**Proposal for a Writing and Contemplation Project:**

**Visions for Israel in Ten Years – 2034**

**Standing at a Crossroads**

Difficult and challenging days, the likes of which we have never previously known, have befallen the State of Israel and Israeli society. We are mourning those who were murdered in the attacked settlements and communities and the fallen soldiers. We worry about the hostages and our responsibility to bring them home. We feel the pain and sorrow of the evacuees and their unimaginable uncertainty about the future.

The root of the Hebrew word for crisis (*mashber* מַשְׁבֵּר) also means birth.[[1]](#footnote-1) Labor pains bring about a new creation. The question remains what its character will be.

This is relevant to the critical historical crossroads at which the Jewish people and the State of Israel now stand.

A massacre was perpetrated in the State of Israel, at a scale incomparably vaster than any terrorist incident or mass murder of Jews since the Shoah. Those terrible hours in the western Negev echoed throughout Israel, into the public sphere as well as the personal space of each and every individual. They eroded, both in our perception and in our actual lives, the line that had previously divided between the time prior to the establishment of the state and the era in which there is a sovereign State of Israel.

Until now, in Israeli and Jewish consciousness, such a horrific massacre belonged to the history of the Jews in the Diaspora, not to our present existence in the State of Israel.

During the attacks on October 7, the state did not live up to its most basic mission – to provide a safe haven for its residents. Our mental and emotional sense of security has been destroyed.

This shocking and incomprehensible event followed a months-long period leading up to it, during which the streets of Israel were burning with the fire of intense internal discord, lack of trust between sectors of the population, and lack of trust in the leadership.

But during this current time, Israeli citizens have shown incredible resilience and strength. Regular and reserve soldiers demonstrated selfless bravery as they mobilized and stepped up to defend the country without hesitation. Also on the home front, we have seen greatness of spirit in the rapid and influential efforts that organizations and individuals have made, offering mutual aid and launching projects in expressions solidarity that crossed community boundaries. Israelis discovered the deeply shared fate that connects them.

**What Now?**

The struggle may be long. When the young people who now carry the destiny of the country on their shoulders return, they will ask large and important questions, with the full force of their strength and spirit.

What kind of society will we be? What will be its Jewish character? In which directions should the State of Israel go? How will the collective memory of this time be formulated and recorded?

Alongside these fundamental questions, simpler and more basic questions will be asked: How do we move forward from here? What will be our sources of resilience? How can we not fall into despair and hopelessness?

How will we rise again to create, build, and envision something new, recognizing reality while striving to change it?

These events have subverted many people’s fundamental worldview. We face spiritual, moral, and political challenges. In multiple areas, things will not return to what they were before. These changes may be a link, transitioning between one historical period and the next. The State of Israel and Judaism have once again come to a crossroads: one way leads to renaissance, restoration, and regeneration, while the other could lead to our decline, humiliation, and social, economic, and spiritual collapse. We could descend into despair and depression from which it will be difficult to arise. We could return to our internal disputes, filled with anger and hatred. Difficult and painful questions are already being asked, and this will continue even more intensely after the war ends.

It is our responsibility to initiate a process of contemplation and visioning that will give us the ability to offer new and revitalizing directions of thought. We must lay the foundation for deep deliberation and clarification.

More than ever before, we need fresh and innovative ideas. We need the ability to express ourselves in a clear, comprehensive, and attractive way that draws on a wide range of sources of knowledge, cultures, and traditions. We must grow from them and use them to help ourselves move forward.

**The Vision for Israel Project at the National Library, in Collaboration with the Matanel Foundation**

**Program Course**

In the current phase, ten writers will be invited to draft and write short articles on the topic of what the character of Israel society and the State of Israel may look like in another decade - in 2034. This project will cover a wide range of fields. Each article will be about ten pages long, or approximately 24,000 thousand characters (including letters, punctuation marks, and spaces).

The writers selected for this fellowship will receive a scholarship and will participate in a program with two facilitators who will mentor them and assist in the writing process. The facilitators, with the help of the National Library’s experts, will guide the writers in exploring ideas and texts from the library’s resources. Each of the facilitators will provide personal assistance to help the writers create a structured, clear, and well-formulated article. During the program, the writers will meet with their peers to discuss their articles, exchange ideas, and engage in dialogue.

**Outputs**

1. The articles will be collected into a book, which will be distributed in appropriate outlets.
2. A ten-episode podcast will be produced. In each episode, one writer will be interviewed by a professional facilitator, in order to explain the main points of their vision to listeners.

For writing and participating in the discussions, the writers will receive a scholarship of NIS 10,000. The articles will not include comments other than references.

**Program Stages**

1. Locating target audiences for announcing the program and publication of a call for proposals and nominations
2. Selection process and acceptance of candidates
3. A seven-session program at the National Library, led by the facilitators in collaboration with experts and curators at the National Library
4. Compilation and submission of the articles
5. Editing and printing the articles as a book and distributing it
6. Producing and disseminating the podcast

**Potential Topics for the Articles:**

* The education system: what will be the nature of the education system, in both its formal and informal aspects?
* Israeli culture: what will culture look like in the State of Israel?
* Judaism in practice: what type of Judaism will be practiced, by which populations, and organized around which institutions?
* The future of agriculture
* Industry and high-tech
* The connection with Diaspora Jewry
* The place and integration of Arab society in the State of Israel
* The State of Israel’s foreign relations
* The relationship between Israel’s geographic center and periphery
* The place of religion in the state
* Jerusalem’s status in the world
* Higher education
* The media, in all its formats
* The legal system
* The governmental regime in Israel
* The ecological and climate crisis
* The healthcare system
* Local governments and their relationship with state institutions
* Other ideas and topics

1. This meaning appears in the Even-Shoshan Dictionary, apparently based on the following sources: a) Isaiah 66:9 “Shall I who bring on labor (*ashbir* אַשְׁבִּ֛יר) not bring about birth? Said the Lord; Shall I who cause birth shut the womb? Said your God.” b) Rashi on Exodus 1:16 “UPON THE STOOLS — the seat for a woman in the act of childbirth; in another passage (Isaiah 37:3) Scripture calls it *mashber* מַשְׁבֵּר.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)