

This Week's Shabbat Message:

A Week of Pausing, Memorializing---and then Celebrating

Last week, more than 400 people came to Temple Sinai to observe Yom HaShoah. This week another 400 plus crowded into our Zwerin Sanctuary for a moving and meaningful community observance of *Yom HaZikaron*, the Memorial Day for those who died in defense of Israel and those who are the victims of terror. And immediately afterwards, we begin the celebration of *Yom HaAtzmaut*, Israel Independence Day. It is an emotional roller coaster that both reaffirms the vital role and connection we have to Israel, as well as a challenge for us to consider how we observe our American Memorial Day and July 4 Independence Day celebrations.

Of course, the circumstances and realities of Americans and Israelis are quite different. While embarrassing numbers of Americans have little or no knowledge of the Holocaust, a goodly number of Israelis live among the survivors or are direct descendants of those who experienced the murderous nightmare in Europe. In America, a relatively small percentage of us serve in the defense of our country---or even know someone who does. In Israel, the vast majority of Jews have served or are serving in the Israel Defense Forces. In Israel, most personally know someone who was killed in action. In America, Memorial Day and July 4 Independence Day are times for picnics, ballgames and shopping the sales at the malls. In Israel, a siren sounds on *Yom HaZikaron* and everyone stops to remember. And this year, *Yom HaAtzmaut*, as Israel celebrates its 70th year of Independence, people will marvel at the hard fought and won miracle that requires daily vigilance against tireless enemies.

Don't get me wrong. Israelis would by far prefer Memorial and Independence Days filled with fun parties, cookouts, and shopping sprees. They long for the security we enjoy in America. They can only dream of a time when their nation can take for granted that it is safe and that there is no existential threat to disturb one's sleep or comfort.

In the meantime, each Israeli observance is packed with very real and personal connections. This Friday, Temple Sinai will reaffirm that we, too, have a real and personal connection to Israel. Our Erev Shabbat service begins at 5:45pm and will be filled with special music and our celebrating

Israel's 70th birthday. For those who registered, we will immediately gather afterwards for Israeli foods and treats in the Social Hall.

And while we are at it, please consider attending our Temple Sinai Memorial Weekend service on Friday, May 25 (6pm) as we honor the men and women who gave their lives in defense of America. I know that the Veterans who will attend this important Shabbat service will be personally touched by our recognition and outpouring of respect.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Rick Rheins

PS.

As a proud supporter of ARZA, the Reform movement's Zionist organization, I am pleased to forward to you their timely message for Yom HaAtzmaut. Enjoy!

April 18, 2018 - The statement below is issued by the organizations of the Reform Jewish Movement, the largest movement in Jewish life:

We join with our Israeli brothers and sisters, the worldwide family of the Jewish people, and friends of Israel everywhere, to mark with joy the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel.

We take this moment to renew and reaffirm our Movement-wide commitment to ahavat Yisrael (love for the land and people of Israel), through our words, by personally studying and traveling in Israel, and by providing financial and political support to the State of Israel and our partners there. We work every day to defend Israel when she comes under attack, and we play a key role in advancing the crucial relationships between Israel and the countries in which we serve.

We know this to be true: The State of Israel represents the greatest achievement of modern Jewish history, reuniting millions with the land that gave birth to the faith and people of Israel. Following nearly 1900 years of exile – centuries of persecution and expulsion, that culminated in eras of both catastrophe and creative growth and innovation – the Jewish people are again sovereign on Jewish soil.

As the Declaration of Independence states, the establishment of the State of Israel “is the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State.” The Zionist dream has been fulfilled with the ingathering of Jews who sought refuge and fulfillment in a land holy to our people, and is continually renewed by ongoing technological, medical, and economic miracles. We are continually inspired by Israeli creativity and contributions to Jewish life and culture.

We will not yield in our pledge to strengthen our ties to the Jewish state and to be strengthened by her.

Across her first seven decades, Israel frequently has been forced to defend herself against stronger and more numerous enemies that have sought her destruction. Israel has sacrificed for peace while maintaining the only democracy in the Middle East. At this critical milestone in Israel and Jewish history, we recommit to working for a secure and just Israel that exists side-by-side with a future state of Palestine. Additionally, we must work for the future, securing an Israel that fulfills the aspiration of its Declaration of Independence as Israel's founders imagined when they wrote that the Jewish State will "uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens without distinction of race, creed, or sex." As tireless advocates for religious pluralism, we recognize that religious equality has been far too elusive for Israel's growing Reform and Conservative Jewish movements and we remain committed to an Israeli society that recognizes the rights of all Jewish movements – and all Jews.

In the presence of both triumph and challenge, hope remains our compass. Today, we join with Jews throughout the world, celebrating joyously this milestone anniversary of Israel's independence. We pray for the fulfillment of Israel's promise as a thriving democracy, an exemplar of security and peace, a beacon of light and hope for all the world.