

May 10, 2019 /5 Iyyar 5779

Dear chevreh,

This past week in Israel was the transition from Yom HaZikaron, the remembrance day dedicated to fallen soldiers and civilian victims of terrorism to Yom Ha'Atzma'ut, Independence Day. In Tel Aviv, there was an Israeli-Palestinian memorial ceremony organized by Combatants for Peace and the Parents Circle Families Forum. Combatants for Peace is an organization of Israelis and Palestinians dedicated to non-violence, and the Parents Circle Families Forum is made up of a group of bereaved Israeli and Palestinian families who work together for reconciliation. This event represented some of the best visionaries in the area, those working together to pave the way for a two-state solution based on cooperation and non-violence, and through a shared narrative of grief and hope. However, some of the worst elements of human nature had their day as well with the recent flare-up of rockets from Gaza, and dozens of right-wing activists who gathered on the evening of the joint memorial service, spitting and hurling invective at members of bereaved families. May next year's Yom HaZikaron and Yom Ha'Atzma'ut find Israel a free and independent country and also a peaceful, fully safe and just one as well, on the road to being at peace with its neighbors. There will be a Reconstructionist trip to Israel in the summer of 2020 with several synagogues in the greater Philadelphia area. I will keep you posted on details, but mark your calendars for late June, 2020 if you are interested.

I'm heartbroken to hear 12-year-old Nate Holley, a student in Colorado, say "I was hiding in the corner, and they were right outside the door. I had my hands on a metal baseball bat, just in case, because I was going to go down fighting, if I was going to go down." Why does a 12 year-old have to be in this situation? Why do children and adults need to throw their bodies in front of shooters, giving their lives to save others? What are we doing wrong as a country? When will we choose sensible gun laws and find creative solutions to stop the carnage, instead of relying on our brave students and congregants to perform heroic acts? Rabbi Menachem Creditor wrote "Yes, the ongoing American Gun Violence Epidemic is unfathomable. It defies our hearts' capacities with staggering pain and loss. But what makes us human is our defiance of that limitation. It is taught in Jewish mysticism that the Holy of Holies, once a part of the ancient Jerusalem Temple, was cosmically relocated to the human heart. So let us be brave. Let us defy the darkness and will our hearts to pulse with hope in the face of it all. Let us imagine a world free of violence, cleansed of hatred,

a world that is safe for our children. Then let's chart a course to split the Sea of Red we face today." [4/28/19 blogs.timesofisrael.com]

We continue to count the Omer, between Pesach and leading up to Shavuot, which commemorates the spring harvest and the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. We are on the 20th day. On the 33rd day, which is called Lag B'Omer, Scott and I would like to invite you to our home in the evening for dessert and snacks. Weather-permitting, we will have a bonfire in our backyard, roast marshmallows and sing songs. If the weather doesn't cooperate, we can sit inside and have a campfire without the fire. Please let me know if you and/or your children are interested at rabbidianamiller@gmail.com I will determine what time it begins based on whether families are interested in attending.

This year we will be having a Tikkun Leil Shavuot on the evening of Saturday, June 8th, beginning with Havdalah and snacks followed by chanting, meditation and late-night Torah learning. Time to be determined. We will have services at 10:00 am on Sunday, June 9th followed by a dairy luncheon which will be provided, but which you can supplement.

Please email me at rabbidianamiller@gmail.com if you have questions and to RSVP for either or both of these events.

Shabbat shalom,

Rabbi Diana