

## Introduction to The Prayer for Israel 5784 – Yom Kippur- Rabbi Andrea Merow

Some of you got to see the miracle of the birth of the State of Israel 75 years ago. How fortunate for you.

More of you knew the triumph at '67. A country not yet 20 years old brutally attacked, yet prevailed. Many remember 50 years ago today, when Israel was attacked. That victory was harder. Ask the 11 families from Kibbutz Beit Hashita whose young men died defending the country, and so, so many more died. How frightening for Israelis at that time to be called up to war. How scared were our diaspora communities learning of war as the news trickled into shuls on our Holy Day. Last week we sang Leonard Cohen's *Who By Fire*. He wrote that several months after the Yom Kippur War. He had gone to Israel right away to entertain the troops. He saw how fragile Israel and we are and wrote a modern version of *Une taneh tokef*. Until this day, the airspace over Israel is closed on this Holy Day.

There has been so much history since then. Leaders tried to make peace; leaders were killed for doing so. Still, some of us call part of the Land Judea and Samaria; others call it The West Bank- they are both right and still there is a lack of peace. Some of us had hope at Oslo, but that was not to be.

We join our brothers and sisters in Israel who want peace, so their children are safe, so there can be *shaket*, so there can be peace with their Palestinian neighbors, and rights for all, as enumerated in the Declaration of Independence.

The struggles continue: They range from how Israelis can live in safety and security, to how minorities, both Jewish and not, are treated.

This current crisis that Israel is facing feels different to so many; a turning point: Israelis are experiencing a rift internally with each other, over culture, identity and law. Many of you participate at rallies in New York, Phila and here.

I spent time this summer in Israel at Demonstrations in Jerusalem against the reforms of this government because I love Israel. Because I am a Zionist. I will continue to do so.

And there are those in Israel and in this community who support the changes of this government. They do so because they love Israel, because they are Zionists.

For over 38 weeks massive numbers of Israelis and their supporters have come out to protest the changes proposed by this government, and the make-up of its ministers, many of whom would deny your identity as a Jew.

Israelis are feeling that they are not able to speak with one another. Many are no longer able to call those on the opposing side brother or sister.

Israel has achieved so much in its short 75 years; we should celebrate that. and now it must as a county move forward and figure out a way to create the new Zionist dream of what the state will be in the next 75 years, with compromise, and with a strong Democracy that respects the rights of all. Remember I said we need to be involved in things bigger than we are. Israel is bigger. I urge you to continue to learn and to advocate for a secure, safe, and democratic state that respects the rights of all. I urge you to respect the opinion of the Jew next to you who may disagree with you.

Please join Moshe and Riva in a prayer for the state of Israel and her people – later in the fall look for education programs about Zionism and Israel. Am Yisrael Chai -