally"?
2. Do you feel that you personally fulfill this appeal?
3. How would you like to see yourself rally around Israel?

Those are the inspirational photographs the group received:



Questions for additional class discussion:

- How do you interpret the words: "Rally" and "Stand by us?"
- Can one criticize Israel and still rally behind her? Do you feel that there is illegitimate criticism of Israel? Why does David Ben-Gurion invites Jews who don't live in Israel to be involved in Israeli society? Should Jewish people living in the diaspora rally and be involved with Israel? If so, why? If not, why not?

## **WRAP UP**

After discussing these questions in small groups each group will present their own paragraph and share the discussions that they had. The facilitator can chose to further the discussion using the discussion questions above.

Close the discussion by showing the video mentioned on page 3 and gather the class to sign the poster of Megillat Ha'atzmaut (in Hebrew) and hang it in the class.

Below you will find the entire text of the Declaration of Independence. Following the text itself you will find the amazing story of why the declaration itself almost didn't make it to Ben-Gurion in time.



# Declaration of the Establishment of THE STATE OF ISRAEL

14<sup>th</sup> May, 1948

## 1

ERETZ-ISRAEL [The Land of Israel] was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.

After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their Dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom.

Impelled by this historic and traditional attachment, Jews strove in every successive generation to re-establish themselves in their ancient homeland. In recent decades they returned in their masses. Pioneers, ma'pilim (Immigrants coming to Eretz-Israel in defiance of restrictive legislation) and defenders, they made deserts bloom, revived the Hebrew language, built villages and towns, and created a thriving community controlling its own economy and culture, loving peace but knowing how to defend itself, bringing the blessings of progress to all the country's inhabitants, and aspiring towards independent nationhood.

## 2

In the year 5657 (1897), at the summons of the spiritual father of the Jewish State, Theodor Herzl, the First Zionist Congress convened and proclaimed the right of the Jewish people to national rebirth in its own country.

This right was recognized in the Balfour Declaration of the 2nd November, 1917, and re-affirmed in the Mandate of the League of Nations which, in particular, gave international sanction to the historic connection between the Jewish people and Eretz-Israel and to the right of the Jewish people to rebuild its National Home.

The catastrophe which recently befell the Jewish people—the massacre of millions of Jews in Europe—was another clear demonstration of the urgency of solving the problem of its homelessness by re-establishing in Eretz-Israel the Jewish State, which would open the gates of the homeland wide to every Jew and confer upon the Jewish people the status of a fully privileged member of the community of nations.

## 3

Survivors of the Nazi holocaust in Europe, as well as Jews from other parts of the world, continued to migrate to Eretz-Israel, undaunted by difficulties, restrictions and dangers, and never ceased to assert their right to a life of dignity, freedom and honest toil in their national homeland.



In the Second World War, the Jewish community of this country contributed its full share to the struggle of the freedom- and peace-loving nations against the forces of Nazi wickedness and, by the blood of its soldiers and its war effort, gained the right to be reckoned among the peoples who founded the United Nations.

On the 29th November 1947, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz-Israel; the General Assembly required the inhabitants of Eretz-Israel to take such steps as were necessary on their part for the implementation of that resolution. This recognition by the United Nations of the right of the Jewish people to establish their State is irrevocable.

This right is the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State.

**ACCORDINGLY WE, MEMBERS OF THE PEOPLE'S COUNCIL, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF ERETZ-ISRAEL AND OF THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT, ARE HERE ASSEMBLED ON THE DAY OF THE TERMINATION OF THE BRITISH MANDATE OVER ERETZ-ISRAEL AND, BY VIRTUE OF OUR NATURAL AND HISTORIC RIGHT AND ON THE STRENGTH OF THE RESOLUTION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, HEREBY DECLARE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A JEWISH STATE IN ERETZ-ISRAEL, TO BE KNOWN AS THE STATE OF ISRAEL.**

**WE DECLARE** that, with effect from the moment of the termination of the Mandate being tonight, the eve of Sabbath, the 6th Iyar, 5708 (15th May, 1948), until the establishment of the elected, regular authorities of the State in accordance with the Constitution which shall be adopted by the Elected Constituent Assembly not later than the 1st October 1948, the People's Council shall act as a Provisional Council of State, and its executive organ, the People's Administration, shall be the Provisional Government of the Jewish State, to be called "Israel."

## **4**

**THE STATE OF ISRAEL** will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

**THE STATE OF ISRAEL** is prepared to cooperate with the agencies and representatives of the United Nations in implementing the resolution of the General Assembly of the 29th November 1947, and will take steps to bring about the economic union of the whole of Eretz-Israel.



## 5

WE APPEAL to the United Nations to assist the Jewish people in the building-up of its State and to receive the State of Israel into the community of nations.

WE APPEAL—in the very midst of the onslaught launched against us now for months—to the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve peace and participate in the upbuilding of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions.

WE EXTEND our hand to all neighbouring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighbourliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land. The State of Israel is prepared to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East.

## 6

WE APPEAL to the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora to rally round the Jews of Eretz-Israel in the tasks of immigration and upbuilding and to stand by them in the great struggle for the realization of the age-old dream—the redemption of Israel.

PLACING OUR TRUST IN THE “ROCK OF ISRAEL” WE AFFIX OUR SIGNATURES TO THIS PROCLAMATION AT THIS SESSION OF THE PROVISIONAL COUNCIL OF STATE, ON THE SOIL OF THE HOMELAND, IN THE CITY OF TEL-AVIV, ON THIS SABBATH EVE  
*THE 5TH DAY OF IYAR, 5708 (14TH MAY 1948).*

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## STORY OF THE WRITING OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

A few weeks before the end of the British Mandate over Israel, David Ben-Gurion asked Mordechai Boehm, a junior lawyer, to take on the task of formulating the Declaration of Independence. Early drafts of the Declaration had been composed in Jerusalem but had been lost due to the blockade during the War of Independence. Boehm had no idea how to start. His relative suggested that he consult with a Jew named Shalom Zvi Davidovich, who lived on a nearby street. Davidovich, also known as Rabbi Davidovich, was a unique and multi-faceted intellectual. He began his studies as a yeshiva student in Lithuania, then immigrated to the US and became a Conservative Rabbi, and in addition earned a Ph.D. in the humanities. This encounter between the secular Israeli attorney and the religious American intellectual produced the first draft of the Israeli Declaration of Independence, one inspired by the American Declaration of Independence.

On Wednesday May 12, only 3 days before the expiration of the British Mandate, Ben-Gurion and his colleagues decided that in two days, on May 14, they shall establish the state of Israel, by declaring its independence. They had only 48 hours to finalize its text, have it approved by the leadership group called "Minhelet Ha-am", and to prepare a suitable place for the ceremony – thus, a hectic race began. New carpets were brought to what is known today as the Independence Hall. Huge flags were found and washed. Secret telegrams were sent to VIP guests, etc.

On Friday, May 14<sup>th</sup> at 1:45 pm, the group of leaders, who would soon become the temporary government, met at KKL-JNF's house in Tel Aviv to approve the Declaration. After a short debate and some corrections, they approved the Declaration only one hour before the ceremony was about to begin. At this point, while the temporary government left in a convoy, heading to the independence hall, Ben-Gurion's assistants stayed at JNF's house to make those last corrections to the final version of the scroll. At 3:40 p.m., 20 minutes before the beginning of the ceremony, they left the office and realized that they forgot to order a taxi for themselves. They ran out onto Dizengoff Street but couldn't find a cab. They saw a policeman and shared their problem with him. The policeman jumped in to the middle of the street, stopped a car and commanded the driver to take them to the independence hall. The driver argued that he is in a hurry because he wants to get home in due time to hear the Declaration over the radio. At this point, they pulled out the scroll from their bag, showed it to the driver and warned him that he shall hear nothing unless he brings them to the hall. Immediately the driver took them to the place, and so, in the true Israeli spirit of improvising at the last-minute, David Ben-Gurion received the Megillah into his hands less than one minute before he stood up to address the world.