

# A Letter from Rabbi Cooper – Past, Present and Future: Last Shabbat, This Shabbat and Pesach

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Dear Friends,

Last Shabbat, I shared some thoughts which occurred to me following the recent AIPAC Policy Conference in Washington, DC. AIPAC's work is indispensable to the strength and security of Israel. However, beyond safety and security, Jews must also be concerned with finding a way to make peace. This "**Mandate of Peace**" was the sermon's focus. After services, we held a discussion on this topic in which a number of different views and perspectives were shared. I was asked, at that time, to post the text of my sermon on our website. That sermon is now posted. Feel free to read, share and respond to it as you see fit.

In this context, I mention, as well, the upcoming visit of Rabbi Donniel Hartman, of the Hartman Institute in Jerusalem. He will be here as our Scholar-in-Residence over Shabbat, April 4 and 5. **His topic for the weekend will be: "Israel and the Palestinians: The Values That Guide Us."** Once again, his visit to our community comes through the generosity of Phil Wachs and Juliet Spitzer. More information about Rabbi Hartman's visit will follow shortly.

This coming Shabbat (3/22), I shall return to some of the stories garnered from my recent trip to Georgia (in the Former Soviet Union) and Israel. I continue to marvel at the work being done for the Jews of Georgia and certain segments of the population in Israel. What are equally important and impressive are the fortitude, determination and undying desire of Jews, wherever we go, to retain their connections to Judaism. They refuse to despair or wallow in their sorrow, even when they have reason to become depressed or deflated. On Shabbat, I will share some uplifting, joyful stories of those for whom life has provided plenty of ammunition and reason to be angry.

Finally, in just a few weeks, we shall celebrate Pesach. Two programs to keep in mind:

1. This year, for the first time, **our synagogue will host a congregational second seder**, which Lori and I will lead together, on Tuesday evening, April 15. I write at this time to remind those who may be interested in joining us for this seder, to sign up, sooner rather than later. The seder will be appropriate for children and adults, with participation encouraged (expected) from

every table. Spaces are filling up quickly and, in order to be able to accommodate those who would like to join us, I encourage you to sign up through our office (or email to: [gelliott@tbhbe.org](mailto:gelliott@tbhbe.org)), as individuals or as a table, as soon as possible.

2. I am thrilled that my children from Jerusalem, Yonatan, Eliana and our granddaughters, Ta'ir and Rakia, will be visiting during Pesach. In Jerusalem, Yonatan works at the Israel headquarters of the JDC (otherwise known as "The Joint"). While here, Yonatan has offered to provide us with a general introduction to the work of the JDC in Israel with which he is involved. He will bring with him, as well, the most current and updated report on the Jews of the Ukraine and Crimea and on JDC's indispensable work to support and care for them. **Yonatan will be speaking to us on Shabbat, Chol HaMoed Pesach, Saturday morning, April 19.**

At Temple Beth Hillel–Beth El, there is always a full plate of activities, speakers and events intended to enrich, enliven and inform our community. I look forward to seeing you at one, some or all of the times mentioned above. In the meantime,

Shalom,

Neil S. Cooper

Rabbi