

Israel Connection

AN AIPAC HOLIDAY PUBLICATION FOR SYNAGOGUES

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A New Year of Challenges and Opportunities

Thought you would find this interesting...

-Rabbi Name

"EVERYTHING GOES ACCORDING TO THE BEGINNING."

These words, quoted from the teachings of Rabbi Nachman, indicate the importance of this season which offers each of us a fresh start. The Ten Days of Awe, known as the *Yamim Noraim*, offer a unique opportunity not only to reflect on the year we are concluding, but also to focus on our goals for the year ahead. Our actions during this auspicious time set the tone and the path for the upcoming year.

Indeed, this year especially offers us the chance to make a meaningful difference. As we end the Jewish year of 5771, we are witnessing historic changes in countries across the Middle East. The wave of revolutions that has come to be known collectively as the "Arab Spring" has not only resulted in

the fall of decades-old dictatorships, but also the opportunity for a fresh beginning for millions of people who have lived their entire lives knowing only tyranny and oppression.

While we hope the changes

sweeping the region lead to real and lasting freedom, history also shows that the path to a peaceful and secure future is fraught with danger.

In the scramble for power that has been created with the ouster of the despots, forces and factions that threaten both

the United States and Israel have been marshalling power with the hope that they will be able to fill the leadership vacuum.

Parts of Egyptian society are already calling to renounce the

peace treaty with Israel, and Iran continues its push to foment unrest in the surrounding states.

We as pro-Israel Americans have an essential role to play. As those who already enjoy the many blessings of living in a democracy, we have the right and the responsibility to continue to help our leaders understand the importance of a strong U.S.-Israel bond – especially during times of great uncertainty.

As we utter the *Amidah* prayer during the *Yamim*

Noraim, we ask for "blessings and peace." We ask to "be remembered and inscribed."

May we also use this season of renewal to act in ways that help bring the blessings of safety, strength and peace to America, to the people of Israel and to our world.



Pictured above, the pomegranate has symbolic significance at this time of year both as a fruit that is mentioned as being plentiful in Biblical Israel and because it is said that the fruit contains 613 seeds—the same number of *mitzvot* which are listed in the Torah. On Rosh Hashanah, we hope our good acts in the ensuing year will be as plentiful as the seeds of the pomegranate.

Travel Log

TWENTY PERCENT of the U.S. House of Representatives, key members of major think tanks, influential women in politics, Christian political leaders and students from campuses around the country traveled to Israel this past summer as part of a series of tailored seminars sponsored by AIEF, AIPAC's educational foundation.

Contact your member of Congress' office to find out if he or she traveled to Israel recently, and would like to speak about the trip at your synagogue.

Be sure to thank your elected leaders for working to ensure America always stands by Israel.

Israel trips, like the one pictured here, help American leaders better understand the country and its challenges.





Foreign policy experts say technologies like Iron Dome, pictured here, are important to a successful peace process. They could allow Israel's leaders to feel more confident in making compromises, knowing that the country can protect its citizens against rockets that might someday be smuggled into or made in the West Bank.

America & Israel: Working Together Toward a Safer Tomorrow

AT YIZKOR SERVICES THIS YEAR, Irit Sheerit's children will once again utter the words of the *Kaddish* prayer for their mother who was killed by a Hamas rocket attack three years ago. Irit's family is only one of far too many whose loved ones have been killed in attacks from Hamas or Hizballah in the last six years.

Now, thanks to Israeli ingenuity and American support, a new rocket defense system has been deployed in Israel to help prevent more Israeli families from losing a loved one to future attacks.

The Iron Dome Rocket Defense System, produced by Israel's high-tech defense industry, destroys incoming rockets, missiles and mortar shells before they can hit their targets.

Israeli defense experts believe that Hizballah, with the help of their suppliers, Iran and Syria, now has up to 55,000 missiles and rockets which could reach

major Israeli population centers, including Tel Aviv. Hamas possesses an estimated 5,000 rockets.

The Iron Dome system not only helps protect Israeli civilians from indiscriminate attacks, but could also help keep American soldiers overseas safe from similar short-range rocket threats.

"The growing proliferation and increasing deadliness of missiles and rockets around the world.... pose a direct threat to U.S. national security," Rep. Steve Rothman (D-NJ), a key member of the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee, stated. "Funding these new technologies serves our interests in the volatile Middle East, and wherever America's troops and citizens are stationed."

Recognizing the huge cost of funding such a program as well as the shared benefits to Israel and the United States, congressional leaders this year allocated

205 million dollars to help fund Israel's urgent procurement needs of Iron Dome batteries. Each battery costs approximately 80 million dollars. A battery consists of several launchers—each with 16 missiles, allowing the Iron Dome to intercept large numbers of rockets in a short time. Defense experts say Israel ultimately will need a dozen batteries, and point out that Iron Dome is not a 100 percent solution to the threat. Israel's defense forces also must purchase other systems with U.S. foreign aid to prevent the rockets from ever being launched.

Congressional funding was an important first step in addressing many joint missile defense needs, according to Senate Appropriations Committee member Sen. Mark Kirk (R-IL). "As Iran continues its pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability and works to expand its sphere of influence in the region," he stated, "we must find ways to expand Israel's military deterrence."

To read more about the ways you can help ensure security assistance for Israel, visit www.aipac.org.

New defense technologies could help keep Israeli citizens safe from incoming rockets and missiles, and avoid scenes like this, where civilians are forced to run for cover.





When Bad Things Happen To Good Countries

Rabbi Harold S. Kushner

WHEN I WROTE MY FIRST BOOK some 30 years ago, I called it *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, rather than “Why.” The title was guided by the wise insight of Viktor Frankl, that we cannot control what the world will do to us, but we can always control how we choose to respond to what the world does to us.

In 1981, when I wrote the book, Israel was just 33 years old, responding to international condemnation for its bombing of an Iraqi nuclear reactor and suffering from relentless terrorist attacks. It was no longer the media’s darling, as it had been after the Six-Day War in 1967. Subsequent decades would bring increased Arab violence, the threat of a nuclear Iran and a concerted international effort to undermine Israel’s very legitimacy as a nation. It saddened me deeply, as one who had picketed with associates of Martin Luther King and protested the war in Vietnam, to see former comrades in arms echoing anti-Israel rhetoric.

But, as in my book title, our concern should be not on why such things happen but on what we can do about them. The greatness of a democracy is that, as we have seen on so many issues, the collective voices of passionately committed individuals can make a difference. Votes count, and politicians count votes. We learned that the best way to make good things happen is not just to protest, but to make changes from within, to support, inform, build relationships with and help shape the views of those in public office.

For almost as long as Israel has existed, citizen activists, in the best American tradition, have worked to ensure that America’s leaders work to strengthen the bonds of friendship between these two model democracies. With the support of the vast majority of Americans, we have worked to ensure that America is prepared to help meet Israel’s economic, military and diplomatic needs.

As we prepare to greet the new year, we cannot know with certainty what the future holds for Israel—what challenges or new opportunities she may face. But in this season of renewal, we can recommit ourselves to working with our leaders to ensure that America always stands with Israel in good times and even when bad things happen.

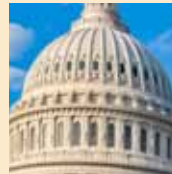
Rabbi Kushner is the author of numerous acclaimed books and serves as Rabbi Laureate at Temple Israel in Natick, Massachusetts. Rabbi Kushner will be a guest lecturer at this year’s AIPAC National Summit in Scottsdale, Arizona, October 30-31. For more information about the Summit, visit: www.aipac.org/summit.

Making a Difference

With the support of its members nationwide, AIPAC works with Democrats and Republicans in Congress and leaders in the Executive Branch to protect and strengthen the U.S.-Israel friendship. Important initiatives have included:



Securing more than \$3 billion in critical security assistance to Israel each year to ensure that Israel remains capable of facing increased threats.



Achieving passage of more than a dozen bills and resolutions imposing tough sanctions on Iran during the past 15 years to exert economic pressure on the regime and slow its pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability.



Supporting America’s efforts to help Israel achieve peace while upholding principles that create the best prospects for Israeli-Arab peace.



Enhancing U.S.-Israel defense cooperation through securing hundreds of millions of dollars each year for key U.S.-Israel defense programs, including the Arrow missile defense system and Iron Dome rocket defense system.



Introducing multiple resolutions affirming congressional support for Israel’s right to self-defense in the face of terrorism by groups such as Hamas and Hizballah.



Strengthening U.S.-Israel energy cooperation by passing legislation that establishes a grant program, funding joint projects between U.S. and Israeli entities in the field of alternative energy.



Increasing U.S.-Israel homeland security cooperation by passing landmark legislation creating an office within the Department of Homeland Security to support joint research and development projects between the United States and key allies, such as Israel.

To find out how you can continue to help make a difference regarding pending legislation, visit: www.aipac.org/takeaction.



How Tweet it Was...

AIPAC's Policy Conference attracted more than 10,000 participants from all 50 states. Approximately 3,000 of the conference delegates traveled to our nation's capital with their synagogue delegations.

The conference included more than two-thirds of Congress, the President of the United States and Prime Minister of Israel, a host of diplomats, journalists from close to two dozen countries, more than 1,500 students and hundreds of tweets throughout the three-day event. Here's a sampling of just a few of the shared sentiments:

lionofzion450

David Samuel Dworkin

is so excited to be joining the largest gathering of pro-israel activists and Pres.Obama and PM. Netanyahu at #AIPAC2011
21 May

NicoleFarnoush

Nicole Farnoush

Man, the line to get into the @AIPAC conference is so insane, you'd think the president was coming...oh, wait. #AIPAC2011
21 May

ZSilberman

Zach Silberman

The amount of pro-Israel activism in this room is just extraordinary. Proud to be at #AIPAC2011.
22 May

lisadsheridan

Lisa Sheridan

#aipac2011 is the smallest crowd of 10,000 people. I keep running into people I know glad we all care about this cause.
22 May

EricCantor

Rep. Eric Cantor (R-VA)

About to speak at AIPAC - America is at its best when it stands with allies that share our values. #AIPAC2011
22 May

EliLake

Eli Lake

Roll call of us officials at #aipac2011 sounds like the superbowl pregame show. Super bowl of #zionism
22 May

cspanradio

C-SPAN Radio

@IsraeliPM Netanyahu @ SpeakerBoehner & @Senator-Reid speak at @AIPAC conf. Live at 8:45pmET on @cspan 2 TV & @cspanradio.
23 May

SethAMandel

Seth Mandel

Why #aipac2011 is like Jerusalem: You expect to see someone you know at every turn #jewishgeography
23 May

akeyax

Aaron Keyax

Rep. Rothman (D-NJ) on US-Israel missile defense @AIPAC in room 145AB at 1:45. Arrow 3 missile model will be on display! #AIPAC2011
23 May

ascharf18

ascharf18

@AIPAC this was my first policy conference and I already signed up for next year—cant wait!!! #AIPAC2011
23 May

rachelalkobey

rachel alkobey

I've never clapped so much in my life. @AIPAC #aipac2011 #BBYO
23 May

SenatorBegich

Sen. Mark Begich (D-AK)

@AIPAC Thanks for having me at your 2011 Policy Conference. America has few allies as strong as Israel #AIPAC2011
24 May

kaybaileyhutch

Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX)

Looking forward to speaking @AIPAC conference today about the importance of strong US-Israel relations. #AIPAC2011
24 May

haileystern

Hailey Stern

An amazing day of lobbying for #aipac2011 got to meet with both senators Leahy and Sanders from VT and congressman Welch! Thank you @AIPAC!
24 May



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AIPAC Policy Conference

March 4-6, 2012
Washington, D.C.



Join members of your congregation, presidents, prime ministers, congressional leaders, diplomats, Middle East scholars and political experts for three of the most important days affecting Israel's future.

To register, and for more information about the AIPAC Policy Conference, visit www.aipac.org/PCREG.