

Weekly Teaching

May 10, 2019

This past Wednesday evening, Israel observed *Yom Hazikaron*—Memorial Day for all those who have sacrificed their lives in defense of the Jewish State.

Then, 24 hours later, we celebrate *Yom Ha'atzmaut*—Israel's Independence Day.

It is a challenging, yet authentic Jewish experience, to transition so suddenly between one's greatest sorrows to one's greatest joys.

God tells us in the Torah that we humans are given “Life and Death, Blessings and Curses”; we are to “Choose Life”.

So, we observe our 24 hours of *Yom Hazikaron* in great solemnity, and then we transition to the next 24 hours of unbridled joy.

I specifically say “we” and not “Israelis”.

Israel is the one and only Jewish State, available to any Jew for their “right of return”; the only immediate safe haven for Jews who would otherwise be trapped.

Our Jewish history quickly informs us of what occurs when Jews don't have national self-autonomy as a constant option.

There is a reason why more than half of world Jewry now lives in Israel; for many it is their only safe option.

When someone says I am only an “anti-Zionist” not an “anti-Semite”, they are almost always being disingenuous.

An anti-Semite is anti-Jew; to deny Jews their right to national self-autonomy is anti-Jew.

To not wish a secure Israel is to imperil the majority of world Jewry.

Israel is often the primary target of the anti-Semite because the Jew hater can't say “I wish to eliminate Jews”, but they are allowed (even at times encouraged) to declare they wish to diminish the viability of the world's one and only Jewish State.

The B.D.S. movement (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) is disguised to be simply a social justice protest movement, yet their leadership acknowledges that their purpose is to destroy the Jewish State.

B.D.S. activists openly acknowledge that destruction of Israel is the goal.

Anna Baltzer declares: “We need to wipe out Israel.”

As'ad Abu Khalil declares: “The real aim of B.D.S. is to bring down the State of Israel.”

Ahmad Moor declares: “B.D.S. does mean the end of the Jewish state.”

And, the founder of B.D.S., Omar Barghouti, declares over and over again: “We oppose a Jewish state in any part of Palestine.”

The B.D.S. activists are part and parcel of the anti-Zionist movement that constantly attempts to de-legitimize our over 3000 year old historic connection with the land of Israel.

The desire is to “de-Zionize” Israel, remove Jewish control and remove the Jews.

The anti-Zionist hides within their disguise of merely concern for others; in truth they are not wanting a fair and secure peace for Jew and Palestinian, and are just biding time until there are no Jews to need to make peace with.

For those of us who believe in the need for a “Two-State” solution; the anti-Zionist pretends B.D.S. is just a non-violent social justice means to this fair goal.

Yet the anti-Zionist doesn’t identify the areas of compromise and doesn’t recognize the Jewish narrative to Israel as being valid.

The naïve supporter of B.D.S. can so easily be duped that it’s merely a mechanism for a fair peace.

The PLO was created in 1964, before the ‘67 war and the creation of Jewish West Bank Settlements.

The PLO’s mission statement—three years before the Six Day War, Israel’s defensive war against another Arab attempt at Israel’s destruction—was overt denial of Israel’s right to exist.

Before the Oslo Accords, the PLO’s mantra, “No negotiation, no recognition and no peace” was known as the 3 No’s.

With the Oslo agreement, the PLO (what became the Palestinian Authority), formally acknowledged Israel’s right to exist, renounced terrorism, and agreed to change the portions of its charter that called for Israel’s destruction.

Because of this, Israel recognized the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people.

But, sadly, the framework of the Oslo Accords was never followed in full by the Palestinian authority.

And now Mahmoud Abbas states “Oslo is dead”.

As Abba Eban famously declared: “The Arabs never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity.”

There have been significant statehood opportunities that Palestinian leaders have willfully missed, and now a fair two-State solution appears less and less likely.

What does a Jew do who cares both for his or her fellow Jews, and for humanity as a whole?

To begin, we can’t fall into a trap that might risk self-harm.

Sympathy for B.D.S. is especially insidious because the only difference between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism is that the latter is a more concrete means by which to directly attack Jews.

Anti-Semitism is often simply the feeling of Jew hatred; anti-Zionism is the means by which to act upon this senseless hatred.

So no Jew should fall into a trap of negotiating for one’s right to exist.

And no Jew should accept a moral double standard by which the Jewish State is held to a different set of rules than other Nation-States.

To go further, as should be the case for any National agenda, no Jew should accept anything less for Israel than Jews being allowed to not just survive as a Jewish nation, but to thrive as a Jewish nation.

With our being anchored within this Zionist foundation, then we should actively pursue any negotiations where a Palestinian Nation based upon democratic ideals might exist within borders that can be fair and safe for both sides.

Israelis are our Jewish brothers and sisters; they are routinely attacked by acts of terror.

The most recent round of Hamas rockets was a stark reminder of how perilous the danger remains for our fellow Jews.

Israelis live their lives when a red alert can sound any minute forcing them to run for shelter.

Imagine the trauma children undergo every day, especially in Southern Israel.

As a reminder, you can google videos of Israeli pre-schoolers singing the “Boom” song during red alerts in order to help them cope while moving to shelter ([click here](#) to watch one).

We American Jews need to remember *Yom Hazikaron*; to feel the solemnity of what it is to have had Jews lay down their lives for the Jewish State.

And, from our sorrow; we need to celebrate.

We need to celebrate with pride that Israel is a vibrant democracy that possesses a free press, civil rights for women, LGBTQs and minorities, etc.

We need to celebrate Israel’s ingenuity and innovation with computer science, medicine, energy, and water conservation, etc.

We need to celebrate that Israel is helping to solve some of the world’s most pressing problems.

We need to celebrate that Israel—even with all she must endure—still remains true to our Jewish moral code. We retain our compassion for all, and we pray that evil doers will change their evil ways, and that a fair and secure peace can be created for all.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Mitch

rabbimitch@templesholom.com