



Jewish Community Center of Paramus
Congregation Beth Tikvah
304 E. Midland Avenue ~ Paramus NJ 07652 ~ 201.262.7691

A Shabbat Message from Rabbi Arthur Weiner

Friday, April 16, 2021 ~ Parsha: Tazria-Metzora

Dear JCCP/CBT Family,

Yesterday, I participated in exclusive conversation with Yossi Klein HaLevi, one of Israel's most influential thinkers and journalists. This event, sponsored by AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) was one of several Israel Independence Day events that I attended during the past week. I hope you took the opportunity to register for some of the events that I had sent to the congregation earlier this week.

Mr. Klein spoke about many important topics. He spoke about the relationship between Israel and the United States. He spoke about the amazing possibilities of the Abraham Accords, and Israel's establishment of full diplomatic relations with the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, Morocco, and the possibility of new partnerships in the future. He spoke about Israel's recent elections, and had some interesting perspectives that I had not heard before.

I had the opportunity to directly ask him a question, and want to share his answer with you. My question to him was, "what is the one message I should deliver to my synagogue this Shabbat to mark Yom Ha'atzmaut?"

And he answered with one simple word: gratitude. It's a great answer.

Israel's Independence Day is a time for all of us to acknowledge our thanks for the state of Israel, how it has added to our lives, and elevated world Jewry. If 1945 and the aftermath of the Holocaust was a culmination of the powerlessness of Jews and the dangers Jews have faced since the destruction of the Second Temple, then birth of Israel in 1948 marked the return of the Jewish people to the world stage. The birth of the modern state of Israel represented Jewish power, sovereignty, the ability to provide a real home for Jews in distress, and to take control of our own destiny for the first time since the Maccabees.

We have not been demonstrating our gratitude too often lately. It is not that we no longer care about Israel, but too many American Jews have disengaged. That is a terrible mistake. We should really consider why the reasons for that might be.

All relationships change in time, and we simply cannot relate to Israel like we did years ago. The perspective of people who remember the condition of world Jewry before the establishment of Israel will differ than those who have only known a secure, powerful and even wealthy Israel. Those who lived through the difficult days of the Six Day War or the Yom Kippur War when Israel found itself alone facing powerful enemies who made no secret of their desire to destroy Israel and her inhabitants will understand Israel differently than the Israel today, a high-tech superpower and one of the world's top weapons exporters. Our relationship with Israel constantly evolves, as do all loving relationships.

We tend to dwell, sadly in my opinion, on many of Israel's faults these days. We are often confused and even alarmed by its government and its decisions. We may not agree with all of Israel's policies or decisions. We are concerned about public disagreements between United States United States and Israel, and worry about the possibility of public tensions over the nuclear negotiations with Iran and other issues.

But Yossi Klein HaLevi is right. Our gratitude, thanks and appreciation for Israel must remain a constant. For even if we have trouble articulating it, the state of Israel allows us to stand a little taller, and enjoys a level of security and respect that previous generations could only dream of.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Arthur Weiner