

# Weekly Teaching

## April 20, 2018

The founding of the State of Israel in 1948 was celebrated this week.

Israel was born into a state of war; her Arab neighbors refused to accept the UN Partition that declared Israel as a Jewish State.

Today, Israel is still surrounded by enemies, yet it continues to both grow and prosper.

In 1776, Benjamin Franklin proposed that the Great Seal of the United States depict a scene from the Exodus from Egypt with the motto underneath: "Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God."

As is the case with our own nation, the modern state of Israel is grounded upon our shared democratic values and principles and still is the only true democracy in the Middle East.

Israel possesses diversity in culture and safeguards an open society that guarantees both civil and political liberties for all citizens, regardless of race, religion, gender or creed.

75% of Israel's citizenry is Jewish and 20% is Arab; mostly Muslim, but also Christian.

The remaining citizens are Bahai, Circassian, Druze or unclassified by religion.

Israel's Arab citizens have equal rights with Jewish citizens, and Israeli Arabs participate in all aspects of Israeli life, including the Supreme Court and Parliament.

Hebrew and Arabic are the two official languages of the state.

Like the United States, Israel safeguards freedom of speech and press, freedom of assembly, the right to petition government and the freedom of religion.

Israel is the only country in the Middle East that provides full equality for women.

And, Israel leads the world in promoting equal rights for LGBTQ individuals.

Our Judaism teaches that all people are created equal and that all human beings are responsible for each other.

Israel is by no means a perfect democracy; and like our own Country, needs to continually be diligent to live up to its democratic values.

Israel's political leaders must sincerely strive to pursue an agreement with the Palestinians that will guarantee both peace and security for all.

Additionally, Israeli leadership needs to effectively address the theoretically inclined and assure they do not succeed in fraying the democratic values of the Jewish State.

On Thursday, June 21 at 7:30 pm, Temple Sholom and AIPAC will present author and journalist Yossi Klein Halevi.

His most recent book published in May, *My Palestinian Neighbor*, is a provocative look at Palestinian suffering and longing for reconciliation as he explores how the conflict looks through Israeli eyes.

Halevi untangles the ideological and emotional knot that has defined the conflict for nearly a century, unraveling the complex strands of faith, pride, anger and anguish he feels as a Jew living in Israel.

He also will discuss the painful choices confronting Israelis and Palestinians that will ultimately help determine the fate of the region.

Yossi Klein Halevi once wrote that Jewish history speaks of two biblical commands to remember:

- *The first commands us to remember that we were strangers in the land of Egypt. Its message is: “We were oppressed; so do not then become the oppressors.”*
- *The second commands us to remember how the tribe of Amalek launched a surprise attack on us in the desert. Its message is: “Don’t be naive. Enemies of Israel could sneak up on us at any moment and they want us dead.”*

Democracy will always struggle to find the right balance between safeguarding individual rights and safeguarding individual safety.

We confront this challenge in the United States, and Israel confronts this challenge in our Jewish State.

Whether we are more “hawkish” or “dovish” we can learn how to more effectively listen to each other’s concerns, and validate each other’s feelings.

When we succeed in this endeavor we live up to the democratic values that we all embrace within our lives.

Jonathan Haidt, the author of *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion*, wrote:

- *The more passionate and angry we are, the more we need each other, because we are blinder than we think. We live in a world of outrage where all conflicts are getting hotter and more divisive. But if you engage in a back and forth, with some humility, then you can make progress towards truth.*

I encourage you to join us for Yossi Klein Halevi’s presentation and to engage in humble dialogue that can help us progress to truth.

But, also, it’s important that we celebrate the miracle that is Israel, and I hope that we will have a wonderful turnout for our Israel@70 Concert, featuring Cantorial Soloist Gòn Halevi, on Sunday, May 6 at 4:00 pm.

*Yom Huledet Sameach* — Happy 70th Birthday Israel!!

Shabbat Shalom,

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