

## A Shabbat Message of Torah from Rabbi Rheins

*“I will grant peace in the land, and you shall lie down with none to make you afraid”*

*Leviticus 26:6*

This week’s Torah reading is a double-portion: *Behar-Bechukotai* (Leviticus 25-27). The portions conclude the Book of Leviticus. It also contains some of the best known passages in the Torah, including the phrase that inspired our American founders to have engraved on the Liberty Bell: “Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all inhabitants thereof” (Lev. 25:10).

With all that is going on this week in the Middle-East, I’d like us to focus on the promise of peace. No matter how you feel about the President’s decision to leave the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action), the Iranian military buildup in Syria and their subsequent attacks against Israel are of great concern to all. Instead of using the JCPOA release of billions of dollars to build their national infrastructure, the Iranians invested in military actions throughout the Middle-East that have shaken the security of Arab Sunni nations as well as Israel. This week, Iran fired missiles from their bases in Syria against Israel. Fortunately, the American-Israeli designed Iron Dome system destroyed those that approached the Israeli border. It goes without saying that the support the United States has been giving to Israel is critical to the safety and security of all who live there.

The escalation of tension and the outbreaks of violence in Syria, Lebanon, and Gaza are surely worrisome. And yet, as Israel celebrates its 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, the promise of peace is also evident. Within the past few weeks Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited first President Trump and then President Putin. Against all odds, Israel has a positive relationship with both the United States and Russia. Even more encouraging is the growing relationships that Israel is building with the Arab Sunni nations including Saudi Arabia. Who could have guessed that just a few years ago?

Of course, messages of hope and encouragement won’t make an attractive headline for a newspaper or blog. But the Torah’s promise that, one day, our brethren in Israel will be able to live their lives in peace with none to make them afraid, is very much alive. A record number of tourists will visit Israel in 2018. Israel’s economy is booming and the standard of living is the highest in the Middle-East by a wide margin. And on May 14, the date on which David Ben Gurion declared Israel’s independence in 1948, the United States will officially move our embassy to Jerusalem. Many more nations will follow America’s lead shortly thereafter.

So, despite the threats of violence by Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas, Israel is stronger and more secure today than ever before.

Is Israel a perfect country? By no means. There are so many areas where Israel needs to improve. But it is courageous and candid enough to acknowledge those short-comings and address them. As we celebrate on May 14, take pride in the role you have played in Israel’s security and prosperity. Israel has benefited from every tree you bought, every visit you made, and every letter you wrote to a member of Congress to support the Jewish nation. Each one of you deserves credit for an Israel that can stand proud, noble and safe!

*B’vrakhah,*

Rabbi Rick Rheins

P.S. Our *Erev Shabbat* service this Friday (May 11) begins at 7pm. We’ll share a special Torah reading and celebrate with May Birthday Blessings!

On Shabbat morning, the early service begins at 9:00am and will be held in the Study.

At 10:30am, the Shabbat service will be led by Asher Weisberg in the Abrahams Family Chapel as she becomes a Bat Mitzvah.

*Shabbat Shalom!*