We Hereby Declare!
Israel’s Declaration of Independence: the Birth of a Jewish and Democratic State

On May 15\textsuperscript{th}, 1948, just a few hours after the last soldier of the British Mandate left the shores of the country, six months after the UN passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a Jewish state, 57 years after the first aliyah, the first wave of Zionist Jewish immigrants arrived in Palestine, 41 years after the Balfour declaration recognized the right of a Jewish homeland in Israel, only a few short years after the near destruction of European Jewry, and thousands of years in the making, Israel declared its independence as a modern Jewish state in a small and modest building on Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv. David Ben Gurion, the soon to be Prime Minister of Israel, surrounded by other prominent Zionist leaders gathered in a room while half the city of Tel Aviv awaited outside, and declared Israel a state, all while what would be known as the 1948 War of Independence raged throughout Israel.

The document that Ben Gurion read on that day, Israel’s Declaration of Independence, serves to this day as the basis of Israeli law and government. It draws on the long standing connection of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel and addresses the most fundamental questions of Zionist and Jewish values, while balancing them with democratic principles, a challenge that preoccupies Israeli democracy to this day.

In the absence of a written constitution, Israeli society and Israeli law rely on the Declaration of Independence as the source for the basic principles of the state.

What can we learn about Israel from this short but extremely significant document, and how does Israel find the delicate balance today between upholding Jewish values, serving as the homeland of all Jewish people around the world, and maintaining its status as a democracy? In studying the Israeli Declaration of Independence, one can learn about the history of the country, while examining the day to day challenges of attempting to maintain a Jewish and Democratic nation state.

We invite you and your students to study this unique document, in celebration and commemoration of the 66\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of Israel’s Declaration of Independence.

\textbf{Objective:} Familiarize students with Israel’s fundamental foundation document and discuss the challenge of maintaining the nature of Israel as both Jewish and Democratic, while maintaining its status as the homeland of the Jewish people worldwide.

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Process:

I. **Introduction to Declaration of Independence and Historical Context**

   - Provide students with a short historical background to the events leading to Israel’s Declaration of Independence. This can be as basic as the information provided in our introduction, or you can provide your own background based on your students’ familiarity with the subject.
   
   - Read through the full text of the Declaration of Independence. (This would be a good time to show any of the youtube links provided as well)

II. **Breaking down the themes**

   - We chose excerpts from the Declaration that highlight three specific themes in the document:

     1. Establishment/statement of the Jewish People’s connection to the Land of Israel.
     2. Israel as a Jewish AND Democratic state
     3. A call for peace with Israel’s neighbors from the day of Israel’s inception!

   For each of the following sections, you can use the excerpts and discussion points provided to create a dialogue about the text and what it means for Israel and the Jewish people today.
A. The Jewish Connection to the State of Israel

Relevant passages:

1. Eretz-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.

2. 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.

4. In the year 5657 (1897), at the summons of the spiritual father of the Jewish State, Theodore 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.

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.

On the 29th November, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz-Israel.

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.

Discussion questions/topics:

- When did the connection of the Jewish People and the Land of Israel begin?
- Do we consider the Bible a clear historic resource, a cultural/mythological resource or a combination of the two? Does either choice make our people’s relationship with the Jewish homeland more or less valid?
- What are the main reasons for the founding of the State of Israel: The Bible, Jewish (proven) history, anti-Semitism, Zionism, the Hebrew language (and its revival), the Holocaust, the UN resolution (11/29/1947), victory in wars, the Declaration of Independence?
B. Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State

*Before delving into this issue, it may be a good idea to briefly go over what it means to be a “nation state,” what does it mean when we say that Israel is the “nation state of the Jewish people”.

- Miriam Webster definition: *a form of political organization in which a group of people who share the same history, traditions, or language live in a particular area under one government.*
- Discussion question: Based on this definition, do you believe Israel is a nation state?
- Are there other nation states besides Israel?
  - Yes, the majority of European countries are considered nation states, i.e. **France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Lithuania, the Ukraine...**
- Beyond defining itself as the Jewish nation state, Israel is also a **Democracy**. The definition of democracy is: *a form of government in which all eligible citizens participate equally—either directly or indirectly through elected representatives—in the proposal, development, and creation of laws. It encompasses social, religious, cultural, ethnic and racial equality, justice, liberty and fraternity.*
- Lead in questions based on the principles of nation state and democracy: If Israel is the nation state of the Jewish people, what does that mean for its minority populations? Within the Jewish State, does the minority population receive equal and free democratic rights?
- Looking back at the Declaration of Independence, where do we find reference to the above questions? Is anything missing? Did our founding fathers not think of any significant issues that eventually surfaced?
- In order to address these questions, use the following relevant excerpt from the Declaration of Independence:

> 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.

Possible discussion points and questions:
- What does it say about Israel that this section is included in its Declaration of Independence?
- Is there a contradiction in being both a Jewish and Democratic country?
- If so, where do you think these two characteristics might conflict?
  - This is a good opportunity to bring up current issues in Israeli society (depending on where the discussion goes), such as national holidays, Israeli citizenship, who is required to serve in the army, marriage laws in Israel, etc.
  - For example: discuss the relationship between the ruling majority and minorities in a democratic society and the heavy responsibility that the stronger party has over the weaker on. Israel’s national anthem “Hatikvah” can be used as an example for
this point. If Israel is truly a democracy, should a more neutral national anthem be chosen? (See Hatikvah lyrics on PowerPoint)

- Additional example: What should Shabbat look like in a Jewish state? In a democracy?

C. A Call for Peace
In declaring itself a nation state, Israel also called for peace with its neighbors, neighbors who at the time were fighting a war against them. As mentioned before, the Declaration has served as the guidelines for Israeli society and government, and the following passage is found in this framework document.

Relevant passages:

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 up building 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 neighboring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good Neighborliness.

Possible discussion points and questions:
- Was anything NOT said in regard to Israel’s true aspiration for peace in the Declaration?
- Imagine the following scenario: the Palestinians also declare statehood on that same day (of the British Mandate’s end)...
- What if the Arab nations had accepted the UN resolution of a two-state solution on November 29th 1947 (כ”ט בנובמבר)...
- Had the above occurred, the State of Israel would have been significantly smaller. Would Israel have fought the Arabs (Palestinians and several other Arab nations) to try and conquer additional land? Should it have?
בארץ - ישראל קם העם היהודי. בה עזכבה דמותו הרוחנית, הדתית והמדינתית, בה היא קומתה. בה צרו הטרדות לאומית וככל-אנושיות והוריש לולע ובלא ספר הספרי הנחית. לאחר שהוגלה העם מארצו בכוח הזרוע שמר לה אמונים בכל ארצות פזוריו, ולא חדל מתפילה ומתקוה לשוב לארצו ולחבר בתוכה את חירותו המדינית. מתוך קשר היסטורי ומסורתי זה חתרו היהודים בכל דור לשוב ולהאחז במולדתם העתיקה; ובדורות האחרונים שב אלארץ בבומרים, חלוצים, מעפילים ומנהיגים התרחבו, החיו שמות חורבן, ויוצרו כפריםiros, והקימו יישוב של חולות התרבות, שחרר שמלת עולם על עצו, מביא בכרד הקידמה לכל תושבי הhetto ופושעל עלامة פלמחית.

בשנת תרנ"ז (1897) התכנס הקונגרס הציוני בסן קריאט של הונהח הדינה ואתונה התאודור

הזרך תכתיים על זכותיה היהודית, לlässigה לאומית לאורנים. בת הוגה החזון, תיאודור הרצל, והכריז על זכות העם היהודי לתקומה לאומית בארצו. זכות זו הוכרזה בהצהרת בלפור מיי ב בנובמבר 1917. ואושרה בהצהרת邦מלט� כון הקינון של הגיה הדינית העולמית את העם היהודי, לנ sağlamak העם היהודי להקים מדינתו הדינית העולמית. שארית השטוקה על עם ישראל בין בוחר הרוח, ה Brideyard ובחרה בין מתיבי יריון ביביוב, הת铨ית את הנכון לשבע מתיבי יריון, מיסור המולדת העולמית ד"י יחידי הדינה.

בשנת תרנ"ז, נשאה השדולה על עם ישראל בין בוחר הרוח, נושאת חברת בר ימית, שב לוחם בין בוחר הרוח, כיון שארתי התרבות בין עילית לארץ. ישראל, על אץ כל קושי, מהתעכון, ולא פסוק לשבע את דרכו של צד, חירץ עצו,سير במאז עד עומד.

בחלו התעלה השתייה הרמ יישוב העב, באר מאיות של עצוב ממאתיה בחוריני ארצות אתחרת לא חזר על עופי לארץ.

ושלחו נגospel תרשה התא, ובדו יהודים המאצואת המלותי医务人员 לא תחך לבר vídeos העב על העומד.

ב-29 בנובמבר 1947 קיבלה ארצות האומות המאוחדות החלת המפתח החמימה הקת מmite ישראל.

ישראל: הערצה את רבה, ואת כל העב, ואת צד עם התא, שב עניין הסיגourney של מדינה insensitive נתייג בן הלכת, הקח את גורלו, אנה נתנש לטרקוע.

וזי צוות העביע על עם היהוד, להלך כל עב עם עצו, שברע אותו Cộngiji הריבה.

לפיור בדיתא, אנכי מתעב עם, צייג יישוב העב, מחייתו הרצועה, בינו עם המדברי

הבריתי על ארץ-ישראל, ובחוקות שהעב עב הקפתו診כיר הניסיון של יסוד הולכת צור אומנות.
המאותשנים אונכים מכרימים בעד הקמת מדינת יהודית בארץ ישראל, היא מדינת ישראל.

אנו קובעים שהחל מרגע סיום המנדט הלילה, אורל שובל ו'אייר תשח', 7 במאי 1948, ועד ליום עלייה במזרח ערב שבת ו'אייר תשח', 29 באוקטובר 1948 - פועלו מתוועדים רבים الأيام ומותם המוכננים הבוחרים אל אוריון מ-1 באנטונבור - על מועצת העם כמועצת מדינה זמנית, ומושב הביצוע שלוה, מנחת-عزם, יזוהו ואית המשלחת המונית של המדינה היהודית, בראש ייקרא בתים ישראלי.

מדינת ישראל היא פותחת עליה יהודית וחלובית כליה; משקוף על פנים הא彧 לתוכה Atlantis. התא מתإستת על יושבי היהודים, תודר והלך高档 שבעים שיבא ישראל; חקם שישו זכויות בחרתי זמני גבית לכל ארגוןים של מדינה זמנית, ובשנים הפרשי, ממשל, שולח, יח保護זום.

המשמר על המ㎞ונות הקדשיות של כל מדינה; והכרה אמונת על הקדושה של מגילות התא במדינת ישראל.

המשמורות: ד раствор ישראלาะ מתועזת על право על העצמאות וה 안יה mạchית של המדינות המאוחדות בבעלות התא הצreadystatechangeים של ישראל-ישראל.

בשָּׁלוֹמָה.

אנו קוראים לאומות המאוחדות לתלות יד לעם יהודי בין מדינותolk במדינת ישראל לתוך

משתף העם.

אנו קוראום - בג' בחטף-בדמי הנקראים על⇧ו זה והישר יישר שעון על ישראל-ישראל על שם יהודים הבכירים מהמדינת ישראל מוכנה להקמת מדינת ישראל-ישראל על שושל ושלאו של BUILD.

מתיאמה של כל מדינת ישראל-ישראל, הושרט והקהובים עמוד התא הקדום

אנו מוסיפים די食べる והשקט לכל המדינות המאוחדות וה_voidה,

וזהו על השעשוע ו𝓪חשה במדינת ישראל-ישראל מהטרות החלוקה של מדינת ישראל-ישראל, madonna.sin

וחרוון בין כל יהודים הבכירים והשקט של מדינת ישראל-ישראל, madonna.sin

הגרדול על הגשה שהודר את מדינת ישראל-ישראל.

מתא בוחטר בוזר ישראלי להשקט בחתימת יד לעה על הכרה זו, במשוב יועץ המדינת

הздоров, על אמת המלדלバリ-האיבי, היה זה, עבר שבת, הז יאיר, תשח', 14 באוקטובר 1948.


לאר, עזרה, מאירי-הל Serialization, הז'אבק, ז'אבק-ז'אבק, פיליס רוזנבליט, ז'אבק, ברל-פון, מרדכי שטרן, בן-

יינו שטרנברג, בערי-achi, משה שפריר, משה שפריר.
ERETZ-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 remained faithful to 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.

In the year 5657 (1897), at the summons of the spiritual father of the Jewish State, Theodore 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 comity of nations.

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.


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”.

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.

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 comity 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 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 own land. The State of Israel is prepared to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East.

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.


Hatikva

As long as in the heart, within,
A Jewish soul still yearns,
And onward, towards the ends of the east,
An eye still gazes toward Zion;
Our hope is not yet lost,
The hope of two thousand years,
To be a free people in our land,
The land of Zion and Jerusalem.

Hatikva Transliteration

Kol ‘od balleivav penimah
Nefesh yehudi homiyah,
Ul(e)fa’atei mizrach kadimah,
‘Ayin letziyon tzofiyah;
‘Od lo avdah tikvateinu,
Hatikvah bat shnot alpayim,
Lihyot ‘am chofshi be’artzeinu,
Eretz-tziyon (v)’Y(e)rushalayim.