

תפילה לשלום הארץ והמדינה — Prayer for the land and the state of Israel

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The traditional prayer for the state of Israel, more literally titled “A Prayer for Peace for the State”, was written in 1948 by the chief rabbis of what had up until then been Palestine, in a time when the state was under direct attack by the Arab armies. There was no distinction between peace, survival, and victory.

As I wrote at Israel’s 70th birthday, it is time to make such distinctions. Israel and the Jewish people live in a much more complex reality today, a democratic reality, where the triumph of one political party or set of goals can change the outlook for peace, and the possibility of justice. In our time, praying for peace for Israel must include praying for democracy, and for the rectification of Israel’s relationships with neighboring countries, and with the Palestinian people, and most of whom are in some way under Israel’s control.

This prayer assumes that the best reality for the Jewish state is also the best reality for all of her citizens and for everyone who lives “in the land,” no matter where they are in relation to the Green Line or Areas A, B and C.

Our father | Our source in heaven and on Earth,
Rock of Israel and its redeemer, bless the state of
Israel, so that she may become the beginning of the
flowering of our redemption.

אָבִינוּ | אִמְנֵנוּ שְׁבַשְׁמַיִם וּבְאֶרֶץ,
צוּר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְגוֹאֲלוֹ, בְּרַךְ אֶת מְדִינַת יִשְׂרָאֵל,
כְּדֵי שֶׁתְּהִי לְרֵאשִׁית צְמִיחַת גְּאֻלְתֵּנוּ.

Shield her with Your embrace of love and spread
over her Your sukkah-shelter of peace, and send
Your light and Your righteousness to her heads,
ministers, advisers, and to the nation that elects
them, and to her judges, may they be stalwart to
bring Justice, and strengthen the voice of those who
support democracy. Align them all with the spirit of
justice from You, as it says, Zion through justice
will be redeemed and her captives through
righteousness (Isaiah 1:27).

הִגֵּן עָלֶיהָ בְּאַבְרַת חֶסֶדְךָ, וּפָרַשׁ עָלֶיהָ סֶכֶת שְׁלוֹמְךָ,
וּשְׁלַח אוֹרְךָ וְצִדְקָךָ לְרֵאשִׁיּוֹת שְׂרָיָה וְיוֹעֲצֵיהָ
וּלְאֹם שְׂבוּחַר בָּם
וּלְשׁוֹפְטֵיהָ, שִׁיְהִיו אֵיטָנִים לְשֹׁפֵט צִדְקָךָ
וְתִזְקֶה קוֹל תּוֹמְכֵי הַדְּמוֹקְרַטְיָה.
תִּקַּן כָּלֵם בְּרוּת מִשֹּׁפֵט מִלְּקַנְיָה
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר “צִיּוֹן בְּמִשְׁפַּט תִּפְדָּה וְשָׂבִיָּה בְּצִדְקָה.”

Rescue all of Your land, from the Jordan River to
the sea, from the spilling of blood, and all of her
inhabitants, under every government, from haters
without and hatred within, and grant peace and
abundance in all the land, and secure calm to her
defenders, lasting joy to all her inhabitants, and true
hope for all her peoples. And let us say: Amen.

הַצֵּל נָא אֶת כָּל אֶרֶצְךָ בֵּין יַרְדֵּן לַיָּם מִשֹּׁפִיכוֹת דָּמִים
וְכָל הַיּוֹשְׁבִים בָּהּ תַּחַת כָּל שְׁלִטוֹן
מִשׁוֹנְאִים בְּחוּץ וּמִשֹּׂנְאָה בְּפִנִּים
וְנִתַּת שְׁלוֹם וְשִׁפְעַת בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ וְשְׁלוֹהָ לְמַגְנֵיהָ,
שֶׁמַּחַת עוֹלָם לְכָל יוֹשְׁבֵיהָ וְתַקְוָה טוֹבָה לְכָל עַמִּיהָ.
וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן.

Avinu | Om'neinu shebashamayim uva'aretz, Tzur Yisrael v'go'alo, bareikh et m'dinat Yisrael k'dei shet'hei l'reishit tz'michat g'ulateinu. Hagein aleha b'evrat chasdekha, ufros aleha sukot sh'lomekha, ush'lach orkha v'tzidkekha l'rosheha sareha v'yo'atzeha v'lal'om shebocher bam, ul'shofteha, sheyihyu eitanim lishpot Tzedek. Chazeik kol tomkhei hademokratiyah v'takein kulam b'ru'ach mishpat milfanecha, shene'emar, Tziyon b'mishpat tipadeh v'shaveha bitz'dakah. Hatzeil na et kol ar'tzekha bein yardein layam mish'fichut damim, v'khol hayoshvim bah, tachat kol shilton, mison'im bachutz umisin'ah bifnim, v'natata shalom v'shefa ba'aretz v'shalvah lim'gineha, simchat olam l'khol yoshveha v'tikvah tovah l'khol ameha. (Amen.)

Underlined and bold phrases are changed from the standard prayer for the state (which uses only half of the 1948 prayer).

What’s left out: “Strengthen the hands of those who defend the land...and crown them with the crown of victory.”

Why: This was the only phrase in the original prayer specifically for the IDF. If in a time of war we want to say a prayer for the soldiers, we should say the full *Mi Shebeirakh* prayer that already exists (<http://www.jr.co.il/prayers/hebrew-idf-prayer.htm>). In other times, such prayer is included in the phrase “grant secure calm (*shalvah*) to her defenders,” which can include everyone fighting for peace, justice, and security for the land and the state.

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צוּר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְגוֹאֲלוֹ, בְּרַח אֶת מְדִינַת יִשְׂרָאֵל,
כְּדֵי שֶׁתְּהֵא לְרֵאשִׁית צְמִיחַת גְּאֻלְתָּנוּ.

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וְשַׁלַּח אוֹרְךָ וְצַדִּיקְךָ לְרֵאשִׁיּוֹת שְׂרִיָּה וְיוֹעֲצֵיָהּ
וְלְלְאוֹם שְׁבוּחֶיךָ בָּם
וְלְשׁוֹפְטֵיָהּ, שִׁיְהִיו אֵיתָנִים לְשֹׁפֵט צֶדֶק
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Prayer for the land and state of Israel

Our father | Our source in heaven and on Earth, Rock of Israel and its redeemer, bless the state of Israel, so that she may become the beginning of the flowering of our redemption.

Shield her with Your embrace of love and spread over her Your sukkah-shelter of peace, and send Your light and Your righteousness to her heads, ministers, advisers, and to the nation that elects them, and to her judges, may they be stalwart to bring Justice, and strengthen the voice of those who support democracy. Align them all with the spirit of justice from You, as it says, *Zion through justice will be redeemed and her captives through righteousness* (Isa. 1:27).

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