

## Tzav 5776

I stand before you today inspired and energized- not just from Purim but from this year's AIPAC Policy Conference that I was privileged to attend earlier this week in Washington DC. This year's conference was the largest ever- with 18,700 delegates, and our synagogue delegation was the largest ever- with close to 40 shul members, including many college and high school students. In the upcoming weeks I hope some of our participants will share their experiences with us in various venues. It's never too early to register for next year's conference- with a steep discount through the beginning of April and fully refundable until the beginning of next year. [Click here to register](#)

If you were following the conference from afar you probably heard a lot about the presentations made by 4 of the presidential candidates. I found the candidates' speeches by and large predictable. What was memorable for me was the context of those speeches: within 12 hours, 4 presidential candidates spoke from the same stage, and that stage was hosted by an organization dedicated to strengthening the US-Israel relationship.

The conference has outgrown the Washington Convention Center for its general sessions. There's not enough room for all attendees to sit together. This year for the first time, the Verizon Center (home of the Wizards basketball team and the Capitals hockey team) was filled to capacity with pro-Israel citizen activists. Because of the arena setting, the program felt to me like a pep rally atmosphere. My favorite moments were those that allowed me to learn about Israel today and celebrate the Jewish state's successes. Some examples:

Taking care of the vulnerable and marginalized within society:

**Sulamot:** a music program for underprivileged youth created by the Israel Philharmonic orchestra. (Krizel's performance brought me to tears and has continued to do so as I've watched it a few times since online with my children.)

**Ro'im Rachok:** The IDF's program for soldiers with Autism. These men and women are serving in key roles for the security of Israel, and through this integration are able to gain confidence and important life skills.

Technological advancements- through innovations that better the world and help people:

**Israeli water technology-** being used not only in third world African countries but in California as well

**Inventions like the Softwheel-** a wheel designed with suspension inside the spokes, allowing for a smoother more versatile ride on wheelchairs and beyond- they literally reinvented the wheel!

(These and many other videos from the conference are available on [AIPAC's website](#)- I encourage you to take look)

When most of what we hear from Israel and about Israel is bad news- it's refreshing- and important to hear these "feel good stories" that brighten our own moods and change the narrative.

Changing the narrative is critical to maintaining US support for Israel in today's environment- among the American public and within the halls of Congress and the White House.

In one of the breakout sessions (in the convention center) that I attended, I listened to a panel discussing BDS- the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions movement that declare Israel to be an apartheid state (tell that to the new class of Arab Israelis sworn in this week into the IDF) and deserving of scrutiny and economic boycott. On that panel was The Honorable Irwin Cotler a former Member of Canadian Parliament and human rights activist. He challenged the audience to reframe the BDS movement as being anti-human rights. A great example of this is the case of Soda Stream. Its plant was in Maale Adumim until it

was pressured by BDS movement to move to the Negev- causing hundreds of Palestinians to lose their jobs.

We learn of the importance of how we frame something from this morning's Torah reading. Parshat Tzav reiterates the various sacrifices that are offered on the altar.

When it comes to the sin and guilt offerings the Torah says

Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, This is יְחַדְּבֵר אֶל אֶהֱרֹן וְאֶל בְּנָיו לֵאמֹר זֹאת  
the law of the sin offering: The sin offering shall תּוֹרַת הַחֹטְאֹת בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁחַט הָעֹלָה  
be slaughtered before the Lord in the place where תִּשְׁחַט הַחֹטְאֹת לְפָנַי יְהוָה קֹדֶשׁ קֹדָשִׁים  
the burnt offering is slaughtered. It is a holy of הוּא  
holies.

And

They shall slaughter the guilt offering in the בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁחָטוּ אֶת הָעֹלָה יִשְׁחָטוּ  
place where they slaughter the burnt offering; אֶת הָאֲשָׁם וְאֶת דָּמוֹ יִזְרֹק עַל הַמִּזְבֵּיחַ  
and its blood shall be dashed upon the altar, סָבִיב:  
around.

Where is the Olah offering slaughtered? On the North side of mizbeiach. So why not just tell us that these two other sacrifices are also slaughtered on the North side of the Mizbeaich?!

The Gemara in Sotah explains that the Torah wants to encourage the sinner to repent and bring their korban. To do so, the Torah mandates that the sinner not be singled out- neither in the text or when s/he comes to bring the korban. Had there been a separate location for sinners, they might feel ostracized and not come altogether. The purpose of korbanot is rehabilitation, not to penalize and embarrass the sinner. In this way, the Torah is changing the paradigm on the purpose of a sin offering. Sinners are to be encouraged and rehabilitated, not punished and shamed.

We just celebrated Purim. One of the themes of the holiday is “*VeNahapoch Hu*”; how there is a complete reversal of fortunes in the Story of Esther. At first the Jews are vulnerable, at the end they are powerful. At first the Jews are divided at the end they are united. *Venahafoch Hu* is the attitude and challenge that we must accept as we advocate and educate on behalf of Israel- highlighting what is good and right about the State of Israel- changing the narrative in order to help people understand just how great and important Israel is- for the Jewish People and for the Western World.