



ההסתדרות הציונית העולמית
World Zionist Organization
המחלקה לפעילות בתפוצות
Department for Diaspora Activities

Beit Ha'am

Z-Talks

בית העם

שיג ושיח ציוני

My Jerusalem

An Anthology for
Yom Yerushalayim
(Jerusalem Day)



Program development and production: Department for Diaspora Activities, 2016-5776

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The “Beit Ha’am” program was developed by the Department for Diaspora Activities at the World Zionist Organization, and its aim is to foster discourse about issues related to the meaning of Zionism in the 21st century. Has the Zionist vision been fulfilled? What role does the State of Israel play in the eyes of those who live outside the country? What does the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora look like in this day and age? And more.

The program contains a diverse selection of materials, including traditional and contemporary texts, video clips, works of art, games, etc. Using these materials, we seek to create a spirited, critical and current dialog.

This is an opportunity for each and every one anywhere around the world, regardless of their previous knowledge, to reflect, question and discuss the significance of Zionism in the 21st century, as well as the degree of its relevance to our lives.

This booklet – part of the broad and dynamic range of activities we are engaged in - proposes an activity for Yom Yerushalayim. Jerusalem is a city of many contrasts: sacred and profane, ancient and modern, Jews and non-Jews – an intricate and captivating human mosaic. The contrasts are also a challenge to tolerance, acceptance and dialog. The collection of texts found in this booklet spark a discourse about the emotions that Jerusalem evokes in each one of us, the way we feel about Jerusalem compared to other cities, and the special place it holds in the hearts of the Jewish people.

We invite you to make use of the booklet in your activity, and offer some different perspectives for reflection and discussion that emerge from the materials it contains.

“Beit Ha’am” materials are available in Hebrew, English, Spanish, French, Portuguese and German and, if needed, can be translated into additional languages. The materials can be utilized in different frameworks and for diverse audiences.

If you have any request or query regarding the subject, please contact us at: beithaam@wzo.org.il.

Gusti Yehoshua-Braverman, Head of the Department for Diaspora Activities

***“Ten measures of beauty descended on the world; nine were taken by Jerusalem and one by the rest of the world”
(Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Kiddushin 49:2)***

Paratroopers Are Crying

(Written by Haim Hefer soon after paratroopers liberated the Western Wall in the Old City of Jerusalem during the Six Day War)

*“This Kotel (Western Wall) has heard many prayers, This Kotel has seen many walls fall, This Kotel has felt the hands of wailing women and notes pressed between its stones, This Kotel has seen Rabbi Yehuda Halevi trampled in front of it. This Kotel has seen emperors rise and fall, But this Kotel has never seen paratroopers cry. This Kotel has seen them weary and exhausted, This Kotel has seen them wounded and scraped, Running towards it with beating hearts, with shouts and with silence, Pouncing like lunatics in the alleyways of the Old City. And covered in dust and with parched lips, they whisper:
If I forget thee, if I forget thee, O Jerusalem. And they are as light as an eagle and as mighty as a lion And their tanks – the fiery chariots of Elijah the Prophet. And they pass by like thunder, and they pass by in fury, And they remember all the awful years When we didn’t even have a Kotel where we could shed our tears.
And here they are, standing in front of it and breathing deeply, And here they are, looking at it with the sweet pain, Tears fall, and they look at each other bewildered, How can it be, how can it be that paratroopers are crying?
How can it be that they’re touching the wall and are so moved? How can it be that from crying they switch to singing? Perhaps it’s because 19-year-old boys, who were born together with the establishment of the State, are carrying 2,000 years on their backs.”*



- In your opinion, what was Hefer referring to when he writes that 19-year-old boys are carrying 2,000 years on their backs?
- Have you ever been to the Western Wall? When and in what capacity? Can you share with us what you felt when you came there the first time?
- Is there any place in the country you live in that evokes such strong feelings? What is it? What is associated with it?

Haim Hefer (1925-2012) was an Israeli poet, songwriter, playwright, screenwriter, columnist and political commentator. He was awarded the Sokolov Prize for Journalism (1969) and the Israel Prize for Hebrew Songs (1983).

Between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem

"We'll have to decide what we've come to do here. It will be interesting, this matter of identity. I can venture a guess. It will be an increasingly more Mediterranean place, like Barcelona, Marseilles, Piraeus...and it will be secular to the bone. It's already like that: noisy, hedonistic, very materialistic, shrewd, and both mean and kindhearted..."

This futurism is the present. It's Tel Aviv, it's the coastal plain. I believe that the coastal plain has already won, and that Jerusalem will become a city which people go to from Israel, like traveling abroad, like seeing the past. And in the war between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv – I'm all for Tel Aviv: sanity, secularism, and present. Something is sick when a society lives only in the past and the future. It's extremely dangerous, it kills people..."

(Amos Oz, Maariv)



- Amos Oz and David Ben Gurion have very different views about Jerusalem. Which of those views is it easier for you to identify with?
- As for the one you didn't choose, are you able to find something between the lines that you can subscribe to as well?
- If you were the only one making the policy, which city in Israel would be worthy of being its capital? Why?
- Should the decision regarding Israel's capital be made only by the Israelis living in the country, or by representatives of the entire Jewish people? Why?



“Jerusalem...is the capital of a nation. It's the capital of Jewish history, it's the capital of the Hebrew spirit, it's the capital of the Eternal One of Israel. Above all, it must serve as an example both to an entire country as well as an entire nation. That's because Jerusalem doesn't belong just to a country, Jerusalem also belongs to a nation. It must serve as an example to all the House of Israel in its country and in the Diaspora. Major things unite us, the ingathering of the exiles unites us, the building of Israel unites us, the country's security unites us, the sanctity of Jerusalem unites us. The very essence of Jerusalem should be a source of brotherhood and of oneness and of Jewish honor, and the people of Jerusalem bear a tremendous responsibility.”

(David Ben Gurion, an excerpt from his remarks at the ceremony where he received honorary citizenship of Jerusalem, 1967)



Amos Oz – (1939-) is one of Israel's most prominent authors and a professor of literature. Oz is also a philosopher whose writings deal with literature, Israeli and Zionist identity and political-social thinking. His books have been translated into 42 different languages, more than any other Israeli author. He is also the recipient of prestigious literary awards in Israel and around the world. Since 2007, his name has been mentioned several times as a candidate for the Nobel Prize in Literature.

David Ben Gurion - (1886-1973) came to the country on the Second Aliyah – the second wave of immigration to pre-State Israel. He stood at the helm of the "state in the making" and was instrumental in pressing for the establishment of the State of Israel. He proclaimed its establishment in 1948 and led the country for fifteen years until 1963. He served as the State of Israel's first Prime Minister and Minister of Defense and was a leader of the labor movement.



Here I Come – Hadag Nahash

Lyrics: Moshe Asaraf, Sha'anani Streett, Shlomi Alon, Guy Mar, Amir Ben Ami, Yaya Cohen Harounoff, Dudush Klemes
Music: Yaya Cohen Harounoff, Dudush Klemes, Moshe Asaraf, Shlomi Alon, Amir Ben Ami, Guy Mar, Sha'anani Streett
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zY28uAxGSNA>

Here I Come...

Jerusalem, an explosive city
Walking on the pedestrian mall feels like an ingathering
of the exiles
A thousand cultures, everyone has a brother and
nine sisters
Arabs are okay, the ultra-Orthodox are in a cheder
And everyone here is on God's wavelength
After Teddy, Jerusalem quickly faded
From day to day Tel Aviv glittered more
Friends left or got closer to the Creator of the heavens
Grey, dull, no sea
Thoughts about leaving
It took me three years to decide
Packing my stuff in the suitcase
From the village to the city in the downhill direction

Tel Aviv – here I come
I'm coming – here I come
I came to perspire – here I come
Because you're the only one, I swear

I left for the coastal plain
What a shock I'm about to get
And now that I'm finally in Tel Aviv
Blending in with the scenery, everything's fresh and
that's good
Wow, so many breasts, my eyes got burned
After two years in Sodom and Gomorrah
I can't recognize myself in the mirror
Getting to know, mixing, mingling, making friends with
All the discotheque owners
Now that I'm IN, I realize it's not all glitter
So much noise, so much soot, give me grass,
give me a tree
The entire day is wasted on peace, peace

The rent is exorbitant, the humidity and insanity
And then it dawned on me,
I had Paradise in my hands
Thoughts about leaving
It took me three years to decide
Packing my stuff in the suitcase
From the city to the village in the direction of

Jerusalem – here I come
Coming back to you – here I come
To your walls – here I come
Because you're the only one, I swear

I returned to Jerusalem, the hummus is better here for sure
Give me serenity, give me quiet, a yawn won't hurt
When was the last time I stuck a note in the Wall, spent
time making food
Made new friends,
This city restored my control over my life
I'll mix in with myself rather than mix water
We'll breathe a little mountain air as clear as wine
Get going, Beitar, get going life in the village!
The main thing is to be happy

Here I come...

Tel Aviv – here I come
I'm coming – here I come
I came to perspire – here I come
Because you're the only one, I swear

- And where are you coming to? Which of the two cities can you relate to more? Can you share that with us?
- Choose one or two lines that you liked in the song Here I Come by Hadag Nahash. Tell us why you chose that line(s).



Jerusalem and Me

"I will now tell you who I am...

As a result of the historic catastrophe in which Titus of Rome destroyed Jerusalem and the people of Israel were exiled from their land, I was born in one of the cities of the Diaspora.

But I've always thought of myself as someone who was born in Jerusalem. In a dream, in a vision at night, I saw myself standing with my fellow Levites in the Holy Temple, singing songs of David, the King of Israel, with them...It is thanks to Jerusalem that I wrote all what God gave me in my heart and my pen."

(Shai Agnon, excerpts from his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, 1966)



• Are you familiar with any other world-renowned author who similarly extols a particular place in the world? Who is that author? Which place is it? What about the place made it so important?

• "I was born in one of the cities in the Diaspora. But I've always thought of myself as someone who was born in Jerusalem." Can you relate to that feeling? Is a person's sense of belonging connected, first and foremost, with the place he/she was born, or not necessarily? Tell us where you feel you belong and what about that place instills in you a sense of belonging.

• Ester Vitkon, an Israeli author and poet, sees many diverse figures in Jerusalem. When you visualize Jerusalem, who are the people you see (in the city)? Do you know of any other city in the world whose human diversity is as great and intricate as that of Jerusalem?

• What is your Jerusalem? What is it to you? Among its human and scenic diversity, what do you relate to? And what not?

A Black Robe / Ester Vitkon

A black robe flaps,
A cool breeze blows beyond Gehenna,
A nun walks briskly, talking on her cell phone,
An amber necklace held by a merchant in front
of his shop catches her golden eye
A sable fur hat of a white-hosed Hasidic Jew,
A border policeman holding a toddler girl
Who has lost her mother in the crowd,
Moves the barrel of his gun and wipes her tears
with his large hand.

Shmuel Yosef Agnon – (1887-1970) was one of the greatest Hebrew writers in modern times. He was born in Galicia (Ukraine) and came to pre-State Israel as a young author at the age of 21. Agnon received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1966 and the Israel Prize for Literature in both 1954 and 1958.



Tourists / Yehuda Amichai

Visits of condolence are all we get from them.
They squat at the Holocaust Memorial,
They put on grave faces at the Wailing Wall
And they laugh behind heavy curtains
In their hotels.
They have their pictures taken
Together with our famous dead
At Rachel's Tomb and Herzl's Tomb
And on Ammunition Hill.
They weep over our sweet boys
And lust after our tough girls
And hang up their underwear
To dry quickly
In cool, blue bathrooms.

Once I sat on the steps by a 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."



Yehuda Amichai was an Israeli poet and a recipient of the Israel Prize for Poetry. He was considered a pathfinder and pioneer in modern Hebrew poetry, and was also one of the most prominent figures in the international poetry scene in the 20th century. Amichai was born in Germany in 1924 and died in Jerusalem in 2000.

In his poem *Tourists*, Amichai describes the experience of a tourist visiting Jerusalem.

• Have you ever visited Jerusalem as a tourist? Can you identify with the way the tourist experience in the city is depicted? How would you describe your experience as a tourist in Jerusalem? In what way (if at all) was it different from being a tourist in any other city in Israel or around the world?

• What's your personal connection with Jerusalem?

What do you feel about the city?

• Jerusalem was, and still is, a leading and important symbol in the consciousness of the Jewish people. Why is it a symbol? What makes the city important?

• In your opinion, is being a symbol an asset or a liability?



In the brief passage written by Amichai right after the poem, he says that redemption will come only if the existing order of importance between the history of the city (and its archaeology) and the people living in it is reversed, and people will come first.

- Do you agree with Amichai?
- Can you provide other examples in support of that view? In Jerusalem/in Israel/in the place where you live?
- That belief articulates a much broader and more profound worldview – namely, the sanctity of life as opposed to the sanctity of faith / religion / history / land. Where are you on the spectrum between the two? Why?
- In what other contexts does that type of tension exist? Is there a way to reconcile it? Can you provide some examples from our current global reality that illustrate that tension?

For the facilitator

You can do an activity dealing with the gamut of opinions, where the participants are asked to position themselves on the spectrum between the sanctity of life and the sanctity of religion, land or history. They can then be asked to explain why they chose to stand in that particular spot.



Jerusalem is almost always mentioned in major Jewish ceremonies and rituals.

For example, twice in the wedding ceremony:
The first time, in the seventh of the seven blessings:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord, King of the universe, who has created joy and gladness, bridegroom and bride, mirth and exultation, pleasure and delight, love, brotherhood, peace and fellowship. Soon may there be heard in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of joy and gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the jubilant voice of bridegrooms from their canopies, and of youths from their feasts of song. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who causes the bridegroom to rejoice with the bride.

The second time, before breaking the glass:

**If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not raise Jerusalem above my chiefest joy. (Psalms 137:5-6)**

In the Amidah prayer (Eighteen Benedictions) recited three times a day:

Our God and God of our ancestors, may there rise, come, reach, appear, be favored, heard, regarded and remembered before You, our recollection and remembrance, as well as the remembrance of our ancestors, and of the Messiah son of David Your servant, and of Jerusalem Your holy city, and of all Your people the house of Israel.

At the end of the Passover Hagaddah:
Next year in Jerusalem

- What is the significance of Jerusalem's mention at all the important ceremonies/occasions in the life of a Jew?
- Do you know of a place that has similar importance in another religion/another culture? Can you give us an example?
- In the culture that prevails in the country you live in, is there a city which poems/stories /legends have been written about and that is held in such high esteem like Jerusalem? What significance/place does it have in the local reality?
- As you know, Jerusalem is also holy to Islam and Christianity. Apart from the complex political ramifications, does that fact have an impact on how you feel about Jerusalem? On your thoughts about the city?





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