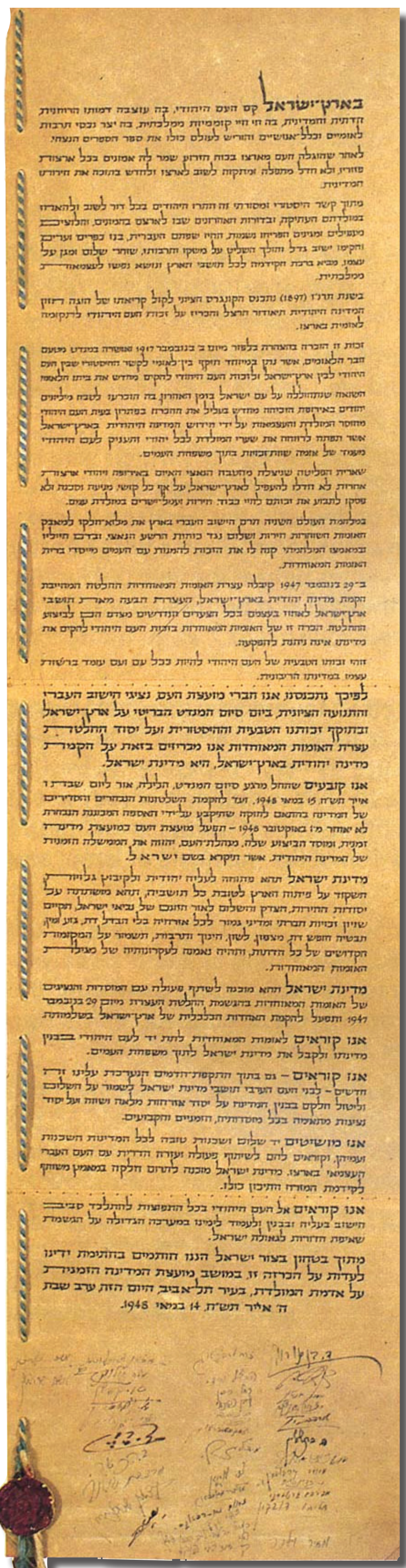
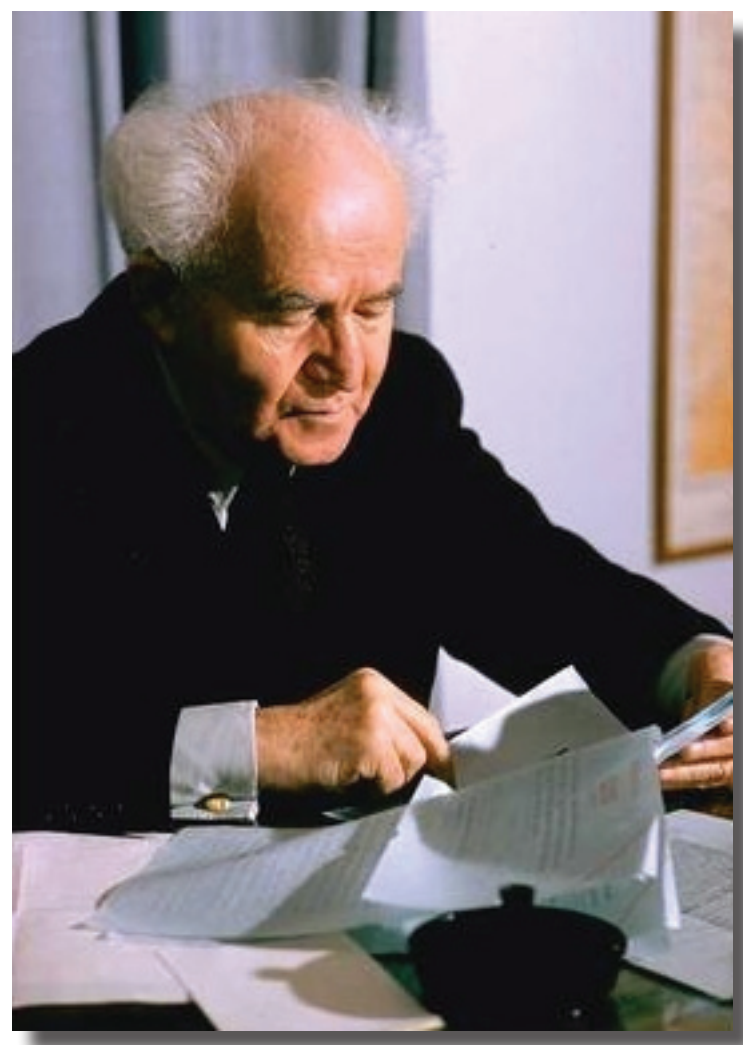


### Activities

- 1) Why do you think the Zionist leaders chose to declare the Jewish State of Israel independent on May 14, 1948? What can be learned from this choice about Zionist leadership (characteristics and traits)?
- 2) What experiences from Zionist pioneering and state-building led Jews to believe they could succeed?
- 3) How did Jewish immigration to Palestine become vital for state-maintaining?



As there was no time to pen the scroll, and the second copy was in Jerusalem with the other delegates who were barricaded in and could not make it to the Tel Aviv ceremony, this scroll with all the signatures had to be penned in the days following the actual declaration.



David Ben Gurion, 1959



David Ben Gurion reading the Declaration of Independence inside Independence Hall



Outside Independence Hall, Tel Aviv, May 1948

Ben Gurion and Zionist leaders knew that declaration of independence would bring upon the Yishuv immediate war on several fronts in which Jews would be outnumbered. As the last of the British officials left the country, Jews were left without British protection and without the assurance of outside assistance from a superpower or the UN.



Crowds in Tel Aviv on Independence Day

### Excerpts from “Israel: Years of Challenge”

By David Ben Gurion

A few minutes before four o'clock, I arrived with a heavy heart at the Tel Aviv Museum to proclaim the creation of the Jewish State that we had decided to name Israel. The auditorium was full. An excited and elated crowd blocked the streets.

We had hung an enormous portrait of Theodor Herzl behind the podium in the auditorium. The philharmonic orchestra played Hatikva, the official national anthem of the new State of Israel. With both a heavy and an elated heart, I then took the declaration in my hand to read it. Everyone rose to listen and I tried to overcome my emotion to be able to read it with a clear and solemn voice. Rabbi Maimon, our Dayan, pronounced the benediction that thanks the Omnipotent for having “sustained us in life to reach this day.”

I informed the assembly that the members of the National Council in Jerusalem who, unfortunately, could not join us, had gathered together in the offices of the Jewish Agency and that they let us know that they were rallying behind the Declaration of Independence. I then read the proclamation of the Council, which became the provisional Council of the State under the Declaration of Independence...

Once it had been read, I signed the Declaration and I requested that the members of the Council come forward to the podium to sign it, one by one. We left spaces for the signatures of our colleagues in Jerusalem....At last, I declared that the State of Israel was, henceforth, an accomplished fact and we concluded the meeting.

The crowds sang and danced in the streets. I immediately went to our headquarters. On that day, I wrote in my journal: “Four o'clock in the afternoon: The Declaration of Independence and the creation of the State of Israel. From now on, its fate depends on our armed forces.” At the headquarters, there were alarming reports about large concentrations of enemy forces all along our eastern, northern and southern borders. Considerable convoys of armed Arab troops were moving about on the roads.

At midnight, the High Commissioner, Sir Alan Cunningham, left Palestine and the Arab invasion began. I returned to the headquarters.

Just before sunrise, I sent a message to America by means of the Hagana radio, which was broadcast from Tel Aviv and which had just come out of the underground to become the State of Israel's official radio station...In my address, I briefly presented the development of our fight, evoking the U.N. Resolution of November 29, 1947, the declaration of war against Israel by the Arab nations, members of the United Nations that were defying the authority of the international organization, the dangers that threatened us and our determination to resist even in the case of an organized attack by land, sea and air. As I spoke, the Egyptians dropped their first bombs on Mahane Yona, not far from the radio station. The explosions were deafening but I had become accustomed to the bombings during the blitz of London. I calmly concluded my message and announced that the Egyptians were bombing Tel Aviv at that very moment.

I then hurried to the area that had been bombed to discover that the airfield and the power station in Tel Aviv were the targets of the enemy's first bombing expedition. A hangar was on fire and some of the airplanes had been hit.

From there I went home. On the way, I saw the people of Tel Aviv through their windows. The sun was rising. You could see the anxiety on their faces, but no signs of panic or fear. I knew in the deepest part of me that these people would hold out well.



Seated next to David Ben Gurion and Moshe Shertok, Eliezer Kaplan signs the Declaration of Independence.