



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

## בית העם שיג ושיח ציוני

# Our Relationship, Where To? Some Soul-Searching

## A Beit Ha'am Anthology for the Month of Elul



Jews have lived around the world for thousands of years.

Since our early days as a people, our history has been replete with journeys of endless wanderings - to and from the Land of Israel, and across the globe. The relationships between the different Jewish communities, wherever they are, have in all generations known transformations and upheavals.

Since the first days of the Exile, through the Zionist idea that was formulated at the end of the 19th century, and up to the present time, we've been conducting a loving, painful, challenging and complex dialogue between us. It is a continuous and winding dialogue that is unparalleled among other peoples. Just a few weeks ago, Uri Misgav wrote an article in the daily newspaper "Haaretz" under the controversial title: "I Have No Money for Jews in the Diaspora." Using loud and clear, and even blunt, language, Misgav makes some statements that are not easy to digest. Precisely for that reason and at this time of the year, in the month of Elul and right before the High Holidays, which are days in the Jewish calendar when all of us are called upon to do personal, collective and national soul-searching,

we are obligated to delve into what he wrote and address his words without fear.

This is the right time for an in-depth examination where we try to clarify for ourselves what the future of the relationship between Israel and Diaspora Jewry is. Which paths will we take together, and which not? Will our shared historical destiny necessarily lead us to a future of mutual responsibility and commitment? How should we conduct a dialog? Who has the authority to decide? What is our role as people whose task focuses on the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora? And much more.

I invite you to explore the issues emerging from the anthology "Our Relationship, Where To? – Some Soul-Searching," which was developed by the Department for Diaspora Activities. Those issues have implications for the lives of each and every one of us.

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

## “No money for the Jewish Diaspora” published by Uri Misgav, Haaretz 19.8.16

There is after all money for "strengthening Jewish identity" and "activity on behalf of Israel" in America, a lot of money paid for by the Israeli taxpayer. That money could be used for other purposes in Israel.

As an Israeli citizen, I don't want a single shekel of my tax money going to Jews in the Diaspora. Not the Diaspora in general and certainly not the Diaspora in rich America. I don't feel any sense of responsibility for them; not for their fate, not for the ways they practice their Judaism and not for their affiliation with Israel. That's their own business.

One can be a Jew outside Israel too, but one cannot be a Zionist in America. It's ridiculous. If you believe in Zionism, you don't live in America. You will live in Israel, contending with it and the vicissitudes of life on a daily basis and fighting over its image according to your civil and political views.

By the same token, the State of Israel needs to let go of its ownership of Judaism. Nobody handed it over. Israel was founded and exists as the national home of the Jewish people, not as a global, umbrella authority over Jews and Judaism. The knot is a complicated, almost Gordian one, but we have to start untying it.

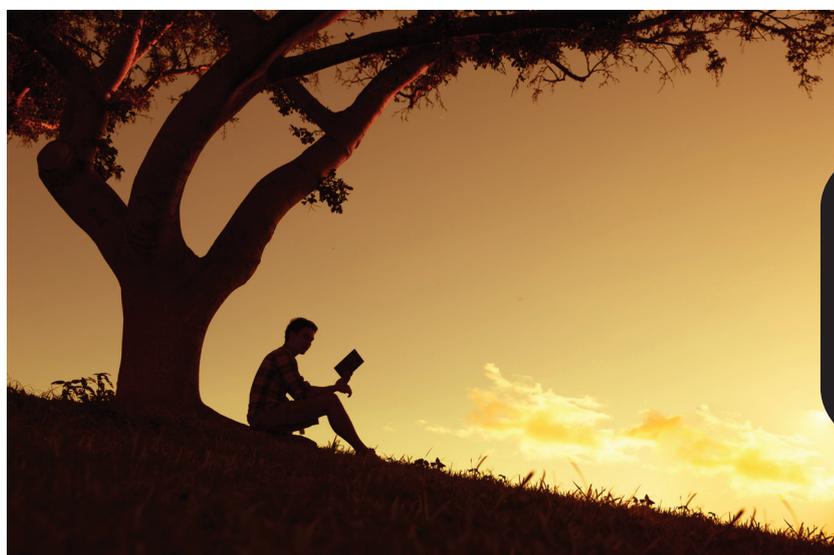
The Jews of North America have no rights here, certainly not a "birthright". By the same token, Israel doesn't have too many rights beyond its boundaries, not over "Jewish values" or over "affiliation with Israel".

To pour Israeli money on America Jews is truly the essence of absurdity.



## Opinions of Jews from Israel & the Diaspora about the article

- “What Israel is, says and does impacts me here in Los Angeles and every Jew everywhere” (Rabbi John Rosove, USA)
- “Everyone is entitled to ideas. We don’t have to legitimize them by responding” (Rabbi Bennett Miller, USA)
- “Let us not forget, it was not the people who lived in Israel who were Zionists, these were Jews from outside of Israel, referred to as the Diaspora Jews, who created, pushed forward the cause of Zionism. Birthright has nothing to do with your birth place or the place where you choose to live in, but is connected with the unconditional and deep bond a Jew has a birthright to this place. It may be consumed by visiting, contributing caring and yes, also by making Aliyah”. (Reuven Marko, Israel)
- “I grant to no one the right to determine whether or not I am a Zionist nor what my Zionism means.” (Stanley Davids, USA)
- “My Zionism is realizing the values in the Israeli Declaration of Independence striving for a peaceful land that allows the Jewish people to be proud of their national identity.” (Yaron Shavit, Israel)
- “Zionism does need new definitions after the establishment of the state”. (Rabbi Vernon Kurtz, USA)



Rabbi Kurtz, president of the AZM wrote:  
“Zionism does need new definitions”

- why are we so “obsessed” with Zionism?
- What does it say about us?
- What is your definition of Zionism?

## Misgav’s statements raise few questions

- “As an Israeli citizen, I don’t want a single shekel of my tax money going to Jews in the Diaspora.” Do you agree with this statement? Isn’t the phrase “charity begins at home” relevant for this matter?
- “One can be a Jew outside Israel too, but one cannot be a Zionist in America.” Do you agree with this statement? What is your opinion?
- “... If you believe in Zionism, you don’t live in America. You will live in Israel, contending with it and the vicissitudes of life on a daily basis and fighting over its image...” what about Jews living in Israel and don’t see their role in contributing towards the state? Contrary – their actions harm the state and its’ citizens, are they Zionists?
- “By the same token, the State of Israel needs to let go of its ownership of Judaism”. In your opinion is it true that Israel has become an “umbrella authority over Jews and Judaism.”? If so, does it have the legal/ moral right to do so? Who, if any, should be the “umbrella authority” over Judaism?
- “As an Israeli citizen ... I don’t feel any sense of responsibility for them (Diaspora Jewry); not for their fate...” Is the state of Israel responsible for diaspora Jewry? or vice- verse the diaspora Jewry are responsible for the Jews in Israel? Is the value of “mutual responsibility” (Arvut Hadadit) still relevant for the 21st century?
- “To pour Israeli money on America Jews is truly the essence of absurdity.” Is it ok to “pour money” on world Jewry In smaller or less wealthy communities? What about Jewish communities in danger?