
ISRAEL CD 1

1.

30 second intro. [Die hoffnung]

Segue to: Ben Gurion announces state, Hatikvah in background.

... The fifth of Iyar 5708. Fourteenth of May 1948. David ben Gurion proclaims the declaration of the state of Israel ...

The longest exile ever endured by a people was at an end. After almost two thousand years of homelessness, the Jewish people came home ...

It is a story without parallel in history, the story of the love of a people for a land, the love of Jews for Israel. There in ancient times our people was born, and there in modern times our people was reborn ...

Join me in a journey of music and words as we think of what Israel meant to more than a hundred generations of our ancestors and what it means to us. I've chosen some music that moves me; I hope some of it speaks to you. Many of the words are in Ivrit, and you'll find their translation in the accompanying booklet. And though the songs are varied, as the Jewish people is varied, one message runs through them all. Judaism was born in the hope of a land, and Israel is the Jewish land of hope.

Track 2: Theme music, Exodus [track 9, from 1.02 to 2.46, then fade]

3.

Israel always was a tiny country, home to a tiny people, yet what our ancestors achieved there transformed the spiritual horizon of humankind. It was there the prophets taught the worship of the one God whose children we are; there that Elijah spoke truth to power, Hosea told of God's love, and Amos of His justice; there that Micah said: What does God ask of you but to act justly and love mercy and walk humbly with your God. It was there that King David sang psalms, and his son Solomon built the Temple. And though the people often fell short of the high ideals to which God had summoned them, in generation after generation there arose visionary men and women who recalled the people to their destiny as a holy people in the holy land. Their teachings never died, and have the power to inspire us still. Here are words once sung in the Temple: *Ana Hashem*, 'Truly God, I am your servant, son of your handmaid; you have set me free from my chains'.

[118]

[Track 4: Ana Hashem, Eli Gerstner and the Chevra acapella]

5.

The journey to Israel was never easy.

At the very dawn of our history, almost as soon as Abraham arrived, he was forced by famine to leave.

Jacob and his family went into exile in Egypt, where, generations later, they were enslaved. In the days of Moses, the Israelites made the second great journey to the land. It should have taken a few weeks, but it lasted forty years, and Moses himself died without entering it. Centuries later, the Assyrians conquered the north, and then the Babylonians did the same to the south, destroying the Temple and taking many of the people captive.

It might have been the end of Jewish history.

But in words engraved on the Jewish soul ever since, Jews vowed never to forget where they came from, the place they called home. Though they no longer lived in the land, the land lived on in them. These were the words they said:

If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
 may my right hand forget its skill .
 May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth
 if I do not remember you,
 if I do not consider Jerusalem
 my highest joy.

[209 words]

Track 6: Im Eshkachech. Shimon Cramer

7.

Opening bars, Hasidah [0.00 to 0.53, fade]

The journey to Israel began four thousand years ago when one man heard a call: Leave your land, your birthplace and your father's house and go to the land that I will show you. Those were the first syllables of recorded Jewish time.

And in a way I find mysterious, even miraculous, Jews throughout history have heard the words calling to them, as they called to Abraham and Sarah, to leave their land, birthplace and father's house and journey to the land of Israel.

Few chapters in that story are more dramatic than that of the Jews of Ethiopia, Beta Yisrael. Separated from Jews elsewhere for some two thousand years, in the fourth century

they fled from attempts to convert them to Christianity, and settled in the hills of Gandor. They lived a tribal lifestyle. Many of them couldn't read or write. Yet they clung to their identity with awesome faith.

When violence broke out in Ethiopia in the 1980s, they began their journey back to Israel through the Sudan. It was dangerous and many died on the way. The voices you're about to hear are those of Ethiopian children who came to Israel. There they met an Israeli musician, Shlomo Gronich, who formed them into the Sheba choir, based on the tradition that Ethiopian Jews were descendants of Menelik 1st, the child of King Solomon and the queen of Sheba.

This unusual song, written by Shlomo Gronich, combines the sounds of Israel with those of Ethiopia, and it's based on an ancient tradition. Each year migrating storks fly over Ethiopia. The Hebrew for a stork is *hasidah*, and in Amharic, it's called *schimmele*.

Seeing the birds flying overhead, the Jewish children would sing them a song, 'Stork, stork, how is Jerusalem?' and they dreamt that they too would one day see the holy city. Listen to how, in our time, Jewish children from Africa heard the call that once summoned Abraham and Sarah, and they too left their land, their birthplace, and their father's house to make the Jewish journey to the Jewish land.

[344]

Track 8: Hasidah: complete song

9.

Jews returned from Babylon and rebuilt the Temple, but they were conquered again by the Greeks. In the days of the Maccabees they regained their independence, but it was short lived, and they came under the rule of Rome.

In year 66 of the Common Era they rebelled, hoping to repeat the victory of the Maccabees. But they were defeated, and for a second time the Temple was destroyed. They rebelled again in the days of Bar Kochba, and were defeated again.

So began the longest exile ever experienced by a people. For eighteen hundred years Jews were dispersed around the world, everywhere a minority, wandering from place to place in search of safety and a place to live. It was a history of terrible suffering, and it added new words to lexicon of tragedy: words like expulsion, disputation, forced conversion, inquisition, auto da fe, ghetto and pogrom.

And though they kept faith, there were times when they cried out from the depths of despair: *Elokim sheli*. My God, where are You? This is a song written around that cry, sung by Gad Elbaz.

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Track 10: Akavot be-chol: Gad Elbaz

11.

Never did the Jewish people leave Israel voluntarily, and there were places which they never left at all.

Throughout the Middle Ages, until modern times, when they could, they returned, as they had returned from Egypt and from Babylon.

Judah Halevi set sail to go there in 1140, though we don't know if he reached his destination.

Maimonides and his family went there in 1165, though they were unable to stay in a land ravaged by the Crusaders.

Nachmanides went in 1267 and revived the Jewish community in Jerusalem.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Jews came from Spain and Portugal, and the community in Zfat became a world centre of Jewish scholarship and mysticism.

In the seventeenth century they came from the Ukraine after the massacres on 1648.

In the eighteenth century, disciples of both the Baal Shem Tov, and the Vilna Gaon, made their way to the land. And in the nineteenth century, aliyah became not a pilgrimage of the few but a movement of the many.

Jews never relinquished the dream of return. Wherever they were, they prayed about Israel and facing Israel. The Jewish people was the circumference of a circle at whose centre was the holy land and Jerusalem the holy city. For centuries they lived suspended between memory and hope, sustained by the promise that one day God would bring them back.

Here is a song whose words were written in Zfat in the sixteenth century by the Jewish mystic, Rabbi Eliezer Azikri. It's one of the most beautiful poems in Hebrew literature, a song of the love between Israel and God, *Yedid nefesh*, Beloved of the soul.

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Track 12: Sam Glaser, Yedid nefesh.

13.

In 1799, in the midst of his Middle East campaign, Napoleon called on Jews to return to their land. And during the nineteenth century, the great age of European nationalism, others began to think that way too.

There were the religious Zionists: Rabbi Yehudah Alkalai and Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalisher, who read the mood of the age and heard within it a call to Jews to re-establish themselves as a nation in their own land.

There were Christian visionaries, statesmen like Lord Palmerston and Lord Shaftesbury, who felt likewise. In 1876, the Victorian writer George Eliot wrote one of the first Zionist novels, *Daniel Deronda*.

Then, a disturbing new phenomenon began to appear. The European Enlightenment was supposed to end the prejudices of the past, but it didn't. A new and deadly prejudice began to appear. In 1879 it was given a name: anti-Semitism.

And now a third voice began to be heard, from Judah Leib Pinsker after the 1881 pogroms in Russia, and Theodor Herzl after the Dreyfus trial in France in 1895, warning that Europe had become unsafe for Jews.

So an ancient dream and a contemporary nightmare came together, calling Jews back to the land of their beginnings, just as the prophet Isaiah had said 27 centuries earlier: 'In that day a great shofar will sound, and those who are perishing in exile will come and worship God on the holy mountain in Jerusalem' (Isaiah 27: 13).

Here are those words, sung by one of the great Jewish musicians of the twentieth century, the late Reb Shlomo Carlebach.

[260]

Track 14: Yerushalayim: Shlomo Carlebach (first 2.40 ... then fade)

15.

[Underneath: , Yitzhak Perlman; CD track

Then came 1933, and the rise to power of Hitler and the Nazis. No one who had read or heard his words could doubt the danger. Antisemitism was at the heart of his campaign, and laws against Jews among the very first of his acts.

Gradually, inexorably, Jews were deprived of their rights, their jobs, their freedoms; they were spoken of as lice, vermin, a cancer in the body of the German nation that had to be surgically removed.

A major humanitarian catastrophe was in the making and everyone knew it. In July 1938 political leaders throughout the world gathered in the French town of Evian to discuss ways of saving the Jews. None was forthcoming. Nation after nation shut its doors. Millions of Jews were in danger and there was nowhere they could go. On all the vast surface of the earth there was not one inch Jews could call home, in the sense given by the poet Robert Frost as the place where, when you have to go there, they have to let you in.

The next piece of music is a poem written by one the heroes of the twentieth century, Hannah Senesh, a young woman from Hungary who made aliyah in 1939, and in 1943 enlisted in the British army, where she was trained as a paratrooper for British Special Operations. In March 1944, she and two men were parachuted into Yugoslavia to help save the Jews of Hungary who were about to be deported to Auschwitz. When they landed they discovered that the Germans had already invaded Hungary. The two men called off the mission. But Hannah Senesh continued alone. She was arrested, tortured and executed by the Germans. She was 23 years old. This was one of the poems she left behind: *Keli, keli*:

My God, my God
may these things never end:
the sand and the sea,
the rush of the waters,

the crash of the heavens,
the prayer of man.

[328 words]

Track 16: Eli, eli: Shimon Cramer

17.

[Underneath: Yitzhak Perlman: theme tune from Shindler's List]

As the smoke of war cleared in 1945, as the Russians entered Auschwitz, and the British Bergen Belsen, slowly people began to understand the enormity of what had happened.

A third of world Jewry had gone up in flames. Entire worlds – the bustling Jewish townships of Eastern Europe, the Talmudic academies, the courts of the Jewish mystics, the Yiddish speaking masses, the urbane Jews of Austria and Germany, the Jews of Poland who had lived among their gentile neighbours for eight hundred years, the legendary synagogues and houses of study – all were erased.

One and a half million children had been murdered, not because of their faith, or their parent's faith, but because one of their grandparents had been a Jew. When the destruction, the Shoah, was over, a pillar of cloud marked the place where Europe's Jews had once been, and a silence that consumed all words.

Shalom Katz was a chazzan who was taken to a concentration camp. He, along with 2000 other Jews was ordered to be shot. Before they did so, the Nazis made the men dig their own graves. As they stood there, waiting for the end, Katz asked permission to sing *Kel Malei Rachamim*, the memorial prayer for the dead. They agreed. Katz sang so movingly that the Nazi officials kept him alive; and he survived the war. Later he returned to the camp to sing the *Kel Malei Rachamim* for the six million Jews who did not survive. This is Shalom Katz singing that prayer.

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Track 18: Keil maleh rachamim: Shalom Katz

Track 19.

[Underneath: Tom Newman . . .]

Even when the war was over, the Jewish situation remained tense. Refugee ships like the Exodus, carrying Holocaust survivors to Palestine, were turned back. There was violence in the land. The British mandatory power turned to the United Nations and on 29 November 1947 the historic vote was taken. By 33 votes to 13 with ten abstentions, the decision was taken to partition the land between its Jewish and Arab populations. After almost 2000 years, there would be, once again, a Jewish state in the land of the patriarchs and prophets. And on the 5th Iyar 5708, 14 May 1948, the State of Israel was proclaimed.

Was this the hand of God or the work of human beings? Surely, it was both. And as we look back at the day the Jewish people became a sovereign nation again, the only adequate words are those of Hallel, that ancient set of psalms of thanksgiving for the miracles of Jewish history.

Odecha ki anitani, I will thank You, for You answered me, and became my salvation. This is the day God has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

[187]

Track 20: Odecha [Pitchu li]: Moshe Haschel, Neimah choir, from 0.46 to end.

21.

I end this part of Israel's story with a prayer. So many Jewish prayers have been answered, for the return to Zion, the ingathering of exiles, the restoration of Jewish sovereignty, and the rebuilding of the Jewish home. What so many generations dreamt of, more in hope than expectation, we have seen in our time. One prayer, though, has not yet been answered. Perhaps our ancestors knew it would be the hardest of all, which is why, in all our prayers, we save it till last. The prayer for peace. Just five simple words: *Yehei shmei rabbah min shamaya*. May there be great peace from heaven. Sung here by Eli Gerstner and the Chevra.'

Track 22: Eli Gerstner and the Chevra: Yehei shmei rabbah min shamaya.

End of CD1

DISC 2

1.

[Background: Tom Newman]

When Jews began to rebuild their home in Israel, they had to do things they hadn't done for centuries. They had to cultivate land that had never been cultivated before, from the rocky hills of the Galil to the desert wastes of the Negev. On barren lands they made farms, in desolate landscapes they built villages.

They had to integrate wave after wave of olim, new arrivals from across the globe. They had to build a society and create the political and economic infrastructure of a nation.

And in some ways the most remarkable of all: they made the decision to revive Hebrew, the language of the Bible, and turn it, after more than two thousand years, into a living tongue again.

The chalutzim, the pioneers, were visionaries. My great-grandfather, Rabbi Arye Leib Frumkin, was one of them. He was a rabbi from Lithuania who made aliyah in 1871 and began writing his *History of the Sages in Jerusalem*, chronicling the continuous Jewish presence there since the days of Nachmanides in 1267.

In 1881 pogroms broke out in more than a hundred towns in Russia. That was when he realised that aliyah was no longer a pilgrimage of the few but an urgent necessity for the many. He became a pioneer, moving to one of the first agricultural settlements in the new yishuv. The early settlers had caught malaria and left. Rabbi Aryeh Leib led the return and built the first house there. The name they gave the town epitomises their dreams. Using a phrase from the book of Hosea, they called it Petach Tikva, 'the Gateway of Hope'. Today it is the sixth largest city in Israel.

One song to me sums up the hardships and the dreams of those early days, Naomi Shemer's *Al kol eleh*. 'For all these things, the honey and the sting, the bitter and the sweet, grant your protection, dear God.' *Hashiveni va'ashuva el haaretz hatovah*. 'Bring me back and I will return to the good land.'

[334]

Track 2. Shimon Craimer. Al kol eleh

3

And they came. They came to Israel from so many lands.

In the early days they came from Eastern Europe.

Then came the Holocaust survivors.

Then in the first years of the state they came from Arab lands.

Operation Magic Carpet brought the Jews from Yemen 'on eagles' wings' as they said when they saw planes for the first time.

Operation Ezra and Nehemiah brought the Jews of Iraq.

They came from Turkey, Iran, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya.

Later, when the Soviet Union opened its doors, they came from Russia.

They came from more than a hundred countries, speaking more than eighty languages.

More than three thousand years earlier, Moses had prophesied, 'Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you and bring you back.'

And so it was. A dismembered people torn into a hundred fragments and scattered across the world came together again as a living nation. There is nothing quite like it in all the annals of history.

Here is the Sheba choir, together with Shlomo Gronich, telling the story of their journey from Ethiopia.

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Track 4: Sheba choir. The Journey

5

And there was war. The day the state of Israel was proclaimed, it was attacked by the armies of five states, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. A country of a mere 600,000 people, many of whom were Holocaust survivors, faced the full force of nations whose population was 45 million. And from that day to this, Israel was never far from war or the threat of war, terror or the threat of terror.

In 1967 Arab armies gathered in force on Israel's borders. The Egyptian president Abdul Nasser closed the straits of Tiran and spoke of driving Israel into the sea.

For those of us watching these events from afar, it seemed as if a second Holocaust was in the making. It was a moment of trauma that changed my life, as it did for many Jews who lived through those days.

As we know in retrospect, Israel survived and won an astonishing victory. The Six Day War, as it came to be known, is associated indelibly with a song written just before, Naomi Shemer's *Yerushalayim shel zahav*.

Track 6: Yerushalayim shel zahav. Sam Glaser

7.

Though Israel has had to fight many wars, from the very beginning it sought peace. From the time of the Balfour declaration in 1917 it was recognised that the land, small though it was, had to be divided so that Jewish and Arab inhabitants could each have a home. Jews accepted every partition proposal, from the Peel Commission in 1937 to the United Nations resolution in 1947, for the sake of peace.

In the Declaration of Independence David Ben Gurion called for peace. In 1967 after the Six Day War Israel again proposed negotiations to establish peace. But no peace came. To this day, only two of Israel's neighbours have made peace, Egypt in 1979, and Jordan in 1994.

The Hebrew language has two words for strength: *koach* and *gevurah*. *Koach* is the strength you need to win a war. *Gevurah* is the courage you need to make peace. Israel has shown both kinds of strength. But peace is a duet not a solo. It cannot be made by one side alone. If it could, it would have been made long ago.

'Seek peace and pursue it,' says the Psalm. The prophets of Israel were the first in history to see peace as an ideal. So, for the sake of Israel, for the sake of the Palestinians, for the sake of God, we pray for peace. With God's help, *be'ezrat Hashem, Inshalla*.

Track 8: Inshalla. Gad Elbaz

9.

Beginning in 1993, the search for peace took on a new dimension with the negotiations that began in Oslo. In September of that year, Israeli and Palestinian leaders met and shook hands on the White House lawn, and Yitzhak Rabin gave one of the great speeches of the twentieth century.

We have come from Jerusalem, the ancient and eternal capital of the Jewish people. We have come from an anguished and grieving land. We have come from a people, a home, a family, that has not known a single year not a single month in which mothers have not wept for their sons. We have come to try and put an end to the hostilities, so that our children, our children's children, will no longer experience the painful cost of war, violence and terror. We have come to secure their lives and to ease the sorrow and the painful memories of the past to hope and pray for peace. Let me say to you, the Palestinians: We are destined to live together on the same soil, in the same land. We, the soldiers who have returned from battle stained with blood, we who have seen our relatives and friends killed before our eyes, we who have attended their funerals and cannot look into the eyes of their parents, we who have come from a land where parents bury their children, we who have fought against you, the Palestinians -

We say to you today in a loud and a clear voice: Enough of blood and tears. Enough. We have no desire for revenge. We harbor no hatred towards you. We, like you, are people –people who want to build a home, to plant a tree, to love, to live side by side with you in dignity, in empathy, as human beings, as free men. We are today giving peace a chance, and saying again to you: Enough. Let us pray that a day will come when we all will say: Farewell to the arms.

Our inner strength, our high moral values, have been derived for thousands of years from the Book of Books, in one of which, Koheleth, we read:

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven:

A time to be born, and a time to die;

A time to kill, and a time to heal;

A time to weep and a time to laugh;

A time to love, and a time to hate;

A time of war, and a time of peace.'

Ladies and Gentlemen, the time for peace has come.

It was not to be. In 1994 suicide bombings began. In 1995 Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated. In 2000 the peace process broke down and there was a wave of terror and suicide bombings.

In April 2002, on the first night of Pesach, as people gathered to begin the seder, a suicide bomber struck in the Park Hotel in Netanya, killing 29, and injuring hundreds of others.

This song written by Steven Levey, sung by Shimon Craimer, was composed in memory of that tragedy. Its words are taken from the Pesach seder service: *Vehi she'emdah*, the passage in which we remember that it was not one alone, Pharaoh, who tried to destroy the Jewish people, but in every generation; sadly too in ours.

Track 10: Vehi she'emdah, Shimon Craimer

11.

How do you live with the constant threat of violence and war? That takes faith. Israel is the people that has always been sustained by faith, faith in God, in the future, in life itself. And though Israel is a secular state, its very existence is testimony to faith: the faith of a hundred generations that Jews would return; the faith that led the pioneers to rebuild a land against seemingly impossible odds; the faith that after the Holocaust the Jewish people could live again; the faith that, in the face of death, continues to say: choose life.

One classic expression of Jewish faith is Psalm 121, *Esah einay el heharim*, I lift my eyes to the hills, *me-ayin yavo ezri*, from where will my help come. This is Shay Gabso, singing a poignant song whose chorus is woven out of those words.

Track 12: Arim roshi. Shay Gabso.

13.

At the heart of Jewish faith is Jerusalem, the holy city whose name is peace. Has a people ever loved a city so deeply for so long? Almost every prayer in the Jewish prayer book includes a prayer for Jerusalem. The word itself figures more than 900 times in the Bible. Jerusalem, David's city, the place where the Temple stood, home of the Divine presence, the place where, still today, you can feel God's closeness as nowhere else. And though all that remains of the Temple is one wall, still to stand and pray in that spot is to feel the presence of three thousand years of Jewish prayers and tears and hopes.

'How do I love thee?' wrote the English poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 'Let me count the ways.' In that spirit let's count just some of the many ways in which Jews today sing the words of Psalm 137, *Im eshkech Yerushalayim*. 'If I forget you, O Jerusalem'. We've already heard one on the first CD. Here are three others, each in a different style, first in English by the Chassidic rap singer Matisyahu, then *a capella*, by Eli Gerstner and the Chevra, to music written by Shlomo Carlebach, and last as a folk song, by Lev Tahor.

Track 14

a. *Jerusalem: Matisyahu*

- b. *Im eshkachech: Eli Gerstner and the chevra*
- c. *Im eshkachech: Lev Tahor*

15.

The journey is not yet over.

Israel has not yet found peace.

And after four thousand years Jews still find it hard to live their faith without fear.

There are 82 Christian nations, and 56 Muslim ones.

There is only one Jewish state, a country smaller than the Krueger National Park, less than one quarter of one per cent of the land mass of the Arab world; the only place on earth where Jews form a majority, the only place where they are able to do what almost every other people takes for granted, to construct a society according to their values, and to be able to defend themselves. For every Jew alive today there are 100 Muslims, 183 Christians. Yet still we have to fight for the right to be.

So often the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is portrayed as a zero sum game in which one side wins and the other loses. But it isn't so. From violence, both sides lose. From peace, both sides gain.

What matters therefore is that we work for peace, a peace that will allow Israel and the Palestinians each to live in dignity and freedom without fear; a peace in which each makes space for the other; a peace in which the children of Abraham, Jews, Christians and Muslims live together as brothers and sisters, part of the same extended family; a peace that heals the wounds of the past for the sake of generations not yet born.

Oseh shalom bimromav, 'May he who makes peace in his high places, help us make peace on earth.'

Track 16: Oseh shalom bimromav: Jonny Turgel

17.

So many people risked their lives for the sake of Israel: from those who made the hazardous journey in the Middle Ages, to the pioneers of the new yishuv; from those who fought in Israel's wars or served in its security forces to the people in the streets of Tel Aviv, the buses of Haifa and the cafes of Jerusalem, at times when suicide bombings were taking place almost daily, and everyday life was etched with fear.

Many, too many, gave their lives.

Why?

Why, after everything, is it still so hard for the nations of the world to grant the Jewish people a place to live without fear? Israel is the West's oldest nation. Its religion is the West's oldest faith. Without Abraham, there would be no Christianity or Islam, two religions that between them command the allegiance of more than half of the 6 billion people alive

today. Why must the people who first taught the world the sanctity of life, so often be made to walk through the valley of the shadow of death? How many lives must be lost and tears shed, before humanity learns that bloodshed achieves nothing, that hate harms both the hated and the one who hates, that God's way is the way of peace?

The next song is a prayer, from the heart of grief, in memory of those who died, in the words of the bereaved.

Track 18: Shema Yisrael. Amiram Dvir

19.

The first reference to Israel other than in the Hebrew Bible is on the Merneptah stele, a slab of black granite engraved in the days of Pharaoh Merneptah, successor to Ramses II, the man some scholars identify as the Pharaoh of the exodus. It says, 'Israel is laid waste; her seed is no more.' The first reference to Israel outside the bible is an obituary. Israel's enemies thought it was dead. More than thirty two centuries, half the history of civilization, later, we can still say Am Yisrael Chai. The Jewish people lives.

Not only Jews, but people like Blaise Pascal, Jean-Jaques Rousseau and Leo Tolstoy, saw in this survival something miraculous, as if an invisible hand had written out of the lives of Jews across the generations a story about human possibility, about a journey from slavery to freedom across a great wilderness of space and time to a land of promise and hope.

How did a people survive for twenty centuries without a state, a home, a place where they could defend themselves? How did they sustain their identity when everywhere they were a minority? How did faith survive the massacres and pogroms, when Jews called and heaven seemed silent? That is what astonished Pascal, Rousseau and Tolstoy before the twentieth century.

But now the question is so much deeper. How could a people ravaged by the Holocaust survive that trauma and put their faith in life again? How could a nation that had not known independence or sovereignty for two thousand years take it up again? How could they, with so little, build a land, a state, a society, a culture, that has achieved so much?

How, under the constant threat of war and terror, surrounded by enemies pledged to their destruction, could they sustain a free and democratic society in a part of the world that had never known it; create an economy with outstanding achievements in agriculture, science, medicine and technology; produce a culture rich in art and music, poetry and prose?

How out of the most diverse population could they shape an identity? How could they build not only great secular universities but also thriving yeshivot, so that the vision of Isaiah could come true in our time, that 'Torah will come forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.' How, so soon after the nightmare, could they realize so many dreams?

Somehow, in ways I don't fully understand, the Jewish people has been touched by a power greater than ourselves, that has led our ancestors and contemporaries, time and again, to defy the normal parameters of history. Somehow heaven and earth met in the Jewish heart, lifting people to do what otherwise seemed impossible. Descartes said: I think, therefore I am. The Jewish axiom is different. *Ani maamin*. I believe, therefore I am.

One of the great songs of modern times, written by Steven Schwartz for the film *Prince of Egypt*, says it simply, in words that summarise the history of Israel from ancient times to today: 'You can do miracles when you believe.'

Track 20: When you believe. Shimon Cramer?

21.

In the most haunting of all prophetic visions, the prophet Ezekiel saw a valley of dry bones, a heap of skeletons. God asked him, "Son of man, can these bones live?" Ezekiel replied, "God, you alone know."

Then the bones came together, and grew flesh and skin, and began to breathe, and live again. Then God said: "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up. *Avdah tikvatenu*, our hope is lost.' Therefore prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel.'

It was this passage that Naftali Hertz Inbar was alluding to in 1877, when he wrote, in the song that became Israel's national anthem, Hatikva, the phrase *od lo avdah tikvatenu*, 'Our hope is not lost.'

Little could he have known that seventy years later one third of the Jewish people would have become, in Auschwitz and Treblinka and Bergen Belsen, a valley of dry bones. Who could have been blamed for saying 'Our bones are dried up, our hope is lost.'

And yet, a mere three years after standing eyeball to eyeball with the angel of death, the Jewish people, by proclaiming the State of Israel, made a momentous affirmation of life, as if it had heard across the centuries the echo of God's words to Ezekiel: *Veheveti etchem el admat Yisrael*, I will bring you back to the land of Israel.

And the day will come, when the story of Israel in modern times will speak not just to Jews, but to all who believe in the power of the human spirit as it reaches out to God, as an everlasting symbol of the victory of life over death, hope over despair.

Israel has achieved great things.

It has taken a barren land and made it bloom again.

It's taken an ancient language, the Hebrew of the Bible, and made it speak again.

It's taken the West's oldest faith and made it young again.

Israel has taken a tattered, shattered nation and made it live again.

Israel is the country whose national anthem, Hatikva, means hope.

Israel is the home of hope.

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Track 22: Hatikva. Rabbi Lionel Rosenfeld and Shabbaton choir.