Peulat Shabbat 8/4

Nation State Law

**Intro:** Two weeks ago, Israel (Netanyahu) passed a new law called the “nation state law”. The law does three big things:

1. It states that “the right to exercise national self-determination” in Israel is “unique to the Jewish people.”
2. It establishes Hebrew as Israel’s official language, and downgrades Arabic — a language widely spoken by Arab Israelis — to a “special status.”
3. It establishes “Jewish settlement as a national value” and mandates that the state “will labor to encourage and promote its establishment and development.”

A slight majority of Israel is pleased with the new law it promotes the Jewish state of Israel, while many Arabs, Palestinians, Liberal american Jews, and Israelis on the left view the law as racist and undemocratic.

**Dis-quessions (discussion questions):**

* Can Israel be both a “Jewish state” that protects and celebrates Jewish identity, and a liberal democracy that protects the rights of all minorities, including non-Jews?
  + How does this law affect that balance?
  + What makes Israel different from the other religious (Islamic) states? *(those states are not democratic but Israel is)*
* Does this law fairly represent the entirety of the population of Israel?
* Why do you think this law was passed now? *(In reality, Netanyahu was probably looking for a way to get some brownie points before the next election which may be held early. You can talk about how after moving the embassy, maybe the government is trying to use that momentum to make more unofficial things official.)*
* What do you think it means that Arabic will be given a “special status”, but not be an official language in Israel?
* **What laws are already in place that promote specifically Jewish culture in Israel? *(There is a tax to open stores on Shabbat, the work week is Sun.-Thurs., The right to return, Arabs are not required to serve in the army, only Jews can get married in Israel etc.)***
  + Why are these laws important?
  + Why might people find these laws unfair?
  + How do the laws of Israel help define it as a Jewish Democratic State?
* **What laws are already in place that promote democracy in Israel? (voting, any citizen can be elected into office, federal funding goes to minority citizens too - education, hospitals, etc.)**
  + Why are these laws important?
  + Why might people find these laws unfair?
  + How do the laws of Israel help define it as a Jewish Democratic State?
* How will the new law impact the future of Jews in Israel? Minorities? *(More dominance/control for Jews, people may revolt [and many already have], 2 state solution… etc.)*
* If you could design a law to balance the democratic and Jewish principles, what would you think the law should be?

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