

## Thanksgiving Prayer for the State of Israel's Independence Day

*"Only in Israel and nowhere else is the injunction to remember felt as  
a religious imperative to an entire people"*

*-Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi*

As the State of Israel ages, and its birth as well as its birth narrative stray from the grasp of the primary witnesses and sources, it may come to pass that this modern holiday will join the ranks of others (such as Purim, Hanukah and Pesah) whose simple understanding has been overtaken by shortened romantic narratives perpetuated by the voices of the believers and the upholders of ceremonial rites. Yom Ha'atzmaut provides a unique and wonderful opportunity to create and experiment with our own practice, ritual and texts. Here are two alternative versions of the Al HaNissim prayer written specifically for Yom Ha'atzmaut.



**ARZA\* ארצה**

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על הנסים ועל הפְּרָקָן ועל הגְּבוּרוֹת ועל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת ועל הַנְּחֻמּוֹת ועל הַמְּלַחְמוֹת שְׁעָשִׂיתָ לָנוּ בְּזֶמֶן הַזֶּה. ביום ה' באייר חמשת אלפים תש"ח למניין שאנו מונים לבריאת העולם, בעת ההכרזה על הקמת מדינת ישראל, זכה עם ישראל לריבונות על אדמתם ולשליטה על גורלם. על נס הקמת מדינה יהודית באשר היא ראשית צמיחת גאולתינו. מדינה זו באה מתוך קשר היסטורי ומסורתי זה חתרו היהודים בכל דור לשוב ולהאחז במולדתם העתיקה. ובדורות האחרונים שבו לארצם בהמונים, וחלוצים, מעפילים ומגינים הפריחו שממות, החיו שפתם העברית, בנו כפרים וערים, והקימו ישוב גדל והולך השולט על משקו ותרבותו, שוכר שלום ומגן על עצמו, מביא ברכת הקידמה לכל תושבי הארץ ונושא נפשו לעצמאות ממלכתית. זה יום עשה יהוה נגילה ונשמחה בו כשנאמר: "וְלִקְחֹתִי אֶתְכֶם מִן הַגּוֹיִם וְקִבַּצְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִכָּל הָאֲרָצוֹת וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל אֶדְמַתְכֶם" (יחזקאל לו, כד) וְלַעֲמֹד יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲשִׂיתָ תְּשׁוּעָה גְּדוּלָה וּפְרָקָן כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה, הַדְּבָרָתְ עַמִּים תַּחֲנֹנוּ וְלְאֻמִּים תַּחַת רַגְלֵנוּ, וְנִתְּנָה לָנוּ אֶת נַחְלָתֵנוּ אֲשֶׁר תִּיקָרָא "מְדִינַת יִשְׂרָאֵל". ולפי כך מדינה זו תהא פתוחה לעליה יהודית ולקיבוץ גלויות; תשקוד על פיתוח הארץ לטובת כל תושביה; תהא מושתתה על יסודות החירות, הצדק והשלום לאור חזונם של נביאי ישראל; תקיים שוויון זכויות חברתי ומדיני גמור לכל אזרחיה בלי הבדל דת, גזע ומין; תבטיח חופש דת, מצפון, לשון, חינוך ותרבות; תשמור על המקומות הקדושים של כל הדתות. יהי-שְׁלוֹם בְּחֵילֶךָ שְׁלוֹהַ בְּאַרְמְנוֹתֶיךָ.

- הרב יהושע ויינברג

**We thank you for the miracles, for the redemption, for the mighty deeds and saving acts brought about by You, and for the wars which You waged for us in this time.**

On the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Iyar 5708, at the moment of declaration of the establishment of the State of Israel, the People of Israel gained sovereignty on its land and control over its destiny. The miracle of the establishment of a Jewish State is the first flowering of our redemption. The State arrives through a strong historical and traditional connection as Jews through each generation strived to return and stand firm on their ancient homeland. In recent generations they have returned to their land en masse as pioneers, clandestine immigrants, and defenders, they made the deserts bloom, revived their ancient Hebrew language, built towns and cities, and established a growing community in control over its own culture and economy. Born is a nation that seeks peace, defends itself, and brings the blessing of progress to all of its citizens. This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it! As it is written: *"For I will take you from among the nations, and gather you out of all the countries, and will bring you into your own land."* (Ezekiel 36:24). And to your people Israel you provided salvation and relief to this day, You helped us to overcome nations and marched us over peoples, and delivered our inheritance which is now the State of Israel. "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." *"Peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces"* (Ps.122).

-Rabbi Joshua Weinberg

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## **Commentary and Explanation:**

In this 'Al HaNissim' the author begins the narrative on the actual day being celebrated and uses part of the prayer to describe what transpired on that fateful day. The decision to do so was an attempt to give a clear historical account written in the style of other such documents. Here, we hear the echo of traditional ketubah language as well as Rav Kook's well known statement that the State of Israel will be the first flowering of our redemption. From there the author goes on to emphasize the historical connection that the Jewish people have with the land, as paralleled in "traditional" versions, and brings the story to the forefront in recognizing the modern return to the land during the early state period. The author then weaves in two important Jewish canonical texts, one from the book of Ezekiel which precedes the well-known vision of the dry bones, and the other from Israel's Declaration of Independence, read and signed on Independence Day. The goal here is to clearly articulate our past and connection to this land, to celebrate this day by marking a significant turning point in our national and collective identity, and to emphasize more than the traditional notion that "God helped us triumph over our enemies seeking our destruction:" we are here for a purpose and that is to continue the work of building a Jewish and Democratic state with clear values. Despite the fact that our day of national independence was entrenched in warfare, our prayers emphasize our dream for peace.

**ARZA \* ארצה**

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מלכת הנסים והפרקן, מלך הגבורות והתשועות, שכינת הנחמות אלוהי המלחמות,  
חלקנו בך וחלקך בנו: בנות אברהם ושרה, בני אברהם והגר, בנות ישמעאל, בני יצחק ורבקה  
אל נָא תְהִי מְרִיבָה בֵּינֵי וּבֵינֵיהֶם וּבֵין רְעֵי וּבֵין רְעֵיהֶם כִּי אֲנָשִׁים אַחִים אֲנַחְנוּ (בראשית, יג', ח')

חיינו תלויים באותה אדמה, את מתינו קברנו באותה מלחמה.  
ארץ זבת חלב ודבש, בראת, ארץ עופרת, דם ואש,  
מכל טוב הארץ ומכל טובי וטובות הארץ הבאנו לך ביכורים, תְּדַשִּׁים לְבָבְךָ (איכה, ג, כג)  
כָּל-מִשְׁפָּרֶיךָ וְגִלְיָהּ, עָלַי עֲבְרוּ. (יונה, ב, ד), בהתעטף עלינו נפשנו את ה' זכרנו ותבוא אליך תפילתנו אל היכל  
קדשך (יונה, ד, ח)

אלוהי הטוב והשפע, שכינת האהבה והחמלה, מלך השלווה והרחמים, מלכת הבינה והדעת  
את שנתת באברהם נשמה, שידעה לכרות ברית שלום עם אבימלך, באר מים חיים  
תני בנו שקט, הזרימי בנו נהרות שלווה, תן בנו את התבונה לסלוח ולבקש סליחה,  
למדי אותנו לחמול, הזכר לנו כי יש ביכולתנו לעשות ניסים,  
חזקי בנו את הידיעה שאנחנו אחים,  
טול קורה מבין עינינו והראה לנו את הדרך להתיר את פקעת המשקעים,  
למען נוכל לטהר ליבנו באהבתך, לחדש, לתקן ולהבריא אדמתך.  
- הרבה יעל קריא – תשע"ב

### **Queen of miracles and salvation, King of mighty deeds and deliverances, Divine spirit of comfort and war,**

Parts of us are in you and parts of you are in us: daughters of Abraham and Sarah, sons of  
Abraham and Hagar, daughters of Ishmael, sons of Isaac and Rebecca. *“Let there be no strife, I  
pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we are  
brethren.”* (Genesis 13:8) Our lives are dependent on the same land, and we have buried our  
dead in the same war. A land flowing with milk and honey You have created, a land of lead,  
blood and fire, from the good produce of the land and from all the good people of the land we  
have brought You our first fruits ‘*anew every morning*’ (Lamen. 3:23). *All Your waves and Your  
billows passed over me* (Jonah 2:4) - we wrap ourselves around you, remember us and our  
prayers will come to you in your holy shrine. God of goodness and bounty, Divine spirit of love  
and compassion, King of serenity and mercy, Queen of understanding and knowledge, you gave  
Abraham a soul that knew to make a covenant of peace with Avimelech, a well of living waters.  
Give us quiet, flow through us the rivers of serenity, give us the insight to forgive and to ask  
forgiveness, teach us to be compassionate, remind us that we have the ability to make miracles,  
strengthen our awareness that we are siblings, remove the splinter from our eyes and show us the  
way to untangle our knots so that we can purify our hearts with your love, to renew, to fix and to  
heal your land.

- Rabbi Yael Karrie

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## **Commentary and Explanation:**

In this 'Al HaNissim' the author begins with an egalitarian connection to our biblical ancestors, naming the ancestors who solved the problem of sharing the land in Biblical times. This prayer is offered as a spiritual expression of yearning and hope for Israel to overcome her tenuous entanglement with her neighbors and to live in a state of peace, with everyone enjoying the fruits of the land and its living waters. Here is a wish to be introspective and reflective and to take the opportunity of Independence Day to offers words, thoughts and supplications towards the future of Israel and strengthen our desire and determination to co-exist peacefully with our neighbors.

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