



**Around the Shabbat Table**  
**Tazria / Metzora/ Yom Ha'atzmaut**  
**April 2006/Iyar 5766**

*This week's writer is Rabbi Steven Moskowitz, Rabbi, Jewish Congregation of Brookville*

**Shalom!**

**Introduction & Texts to Wrestle With**

On Wednesday, May 3rd, the Jewish people and the State of Israel will celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israel's Independence Day. This is a day we should celebrate and revel in. We are part of a small percentage of history's Jews who are blessed with a sovereign Jewish state. After 2,000 years we have been restored to the land of Israel.

On Shabbat discuss the blessings of the State of Israel. Discuss the ideas presented in the following quotes:

Abraham Joshua Heschel (the unparalleled modern American Jewish thinker and activist)

*For all who read the Hebrew Bible with biblical eyes the State of Israel is a solemn intimation of God's trace in history. It is not the fulfillment of the promise, it is not the answer to all the bitter issues. Its spiritual significance, however, is radiant. Ultimately the significance of history must be understood in terms of theology. It would be a distortion to reduce the meaning of Israel reborn to the necessity to deal with Jewish misery. It was above all the power of promise, the power of hope, that necessitated the resurrection of Israel....*

(Israel: An Echo of Eternity)

Rabbi David Hartman (contemporary Jewish philosopher)

*We will celebrate our people's new life and hopes in Jerusalem. In returning to Israel we reaffirmed our determination not to withdraw from history but to continue believing in the possibilities of a new future no matter how ambiguous, uncertain and precarious life is. In coming back to Israel we made a decision not to define our identity by our memories of suffering and victimization, but by the moral and spiritual aspirations of our tradition.*

("Israel, Judaism and Jewish Identity")

Yehuda Amichai (the great Israeli poet)

Once I sat on the steps by the gate at David's Tower, I placed my two heavy baskets at my side. A group of tourists was standing around their guide and I became their target marker. "You see that man with the baskets? Just right of his head there's an arch from the Roman period. Just right of his head." "But he's moving, he's moving!" I said to myself: redemption will come only if their guide tells them, "You see that arch from the Roman period? It's not important: but next to it, left and down a bit, there sits a man who's bought fruit and vegetables for his family.

("Tourists," Poems of Jerusalem)

## Psalm 126

Every Shabbat and holiday, and especially on this Yom Ha'atzmaut, we begin Birkat HaMazon with the words of King David:

*Shir Hamalot. B'shuv Adonai et shivat tzion, hayinu k'cholmim. Az y'malei s'chok pinu, ul'shoneinu rina, az yomru va-goyim, higidil Adonai la-asot im eyle. Higidil Adonai la-asot imanu, hayinu s'maychim.—When the Lord brought back the exiles to Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then shall they say among the nations, "Adonai has done great things for them!" Adonai will do great things for us and we shall rejoice.*"

Indeed Adonai has done great things for us. God has restored our hope. God has returned us to history. I wish you a "Chag Ha'atzmaut Samayach!"



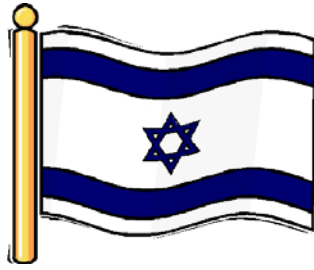
## **Questions for Your Family's Discussion**

1. What do you think Heschel meant when he wrote of the rebirth of Israel not being an “answer to all the bitter issues”?
  - a. What are the “bitter issues”?
  - b. How are they to be addressed in order to make the “promise” of Israel complete?
2. Hartman writes of how Israel calls Jews to define identity not by “memories of suffering and victimization, but by the moral and spiritual aspirations of our tradition”.
  - a. To what degree has this goal of redefining Jewish (and/or Israeli) identity been achieved?
  - b. Explain your response
3. Why does Amichai seem dismissive of the “arch from the Roman period” in Jerusalem?
4. Why is he more impressed by the “man who’s has bought fruit and vegetables”?
5. How does Amichai view the tourists to Israel?



## **Towards an Action Agenda**

1. Participate in a Yom Ha'atzmaut program and/or service in your community or synagogue.
2. Plan for an individual or family trip to Israel. Did you know that the vast majority of American Jews have never been to Israel? Be among those who DO experience Israel. If you're between the ages of 18 – 26 (or will be!), you may be eligible for an expense-paid Israel experience. Learn more at [Birthright Israel](#)
3. Subscribe to one of the e-mails lists of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations to learn about news of Israel on a regular basis. There is a general list, as well as two specialized lists for students. To learn more, go to [Presidents' Conference](#)



**Please join in sharing your thoughts and ideas with other families and subscribers by sending your responses to [RavADS@bjeny.org](mailto:RavADS@bjeny.org) . We'll post them to the list and to our website.**

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