

Prayer for the State of Israel

אָבִינוּ שְׁבַשְׁמַיִם  
צוֹר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְגוֹאֲלוֹ  
בְּרַךְ אֶת מְדִינַת יִשְׂרָאֵל  
[שְׁתֵּהא]

*“Avinu she-ba-shamayim, stronghold and redeemer of the people Israel: Bless the State of Israel, [that it may be] the beginning of our redemption.”*

Siddur Lev Shalem, The Rabbinical Assembly, 2016

According to margin notes in Siddur Lev Shalem (page 178), “Upon Israel’s independence in 1948, many prayers were circulated for the well-being of the new state. This one was composed by Israel’s chief rabbis and was then slightly edited by the writer S. Y. Agnon.

שְׁתֵּהא [*she-t’hei - that it may be*] This Hebrew word was added by the Chief Rabbi of England, Immanuel Jakobovitz, turning the phrase ‘the beginning of the redemption’ into an expression of hope, rather than a statement of fact.”

Imagine being in Israel on the day statehood was declared - exhilaration, exuberance, singing and dancing in the streets.

Meanwhile, in Warsaw, Vienna, New York, Bulgaria, Washington, DC, Prague, Rome, Johannesburg, Buenos Aires, London, Chicago, Amsterdam, Montreal, Boston, Detroit and every place in the world where Jews lived – we celebrated the new State of Israel with special services, massive Salute to Israel rallies, flying the Israeli flag, singing and dancing.

How similar to our escape from Egypt, crossing the Sea of Reeds, singing and dancing, praising God for redeeming us, for rescuing us from slavery.

With the addition of one word, Rabbi Jakobovitz changed the prayer for Israel from the present to the future, to *atid*. The chief rabbi of the England, representing all of us in the Diaspora, prayed and hoped that the State of Israel will be our redemption as we continue to pray today.

- 1) Why was it so important for Rabbi Jakobovitz to add one word, to pray for Israel in the future tense?
- 2) In what ways did the creation of the State of Israel redeem us, rescue us?
- 3) Should this prayer reflect a belief that the State of Israel has saved us or should this prayer reflect a belief that we hope for God’s redemption in the future?

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