



September 2017
Elul 5777

Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People Agenda for the 21st Century

Background: A Perfect Storm

This paper proposes an updated agenda for the relationship between World Jewry and the State of Israel that fully expresses the character of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish People. The context for this agenda and the sense of urgency that propelled its formulation is the 'perfect storm' that erupted in June 2017 which is disrupting this historic relationship.

This agenda is based on the [conceptual framework](#) published by the [Reut Group](#) in March 2017 and was developed with the generous and visionary support of Katie and Amnon Rodan. Our hope is that it will be discussed, improved and eventually embraced by the Government of Israel and World Jewry leadership.

In June 2017, the Government of Israel decided to cancel the so-called 'Kotel Compromise' and to promote an amendment of the Conversion Bill so that it would not acknowledge conversions performed by most rabbis outside of Israel. Shortly thereafter, Israel's Chief Rabbinate was exposed for maintaining a 'blacklist' of rabbis who are 'not recognized', and later the Government of Israel was slow to condemn the anti-Semitic events in Charlottesville, Virginia. Together, these events created a 'perfect storm', which angered many in Jewish communities in the USA and around the world and led to calls for a rethinking of their entire relationships with Israel.

These events revealed a bitter truth: not only that the Israeli Government's relationship with World Jewry is often shaped by narrow political considerations, but also that the Israeli public is mostly indifferent to this issue.

Furthermore, these events highlighted the tension between the classical conception of Zionism and the contemporary reality of the Jewish People in the 21st Century. Israel was created to serve as the national home for the entire Jewish People, and has been, in fact, its 'central project' for the past century. Indeed, for decades, this meant encouraging Aliyah and ensuring security, freedom and prosperity for the Jewish community in the Land of Israel. However, now, when Israel is powerful and prosperous, many Jews feel a growing distance and even alienation from it.

Against this backdrop, it is essential for Israel and World Jewry to reimagine the essence of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish People, and to translate this vision into a concrete agenda that can be acted upon.

This is an attempt to offer such an agenda.



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“Zionism will not injure the religious worldview of any denomination.” (Herzl)

- ❖ **Formal declaration of Israel-World Jewry relations as a core issue of Israeli national security** and part of the agenda of the National Security Council, as guided by the National Security Council Law.
- ❖ **Formalized and mandatory consultation on Knesset legislation and government policies** based on the following:
 - **An agreed list of key government agencies** that interface with World Jewry;
 - **An agreed list of Israel-World Jewry issues where consultation is expected.**
- ❖ **Renewal of the Kotel Compromise** regarding the Kotel Plaza and amendment of the Holy Sites Administration Law.
- ❖ **Mandatory immersive programs for all levels of public sector leaders of the Government of Israel** within World Jewry communities, with special emphasis on the key relevant government agencies.
- ❖ **Integration of Peoplehood as a core theme in the Israeli education system**, based on a narrative which is respectful of Diaspora Jewry.
- ❖ **Expanding the budget for informal education and engagement programs** focusing on:
 - **Continued and expanded support for Birthright Israel, Masa and other similar programs;**
 - **Connection between youth movements** in Israel and in World Jewry communities;
 - **Support for *shlichim* programs among Jewish communities;**
 - **Gap year opportunities in Israel;**
 - **Joint educational ventures** such as trips to Poland and school twinning.
- ❖ **Support for Tikkun Olam programs that connect to Israel and to Judaism** while making a unique contribution to humanity.



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End.