

Weekly Teaching

May 5, 2017

This past week we celebrated first Israel's Memorial Day (*Yom Hazikaron*) and then Israel's Independence Day (*Yom Haatzmaut*).

The two holidays run together; an emotional roller coaster.

I have always felt a deep connection to Israel, but since our oldest son made *aliyah*, I find myself even more deeply rooted in my own Zionism.

I take enormous pride in our son's decision, and while I immensely miss his close physical proximity, I am gratified that over the past five months he appears happier than I've ever observed since his college graduation.

Every act of violence aimed at Israelis takes on even greater concern and my admiration for all Israelis increases as I observe how as a Jewish Nation, Israelis simply possess as a "given" their need to live courageous lives in which they remain unaffected by the threat or even occurrence of senseless violence that targets them.

When I take a mission delegation to Israel, one of the more important experiences is visiting *Yad Vashem*, Israel's Holocaust Memorial Museum. There, the visitor is told the narrative of the *Shoah* (Holocaust) through pictures, words, video and other advanced technology.

Yad Vashem very effectively conveys both the history and the full extent of the horror that is the Holocaust.

But *Yad Vashem* is also an architectural wonder, and as you leave the museum you come out of a dramatic opening by which you immediately see the hills of Jerusalem. This vision creates a strong feeling of personal and collective liberation. Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon Z'L, said of *Yad Vashem*:

"When you leave this museum, you see the sky, of Jerusalem. I know how a Jew feels when he emerges from these depths and breathes the air of Jerusalem. He feels at home. He feels protected. He feels the terrible difference between living in one's homeland, in a country which can provide protection, and standing alone, utterly defenseless... He knows Israel is the only place in the world where Jews have the right to defend themselves, and that proves the Jewish people will never know another Holocaust."

Prime Minister Sharon Z'L reminds world Jewry and the world that it's the very vibrancy of Israel that is our response against those who wish us harm because we are Jews.

The politics of the Middle East is complicated. There are no simple answers to the extremely difficult questions.

Palestinians have a right to a secure and peaceful land of their own; significant compromise will ultimately be demanded of both sides should an agreement ever come in place.

Such a framework as was offered at Camp David II appears to ultimately be what might be possible one day.

While the situation is complicated, our need to support Israel is simple.

Half of the world's Jewry now lives in our Jewish homeland.

Israel's security cannot be compromised any more than we would tolerate our own lives to be at unnecessary risk in America.

Jews and non-Jews need to be consistent in their expectations of the Jewish State; to hold Israelis to a different standard than other nations is its own form of anti-Semitism.

Our Israeli brothers and sisters are at the Jewish “front lines,” and we owe them our united and absolute support.

We ask God to continually bless the State of Israel and her citizens.

May our Israeli brothers and sisters continually access the strength of their spirit and their resolve to withstand any and all challenges.

May the leadership of Israel possess wisdom, and be able to effectively navigate the inherent tensions that come with the need for both Peace and Security.

May the men and women of the Israeli Defense Forces always feel protected and be safe.

May Israel and our world know a day when peace shall reign, and all will know joy and happiness in our Holy Land.

Amen!

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Mitch

rabbimitch@templesholom.com