

# ISRAEL REPORT

To provide greater exposure to primary Israeli news sources and opinions in order to become better informed on the issues, and to gain a better understanding of the wide range of perspectives that exist in Israeli society and politics.  
Issue 1102 • April 20, 2018 • Yom Ha'atzmaut 5778

## ISRAEL'S POPULATION TOPS 8.8 MILLION AHEAD OF 70TH ANNIVERSARY (Israel Hayom 4/18/18)

The population of Israel is now 8.842 million people, a tenfold increase since the state's establishment, according to a report published by the Central Bureau of Statistics ahead of the Jewish state's 70th Independence Day.

According to the report, 805,000 people lived in Israel in 1948. At the state's centennial in 2048, the population is expected to reach 15.2 million.

The data showed that Israel's population comprises 6.589 million Jews residents (74.5% of the total), 1.849 million Arabs (20.9%) and 404,000 (4.6%) others: non-Arab Christians, people of other religions and people unaffiliated with any religion.

Over the past year, the population has grown by 163,000, or 1.9%, the report said. During this period, 177,000 babies were born, 28,000 people made aliyah, and 41,000 people died.

The report noted that in 1949 there were 500 communities in Israel, which grew to 1,214 by 2016. Today some 44% of Israelis live in the nation's 16 largest cities. Jerusalem is the country's largest city, with 882,000 residents. The remaining 15 – Ashdod, Beersheba, Givatayim, Hadera, Haifa, Herzliya, Holon, Kfar Saba, Netanya, Petach Tikva, Raanana, Ramat Gan, Rehovot, Rishon Lezion, and Tel Aviv – each has more than 100,000 people.

## INDEPENDENCE IS BEING ABLE TO DEFEND OURSELVES, NETANYAHU SAYS AS ISRAEL MARKS 70 (Ha'aretz 4/18/18)

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke at Israel's official Independence Day ceremony Wednesday evening, marking the end of Memorial Day and the beginning of the celebrations of Israel's 70th year, and praised the country as a beacon of light. Meanwhile, President Rivlin took the opportunity to thank the U.S. for recognizing Jerusalem.

"All other nations who have faced exile have fallen apart – but only the Jewish people refused to disappear and to integrate and never gave up the dream of returning to Zion," Netanyahu said. Using the metaphor of the menorah, the main symbol on Israel's emblem, Netanyahu said that there are those today who still wish "to extinguish our menorah's light."

He vowed that Israel will defend itself in the face of those wishing to destroy it, saying "independence is being able to defend ourselves... I salute you," Netanyahu said to Israeli soldiers.

Netanyahu said Israel is a home to a diverse community of Jews, but also Muslims. He also thanked U.S. President Trump for recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

President Reuven Rivlin also praised the country, saying "we must remember how lucky we are to be the generation that returned to Zion. The generation that saw Jerusalem rebuilt. This year, our greatest ally, the U.S., recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital. We are certain that more and more nations will recognize Jerusalem as well and join the U.S.," he said

Netanyahu issued a veiled warning to Iran, saying his country will defend itself against anyone that tries to harm it. The premier's remarks at a Memorial Day ceremony on Wednesday come amid rising tensions between Israel and Iran over an alleged Israeli airstrike in Syria last week that left at least four Iranian military personnel dead.

On Wednesday, Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei called for "offensive plans against the enemy," without specifically naming Israel.

Netanyahu says Israel will stand firm against "continued incitement by our neighbors, many of whom refuse to come to terms with our existence," and cautions that "anyone who raises a hand against us won't be spared."

Netanyahu's remarks were delivered just hours before Israel celebrates its 70th anniversary.

## PENCE: WE STAND WITH ISRAEL ON THIS HISTORIC DAY (Arutz-7 INN.com 4/19/18)

U.S. Vice President Mike Pence congratulated Israel on Wednesday on the occasion of its 70th Independence Day.

"Today we join our great ally Israel as they celebrate their 70th Anniversary of Independence. The miracle of Israel's rebirth in her historic homeland is an inspiration to the world and the American people are proud to stand with Israel on this historic day and every day," tweeted Pence.

Earlier, President Donald Trump congratulated the State of Israel as well.

"Best wishes to Prime Minister Netanyahu and all of the people of Israel on the 70th Anniversary of your Great Independence. We have no better friends anywhere. Looking forward to moving our Embassy to Jerusalem next month!" he wrote on Twitter.

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu thanked Trump, writing, "We too have no better friend than America. We are greatly looking forward to your moving the embassy to Jerusalem, Israel's eternal capital."

## GAZA PROTESTS TO MOVE CLOSER TO BORDER WITH ISRAEL (Times of Israel 4/18/18)

The encampments set up in the Gaza Strip as part of the so-called March of Return protest will be moved 50 meters closer to the border with Israel, the organizers of the mass demonstrations announced on Wednesday.

The National Forum for the March of Return, one of several Palestinian groups behind the weekly demonstrations, said that the decision came to "affirm our right to return" — a reference to the Palestinian demand that Israel

Israel Report is a Student Publication of

## Torah Academy of Bergen County

Alex Ostrin, Yoav Zolty, Editors-in-Chief

Akiva Sturm, Eli Jarashov, Ezra Sepowitz and Bentzion Rotblat, Editors

We are proud to be distributed by these institutions, though they do not necessarily support or condone any of the material published:

Anshei Chesed Cong., Boynton Beach, FL	Hillel at Brandeis University
Bergen County High School of Jewish Studies	Hillel at California State University - Long Beach
Boca Raton Synagogue, FL	Hillel at Columbia University
Carmel School, Hong Kong	Hillel at Johns Hopkins University
Cong. Agudath Achim, Bradley Beach, NJ	Hillel at Yale University
Cong. Ahavas Achim, Highland Park, NJ	Hillel High School, Deal NJ
Cong. Ahavath Achim, Fairfield, CT	Jewish Center of Teaneck, NJ
Cong. Anshe Shalom, Jamaica Estates, NY	Kehillas Bais Yehudah Tzvi, Cedarhurst, NY
Cong. Anshe Shalom, New Rochelle, NY	Kemp Mill Synagogue, Silver Spring, MD
Cong. Beth Aaron, Teaneck, NJ	Mizrachi Shul, Johannesburg, SA
Cong. Beth Shalom, Monroe Twp, NJ	North Shore Hebrew Academy HS, NY
Cong. Bnai Yeshurun, Teaneck, NJ	Suburban Torah Center, Livingston, NJ
Cong. Etz Ahaim, Highland Park, NJ	The Learning Shul, Columbia, SC
Cong. Ohr Torah, Edison, NJ	Woodsburgh, NY Minyan
Cong. Rinat Yisrael, Teaneck, NJ	Young Israel Bet Tefilah of Aberdeen, NJ
Cong. Shomrei Torah, Fair Lawn, NJ	Young Israel of Brookline, MA
Cong. Sons of Israel, Allentown, PA	Young Israel of East Brunswick, NJ
Cong. Zichron Mordechai, Teaneck, NJ	Young Israel of Fort Lee, NJ
Cong. Zichron R. M. Feinstein, Brooklyn, NY	Young Israel of Hancock Park, CA
Delray Orthodox Synagogue, Delray Beach, FL	Young Israel of Holliswood, NY
East Denver Orthodox Synagogue, CO	Young Israel of Houston, TX
Flatbush Park Jewish Center, Mill Basin, NY	Young Israel of New Hyde Park, NY
Harvard University Library	Young Israel of North Woodmere, NY
Hebrew Academy of Long Beach, NY	Young Israel of New Rochelle, NY
Hillel at Baruch College	Young Israel of Sharon, MA

YI Shomrai Emunah, Silver Spring, MD

We encourage our readers to subscribe to our sources on the internet. For more information or to subscribe by e-mail, reach us at [IsraelReport@tabc.org](mailto:IsraelReport@tabc.org)



allow tens of thousands of refugees and their millions of descendants to return to their former homes inside Israel, a demand that would mean the end of Israel as a majority Jewish state.

The decision also came in the context of the Palestinians' effort to thwart US President Donald Trump's yet-to-be-announced peace plan and end the Israeli blockade on the Gaza Strip. (Israel says it maintains the blockade to prevent Gaza's terrorist ruler Hamas, which seeks to destroy it, from importing weaponry.)

Egypt has reportedly been exerting pressure on Hamas and other Palestinian groups to halt the mass protests. The Egyptians, according to reports, have expressed fear that the demonstrations could spin out of control and ignite another war between Hamas and Israel.

On Friday, at least 10,000 Gazans took part in large-scale demonstrations, with the Israeli military saying some protesters hurled an explosive device and firebombs at Israeli troops deployed at the border, as well as making "several attempts" to damage the fence and cross over into Israeli territory. A week earlier, about 20,000 Palestinians took part in the demonstrations, with the previous week attracting an estimated 30,000.

### **ISRAEL WELCOMES THE HONDURAN DECISION TO MOVE ITS EMBASSY TO JERUSALEM (MFA, 4/13/18)**

The State of Israel welcomes the decision of the Honduran Congress to support the transfer of the Honduran embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. The decision was passed by a huge majority of Congress.

### **ISRAEL 'STRUCK ADVANCED IRANIAN AIR-DEFENSE SYSTEM' IN SYRIA (Ha'aretz, 4/18/18)**

The Israeli military targeted an advanced Iranian air-defense system at the T4 base in Syria last week and not just attack drone deployment, the Wall Street Journal reported Wednesday.

The report noted that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the strike after conferring with U.S. President Donald Trump, in hopes of preventing Iran from using the anti-aircraft battery against Israeli jets carrying out strikes in Syria.

Haaretz previously reported that the strike apparently targeted armaments aside from the drones, which could have reduced the Israel Air Force's freedom of operation in Syrian airspace.

Earlier this week, a senior Israeli military official admitted to New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman that Israel targeted T4, adding that "it was the first time we attacked live Iranian targets - both facilities and people."

According to the Wall Street Journal, Iran began bolstering air defenses following an escalation triggered by Iran sending an armed drone into Israeli airspace. Israel shot down the drone and retaliated with strikes in Syria, during which an Israeli F-16 war plane was downed.

The Israeli official told the New York Times that the incident "opened a new period," adding that "this is the first time we saw Iran do something against Israel - not by proxy."

The Wall Street Journal reported that Israel tracked an Iranian plane flying a Tor missile system from Tehran to T4 following the flare-up. The report notes that Israel moved quickly to destroy Iran's new defense system before it could be set up, citing intelligence officials.

Seven Iranian Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force members, including drone unit commander Colonel Mehdi Dehgan, were killed in the strikes on T4.

### **ISRAELI F-15s WON'T PARTICIPATE IN US EXERCISE DUE TO TENSIONS IN NORTH (YNet 4/18/18)**

The Israel Air Force's F-15 aircraft will not participate in the Red Flag exercise, which is set to take place next month in Alaska, because of the high tensions on the northern border in the face of the threat of Iranian reprisal for an attack on the T-4 air base in Syria, which has been attributed to Israel.

Other IAF aircraft, including aerial refuelers, will still take part in the exercise. Israel joined a previous Red Flag exercise two years ago, alongside Singapore and Jordan. Similar to the Blue Flag exercise, which Israel hosted last year, the exercise includes aerial combat scenarios against an "imaginary" enemy, dogfight simulations, air-to-ground attacks, and more.

Fourteen people were killed at the Iranian drone base at the T-4 military complex near Homs, according to the Syrian Center for Human Rights. The Iranian army has officially admitted that seven of its own military men were killed in the attack.

The Russian army claimed that two Israeli jets had carried out the attack, while Syria said the attack was carried out by Israeli F-15 fighters that launched a number of missiles from over Lebanese airspace.

The IDF is maintaining a high level of vigilance in the north, both in the air and on the ground, against any Iranian retaliation, including public and covert warnings Israel has been communicating to Tehran in recent days.

IDF bases on the northern border raised their threat level accordingly, out of fear of anti-tank rocket fire, terrorist infiltrations, or the use of explosive devices. Another significant possible scenario taken into consideration by the IDF is a barrage of rockets fired by the Iranians from Syria towards a large Israeli city.

### **KIBBUTZ LAUDS WINGED WARRIORS THAT HELPED WIN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE (Israel Hayom, 4/18/18)**

As Israel prepared for its 70th Independence Day celebrations, the cooing of pigeons filled the air once again in a secluded dovecot that was once part of a top-secret communications project during the 1948 War of Independence.

Back then, it housed carrier pigeons, which delivered critical messages from the battlefield to Israeli military headquarters after the new state declared independence and was attacked by the armies of Syria, Egypt, Jordan and others.

The recently restored dovecot in Kibbutz Givat Brenner is today an educational center devoted to the winged warriors.

"This is the only thing that was left, and we thought that this is a great place to tell the story," said Tal Ben Nun, of the Society for Preservation of Israel's Heritage Sites.

The Defense Ministry and the Prime Minister's office have allocated some 600,000 shekels (\$170,000) to restore the site. Kibbutz Givat Brenner, founded in 1928, lies between Ashdod and Tel Aviv, just north of where Egyptian forces reached after invading from the Sinai in 1948.

Lacking communication devices during the war, the Israeli forces relied on a clandestine network of 68 dovecots spread across the country, and ran "pigeoneer" courses for soldiers, Ben Nun said.

Counting, as did many armies before them, on the pigeons' ability to return to their home dovecot, the Israeli soldiers flew them from the heart of the battle carrying messages written mostly in Morse code.

"It was the only way to communicate, to receive news of what was going on with the troops - whether they succeeded or not, whether they were attacked, if they had wounded or dead, was there a need to send a vehicle to evacuate the wounded. It was all done through the pigeons," said veteran military pigeoneer Shaul Sapir, 90, who still gets emotional when he reminisces about his birds.

"They were nurtured, so much that ... a truck would be brought carrying food for the pigeons, while we remained very hungry," he said.

After being deserted for decades, the restored dovecot in Givat Brenner now houses 60 carrier pigeons, some of which are descendants of those who were there during the war. They are trained daily by volunteers.

"I think it is a duty, a duty, to all the youths and especially those who will be enlisted to the Israeli army's communication or intelligence units, to come and see how we started from nothing, with a pigeon, and what is reached today,

with satellites."

### **ALGORITHM TO FIND PHONY USERS ON MANY SOCIAL NETWORKS** (JPost, 4/17/18)

A new generic method to detect fake accounts on most types of social networks, including Facebook and Twitter, has been developed by researchers at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Beersheba and the University of Washington in Seattle.

According to a study just published in *Social Network Analysis and Mining*, the new method is based on the assumption that fake accounts tend to establish improbable links to other users in the networks.

"With recent disturbing news about failures to safeguard user privacy and targeted use of social media by Russia to influence elections, rooting out fake users has never been of greater importance," said Dima Kagan, lead researcher and a PhD student in BGU's software and information systems engineering department. "We tested our algorithm on simulated and real-world data sets on 10 different social networks, and it performed well on both."

The algorithm consists of two main iterations (repetitions) based on machine-learning algorithms. The first constructs a link prediction classifier that can estimate, with high accuracy, the probability of a link existing between two users. The second iteration generates a new set of meta-features based on the features created by the link prediction classifier. Lastly, the researchers used these meta-features and constructed a generic classifier that can detect fake profiles in a variety of online social networks.

"Overall, the results demonstrated that in a real-life friendship scenario, we can detect people who have the strongest friendship ties as well as malicious users, even on Twitter," the researchers said. "Our method outperforms other anomaly detection methods, and we believe that it has considerable potential for a wide range of applications, particularly in the cybersecurity arena."

The BGU researchers previously developed the Social Privacy Protector to help users evaluate their friends list in seconds to identify which have few or no mutual links and might be "fake" profiles.

### **INTEL CEO, AND 300 OF HIS DRONES, TO ATTEND ISRAEL'S INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATIONS** (Times of Israel, 4/17/18)

The chief executive officer of Intel Corp., Brian Krzanich, will join Israel for Wednesday night's celebrations of the 70th anniversary of its independence, which will include a special display of a fleet of 300 Intel drones staged for the state's official ceremony in Jerusalem.

"I am excited to be in Israel on Independence Day, in Jerusalem, and to participate in this exciting event," Krzanich said in a statement. "This year, in 2018, Intel marks its 50th anniversary and the State of Israel celebrates its 70th anniversary. This is a double and moving birthday."

As part of the show on Jerusalem's Mount Herzl, Intel's Shooting Star drones — quadcopters that integrate sensors, computing, communication and cloud technologies — will light up the Jerusalem skies with star-like images of the Star of David, the peace dove, the walls of Jerusalem and Theodor Herzl, along with music. The drones, which weigh just 330 grams each, are equipped with LED bulbs and are able create more than four billion color combinations.

Israel at 70 is notable for its technological prowess and Intel is "proud" to be represented in the official state celebration, where just one operator is in charge of flying the 300 drones, Yaniv Garty, the CEO of Intel Israel, said in the statement.

The Shooting Star drones have been showcased by Intel at other events abroad, including in the 71st Super Bowl and at Disney World.

Intel has been operating in Israel since 1974, and has invested some \$17 billion to date. The US semiconductor giant is also planning an additional \$5 billion investment through 2020, to expand a chip manufacturing plant in

Kiryat Gat. The firm employs some 11,000 workers in its manufacturing plant in Kiryat Gat and in its R&D centers in Jerusalem, Petah Tikva and Haifa. In addition, Intel employs some 1,000 workers at Mobileye, the Jerusalem-based auto technology firm that it acquired last year for a whopping \$15.3 billion.

"Intel connected itself to Israel decades ago, during which it has operated and invested heavily in Israel," Mobileye's CEO Amnon Shashua said in the statement. "Today it is taking another step in strengthening this connection through a spectacular show of drones that will showcase historical Israeli symbols."

In addition to Krzanich, who has flown in from the US especially for the event, a number of other Intel executives will take part in the Jerusalem ceremony.

### **NASA TO TEST ISRAELI-MADE ANTI-RADIATION VEST IN DEEP SPACE** (YNet, 4/17/18)

The Israel Space Agency (ISA) announced on Tuesday that it is entering an agreement with NASA to test a radiation suit manufactured by Israeli company StemRad Ltd. during a deep space mission. The agreement is scheduled to be signed at the 34th Space Symposium in Colorado.

Dubbed AstroRad, the vest-like suit, first adapted for female astronauts, protects vital body organs and tissues which are especially sensitive to radiation damage such as lungs, bone marrow, the large intestine, the chest and the ovaries, the agency said in a statement. According to the statement, the company hopes the results of the experiment will lead NASA to use the suit in future manned missions to space.

In 2015, StemRad partnered with American aerospace manufacturer Lockheed Martin, NASA's prime contractor for its deep space Orion capsule.

### **CELL DISCOVERY HOLDS OUT PROMISE FOR PARKINSON'S THERAPY** (Israel 21c, 4/12/18)

An Israeli-led international study featured on the cover of *The Journal of Neuroscience* in February, holds the promise of advancing the field of cell-replacement therapy for people with Parkinson's disease (PD).

PD, which affects millions of people worldwide, causes devastating motor symptoms due to a loss of dopamine-secreting brain cells (dopaminergic neurons). Although there is no cure for PD, its symptoms can be treated.

Over the past few years, scientists discovered that human stem cells can be differentiated into dopaminergic neurons for modeling of Parkinson's disease, drug screening and cell replacement therapy.

However, the yield of stem cell-derived dopaminergic neurons is low due to a poor understanding of the molecular mechanisms directing the embryonic development of dopaminergic neurons. This significantly limits the potential of cell-replacement therapy for PD.

In the new study, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev researchers discovered that proteins called BMP5/7 are essential for the embryonic development of dopaminergic neurons.

"Notably, we demonstrated that BMP5/7 robustly increase the differentiation of human-induced pluripotent and induced neural stem cells to dopaminergic neurons," said lead author Dr. Claude Brodski of the Department of Physiology and Cell Biology, Faculty of Health Sciences and the Zlotowski Center for Neuroscience.

"Taken together, our results provide critical information in order to more efficiently program stem cells to dopaminergic neurons, thus critically increasing graft outcome and reducing side effects after transplantation in cell-replacement therapies currently developed for Parkinson's disease," said Brodski.

The researchers also identified that the intracellular signaling protein SMAD1 plays a critical role in the process of dopaminergic neurons. Interestingly, SMAD1 is required for the development of substantia nigra neurons in particular, which are the brain cells that predominantly degenerate in patients

with PD.

The study was funded by the Israel Science Foundation and the United States-Israel Binational Science Foundation.

**IT'S GOOD TO LIVE FOR OUR COUNTRY** (Racheli Frenkel, YNet 4/17/18)  
 "So how do you feel on Memorial Day?" The question took me by complete surprise. It wasn't at all clear to me that I would play the game. The role of the bereaved family.

Memorial Day has hardly changed for me since the murder. Life has changed, and there are special days too—the birthday, the day of the kidnapping and the murder, the burial day—but my Memorial Day has hardly changed. I don't feel a stronger connection to this day now. It has always been my Memorial Day.

I once heard about a support group for parents who lost their children in a mass-casualty incident. At one point, they were asked what was on their horizon, what they wished for themselves now. One of the parents had the audacity to say, "My goal is that my family will have an even better life than before the disaster." Within the sea of pain in the group, this wish almost seems arrogant. The truth is that one can wonder and fail to understand, and one who is familiar with the burden of the yearning and the pain can doubt and question, but this aspiration is completely appropriate!

In fact, we know that happiness isn't the result of continuous pleasure, but of meaning, activity, gratitude, friendly relations and family ties. It doesn't happen on its own and it doesn't happen without a choice and effort, but we can definitely imagine the lineup of these elements of goodness building up and intensifying in the gentle mending processes that form after a disaster.

In one of her studies, sociologist Brené Brown asked dozens of people who had experienced bereavement what could be done for them. She repeatedly heard the following answer from the family members: When I see you cherish the blessings in your lives, it helps me heal. When you respect what you have, you respect what we have lost.

People don't yearn for the highlights of their life, and they don't even yearn for the events they won't get to experience with their loved one. They endlessly miss the ordinary days, the little moments they had almost despised.

Once, after an event focusing on "Brother's Keeper" (the IDF search operation to find kidnapped teens Naftali Frenkel, Gil-Ad Shaer and Eyal Yifrah), I was approached by a person I didn't know, who asked me: "Which one of you said that thing about the Priestly Blessing? I have to thank him."

I knew what he was talking about. The three teens' fathers were asked in a radio interview what they missed the most. Ofir, Gil-Ad's father, talked about the custom of letting the children gather under the talit during the Priestly Blessing and about Gil-Ad's painfully tangible absence in those moments.

The man standing in front of me wasn't referring to the heartbreaking aspect of that story, but to the celebration of life. He was given a gift—he always used to bless his own children that way, but those moments just passed by him. He nearly missed them. Now, he cherished them very much. They became moments of gratitude and magic. The essence of life. This applies to one's personal life and it applies to the entire society. The skill is to raise the price of the good, and in light of the price—to make life even better.

My Memorial Day has hardly changed. It has always been mine, ours, the closest thing to sanctity that can be created by a secular calendar. It has never been perceived as a gesture towards the bereaved family, as a show of respect and goodwill, a gesture towards the victim. It's coming together around the loss we are all experiencing. One doesn't have to lose a close relative, God forbid, to feel that this date is part of Israel's personal and familial calendar.

But our memorial days have never been a veneration of the dead. This isn't a culture of martyrs. We will always favor, appreciate and celebrate life over death. It is good to live for our country, it is good to live. It is good to raise the

price of life.

When we gather, with respect and yearning, around the names and faces we knew, it's not an addiction to pain. It's not a macabre day of mourning. It's a day of renewing the commitment, of reviving the alliance.

We mention our loved ones, the joy and the smiles, so they will keep living among us. Our mission is to make life here better, thanks to them. Their friendship is our challenge, their solidarity has become our responsibility: To incorporate the memory of love into caring, to incorporate the passion into respectful disagreements. To turn the self-sacrifice into further closeness, and to turn the memory into life.

**MUCH MORE THAN A SHELTER** (Nadav Shragai, Israel Hayom 4/18/18)

In the crawlspace of our national consciousness there lies, almost forgotten, a remark by Zionist visionary Theodor Herzl.

"Zionism is a return to Jewishness even before it is a return to the land of the Jews," he said.

But the opposite is how history wound up shaping reality: First we came back to our land, and built a state and a defense force. We are up to our ears in existential threats and in defending our lives. Building the internal identity of the State of Israel – of which the "Jewishness" Herzl spoke of is an integral part – was sidelined. We often become confused about the Jewish basis that is the foundation and the essence of the state, and its defense, which is only a tool.

There are too many people who too often, usually without noticing, treat Israel as if it is nothing more than a haven and speak only about defense among themselves and in the world. The phrase "land of destiny" has almost dropped out of use. It is not only a matter of semantics. The entire discourse about our rights to this land stems from those words.

Now, after 70 years of independence, is an appropriate time to start drawing a distinction between the "technical" question of how we defend our existence and the new-old question of why we are fighting to exist here, of all places. A milestone birthday is a good opportunity to re-teach our children that before this country became a shelter for refugees from pogroms and the Holocaust, it was a destination; that although we are here thanks to military might, we were here before that because we had a right to be. We should teach them that defense is a tool of unparalleled importance, but it is only a tool with which to implement our right to live here, and that the idea of "here" goes far beyond a birthplace. In every other country, being a mere birthplace is enough. But not in Israel, which rose up from the past. Without the religious-cultural and national-historic baggage that rests on the Jewish faith, we have no right to exist here, of all places.

To inculcate that understanding, we need a "consciousness of presence" that carries an obligation beyond the lyrics of the popular song, "I was born here, and so were my children."

Our personal and national past extends far beyond our own lives, so that even if the Jewish people live in their country in peace, and "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore," Zionism is far from completing its mission.



THE TERRIBLE COST OF INDEPENDENCE