

A Rosh HaShanah Greeting from Rabbi Rheins

## **Ushering in the New Year with Peace: Israel, UAE and Bahrain Sign a Historic Treaty**

For the most part 2020/5780 was a “rough year” (okay, I undersold it a bit too much. Simply substitute whatever adjective you wish for my “rough year” and I’ll go along). Still, 5780 is ending on a historically significant high. Tuesday, September 15 should be marked as a day of celebration for generations to come. Many of us watched live the historic signing of a peace treaty that signals a new era in the Middle East. Israel, the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Bahrain signed a peace treaty under the guidance and support from the United States. It is the first formal peace treaty between Arab states and Israel in over a quarter of a century.

UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan thanked Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and declared, “We are already witnessing a change at the heart of the Middle East, a change that will send hope around the world.” He added that the accord’s “reverberations will be reflected on the entire region.”

Bahrain’s Foreign Minister Abdullatif al-Zayani spoke of “a moment of hope and opportunity for all the peoples of the Middle East” and “a historic step

on the road for genuine and lasting peace” across the region. “For too long, the Middle East has been set back by conflict and mistrust, causing untold destruction” and thwarting hopes of the region’s “youngest and brightest. . . Now I am convinced we can change that,” he said.

And lest we think that this peace initiative is a one and done, Al-Zayani noted that this treaty will lead to a peace treaty with the Palestinians. He said, “Today’s agreement is an important first step and it’s now incumbent upon us to bring about the lasting peace and security that the region: A just, comprehensive and enduring two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be the foundation, the bedrock to such peace.”

Yes! This truly is the beginning of a new era. No, it will not resolve every problem between Israel and the Arabs. But yes, it is a fabulous start!

After the deadly COVID-19 pandemic, disastrous forest fires that choke our skies with smoke and ash, small businesses tottering on bankruptcy, millions unemployed, schools and shuls struggling to connect with students and congregants online, isolation, quarantine, face masks, temperature checks, dousing ourselves in so much hand sanitizer that our hands are chapped raw, and now we’re in the middle of the most divisive political season in memory . . . isn’t it great to end on some good news!

No doubt, there will be cynics and critics who will downplay the promise of peace. They are hedging their bets; it is tempting to fold too quickly when you're on a losing streak. But God has provided us with eternal hope. We Jews have witnessed too much history to believe in dooms-dayers and nay-sayers. Just last week we read in the Torah:

*I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day: I have put before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life – so that you and your offspring will live! (Deuteronomy 30:19)*

It is up to us to choose. This New Year 5781 is a chance for us to renew, rebuild and begin writing the next chapter of our lives. Yes, there is hope. Yes, there can be peace . . . even in the Middle East! Yes, there will be an end to this awful pandemic. Yes, we will once again join together in-person to worship, study, schmooze, laugh, cry, hug, and celebrate life!

As we gather on-line or in-person to hear the Shofar and welcome in the New Year, let us add our personal *t'kiah*, a personal call of affirmation to bring our gifts of wisdom, joy and peace to bless and heal this world.

Susan, Josh, Sam and Jakob join me to wish you and your loved ones a sweet, healthy and happy New Year 5781 filled with God's blessings!

*L'Shanah Tovah teka-tay-vu ve-t'cha-tay-mu,*

*Rick*

Rabbi Rick Rheins

