

Israel Connection

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Sukkot: Reaping What We Sow

SUKKOT, also known as hag ha'asif (feast of gathering), is the quintessential harvest festival. Symbols of the harvest are incorporated into every aspect of the holiday from the taking of the lulav and etrog to building the sukkah with an unobstructed view of the sky.

For the duration of the holiday, we dwell in the sukkah not only to commemorate our people's forty-year desert experience, but to expose our vulnerabilities and give thanks for what we have. Sukkot reminds us to retain some of our harvest for the lean years, to plan for the future and to not take anything for granted.

These lessons can be applied to our broader world as well. Change is constant and we cannot leave anything up to chance. Even the continued existence of the Jewish state cannot be assumed. After all, look at the challenges facing Israelis today: Iran is working harder



and faster than ever to acquire a nuclear bomb. Hamas and Hizballah continue to plan and even launch attacks on Israel, calling for her destruction.

We have a unique opportunity to help Israel by ensuring America's ongoing friendship and support. However, even that relationship is not inevitable.

Our leaders change constantly. New

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members of Congress are elected frequently, and in just a few weeks, Americans will elect a new president and have a new administration. We must ensure that the U.S.–Israel relationship remains secure and strong throughout all these changes.

The best way to do this is through our relationships—by planting the seeds of vital friendships now. Our leaders need our help. Elected officials regularly look to their constituents for information and guidance. Now especially we need to make time in our lives to get involved in the political process. We must foster friendships with candidates, our members of Congress and others in seats of power. We can help shape their viewpoints, their passions, their preoccupations—and our world.

Just as Sukkot allows us to celebrate what we reap, this season also should propel us toward taking action to ensure the success of a future harvest.

We need to act now so that we are able to transform our fragile sukkah into a sturdy sukkat shalom—a canopy of peace—solidified and reinforced by the strong bipartisan relationships that we build today with the leaders of tomorrow.

Building Relationships With A New Congress

RIGHT NOW, the exciting and historic presidential contest occupies the attention of most Americans. As important as the presidency is, it is Congress that has provided the bedrock of American support for Israel over the last 60 years.

Every president—Democrat or Republican—is subject to the pressures



of diplomatic institutions and the international community. It is Congress that helps the president withstand the inevitable tidal wave of international demands to pressure Israel and crafts legislation that strengthens the U.S.–Israel friendship.

This is why we must work to ensure that the next Congress is the most pro-Israel in history. After all, we can't just assume that America will always stand by Israel.

Congress changes all the time. Retirements, deaths and pursuit of higher office have led to a record 12 special elections in this past year alone. On top of that, there are 35 open seats in the House and another five in the Senate. Even if every single incumbent were to win reelection this November, still, close to ten percent of the next Congress—that means 52 men and women, including those who won special elections in

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Building Relationships With A New Congress

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the past year—will be new to Washington and new to the issues shaping the U.S.–Israel relationship.

Do we know them?

Do they know us?

Have they been to Israel?

Do they understand the issues we care so deeply about?

The success or failure of the pro-Israel community rests on three words: “Our personal relationships.” We accomplish our goals based on the interaction of two people—you and a member of Congress. It is that simple.

Our friendships with new members must be strong before they get to Capitol Hill because new members of Congress make big decisions from day one. These decisions influence the nature of future peace negotiations and determine how much foreign aid Israel will receive or whether Iran will face tougher sanctions.

Therefore, now is the time to reach out to candidates for Congress. Get to know them and provide them with the information they need to better understand Israel’s past, present and what’s at stake for her future. After the election, our ability to help influence American foreign policy in the Middle East will be directly linked to our relationships with the men and women who will comprise the 111th Congress.

To learn more about how you can strengthen the U.S.–Israel relationship through political involvement and advocacy, visit www.aipac.org.

A Look At Israel’s Future: Thoughts On The Next Sixty Years

ONE HUNDRED ELEVEN YEARS ago, some of the brightest minds came together in Basel, Switzerland to talk about what a Jewish state might one day look like. At the historic gathering, authors and professors, lawyers and philosophers shared their thoughts about Jewish identity and the future of their people.

to preserve its relationship with Diaspora Jewry, and Israel will embark on a great process of introspection. The great challenge of Israel in the next 60 years, after it has built the state institutions, after it has built its armies, after it has established its diplomacy, is figuring out who it is as a nation, its relationship to



Leading Thinkers: From left, Moderator and Editor David Horovitz interviews Author Michael Oren, Law Professor Ruth Gavison, Literary Critic Leon Wieseltier and former Israeli Cabinet member Natan Sharansky.

Today, Israel remains one of the most talked about and written about countries. But what will be the issues and challenges that the Jewish state will face in the next six decades? To answer that question, we asked a distinguished group, including authors, professors, philosophers, at least one lawyer and a distinction nobody could have had back in 1897—a former member of Israel’s Knesset. Here are excerpts from that conversation:

AUTHOR MICHAEL OREN

One of the great things about being a historian is that you only have to predict the past. First of all, in the future, we’ll all be driving electric cars. Israel will have an even stronger relationship with the United States and Israel will continue to develop its society. Israel will continue

Judaism, whether it is just a state of Jews or is there something inherently Jewish about this state? Israel must figure out its relationship with its minority communities, which is exceedingly important. Israel is going to embark on this great venture of self-discovery and at the end of 60 years, I think we’ll have a good sense of what Israel is about.

FORMER ISRAELI CABINET MEMBER NATAN SHARANSKY

Well, the important thing is that 60 years from now—in fact much earlier, but definitely 60 years from now, the far majority of Jewish people will live in Israel. And I recommend to everybody to think how many of your great grandchildren will be in Israel, how many of them will live as Jews in the Diaspora, and how many of them will assimilate?

I think there will be an understanding that we all are interested in encouraging the building of a civil society in our area, and as a result, Israel will lose its monopoly on being the only democratic state in the region. And that will be the most revolutionary step toward real peace in the Middle East.

If we really want to be at peace with the world and to remain ourselves and give good contributions to others in the world, we have to insist on being a Jewish state in spite of all the pressures.

LITERARY CRITIC LEON WIESELTIER

I have to say that I have an almost mystical faith in the survival of Israel. I do find myself deeply anxious about the future. For the first time in my adult life, I sometimes think that there will not be peace in my lifetime.

On the other hand, if one looks at what the demographers say about population growth between the river and the sea, the arrival of peace seems to me to be more urgent than ever before. [Demographers indicate that the Arab population is growing at a much faster rate than the Jewish population.] When



Peace has never been more necessary, but peace also has never seemed more distant. — Leon Wieseltier

peace does come, I worry more about the larger Jewish questions.

I actually worry much more about the American Jewish community than I do about Israel. But one cannot take Israel for granted. Peace has never been more necessary, but peace also has never seemed more distant.

LAW PROFESSOR RUTH GAVISON

I hope that Israel will be independent and Jewish and liberal 60 years from now. I don’t take this for granted and I’m going to try and work as hard as I can and make anyone else who is concerned about Israel, work as hard as they can so that Israel in 60 years will be

There is nothing more dangerous to a project like Israel than taking it for granted. — Ruth Gavison



and we will be here sitting and talking about Israel and its prospects for the next 60 and 100 years. There is nothing more dangerous to a project like Israel than taking it for granted. Some of the concerns of the Jewish people with Israel, and with the continuation of the Jewish people, are not as strong today as they were 60 years ago.

And these are things that each one of us, who is interested in the survival and flourishing of the Jewish people and of the state of Israel as the independent home of part of the Jewish people and in the relationships between Israel and America should work very hard to maintain and promote.

I think a troubling fact is that despite the fact that Israel has existed for 60 years, and that some of its achievements are so immense, that it’s still possible to doubt its legitimacy and its right to exist.

And I think one of our challenges in the 60 years ahead is to understand why this is happening and to try and work on the relationships between Israel and the world.

Working Together: AIPAC And Congress

As America’s leading pro-Israel lobby, AIPAC works with both Democratic and Republican political leaders to enact public policy that strengthens the vital relationship between the United States and Israel. With the support of its members nationwide, AIPAC has worked with Congress and the Executive Branch on numerous critical initiatives.

- **HELPING** ensure passage of more than a dozen bills and resolutions condemning and imposing tough sanctions on Iran during the past 15 years.

- **MAINTAINING** critical security assistance for Israel each year to ensure that Israel has a qualitative military edge over potential adversaries.

- **EXPRESSING** in letters to the president, signed by 268 House members and 78 senators, the key principles America should adhere to as it works to help Israel achieve peace.

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

- **ENSURING** U.S.–Israel energy cooperation by passing legislation that will establish a grant program to fund joint projects between U.S. and Israeli entities in the field of alternative energy.

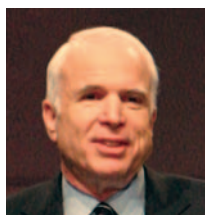
- **STRENGTHENING** U.S.–Israel homeland security cooperation through landmark legislation that creates an office within the Department of Homeland Security to support joint research and development projects between the United States and key allies such as Israel.

- **PROHIBITING** U.S. aid to and contacts with Hamas until its leaders recognize Israel’s right to exist, renounce terrorism and accept previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements.

To learn about pending legislation and how you can help ensure that America always stands by its ally, Israel, go to www.aipac.org.

In The Candidates' Words

The following are excerpts taken from Senators John McCain and Barack Obama's addresses during AIPAC's Annual Policy Conference last spring in Washington, D.C.



SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN (R-AZ)

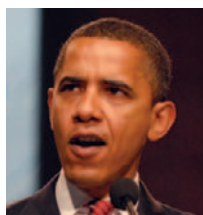
My friends, all of you involved in the work of AIPAC have taken up a great and vital cause and a

cause set firmly in the American heart. The threats to Israel's security are large and growing and America's commitment must grow, as well. I strongly support the increase in military aid to Israel scheduled to begin in October. I am committed to making certain Israel maintains its qualitative military edge. Israel's enemies are too numerous, its margin of error too small and our shared interests and values too great for us to follow any other policy.

Tehran's continued pursuit of nuclear weapons poses an unacceptable risk, a danger we cannot allow.

Over a year ago, I proposed applying sanctions to restrict Iran's ability to import refined petroleum products, on which it is highly dependent, and the time has come for an international campaign to do just that. A severe limit on Iranian imports of gasoline would create immediate pressure on Khamenei and [President] Ahmadinejad to change course and to cease in the pursuit of nuclear weapons. At the same time, we need the support of those in the region who are most concerned about Iran and of our European partners, as well. They can help by imposing targeted sanctions that will impose a heavy cost on the regime's leaders, including the denial of visas and freezing of assets. My friends, as the people of Israel know better than most, the safety of free people can never be taken for granted. And in a world full of dangers, Israel and the United States must always stand together.

We are the most natural of allies, and like Israel itself, that alliance is forever.



SENATOR BARACK OBAMA (D-IL)

One of the many things that I admire about AIPAC is that you fight for this common cause from

the bottom up. The lifeblood of AIPAC is here in this room; grassroots activists of all ages, from all parts of the country...

Those who threaten Israel threaten us. I will bring to the White House an unshakable commitment to Israel's security. That starts with insuring Israel's qualitative military advantage. I will insure that Israel can defend itself from any threat from Gaza to Tehran. As president, I will implement a Memorandum of Understanding that provides \$30 billion in assistance to Israel over the next decade...

We must isolate Hamas unless and until they renounce terrorism, recognize Israel's right to exist and abide by past agreements. Israel's security is sacrosanct. It is nonnegotiable.

The Palestinians need a state that is contiguous and cohesive and that allows them to prosper, but any agreement with the Palestinian people must preserve Israel's identity as a Jewish state, with secure, recognized, defensible borders. Now there's no greater threat to Israel or to the peace and the stability of the region than Iran. We should work with Europe, Japan and the Gulf States to find every avenue outside the United Nations to isolate the Iranian regime, from cutting off loan guarantees and expanding financial sanctions, to banning the export of refined petroleum...

I will always keep the threat of military action on the table to defend our security and our ally, Israel. If we must use military force, we are more likely to succeed, and we'll have far greater support at home and abroad, if we have exhausted our diplomatic efforts.

The AIPAC Policy Conference

May 3-5, 2009
Washington, D.C.



"...Awesome...I have not stopped talking about it to colleagues, friends, family and congregants."

Rabbi Norman Cohen
Bet Shalom Congregation, Minnetonka, MN

"...Empowering...It was wonderful to travel with fellow congregants to Washington and share the experience of lobbying together."

Judie Cotton
Past President of Valley Beth Shalom, Encino, CA

"As a new American citizen, meeting with our country's leaders face to face was very powerful, very moving."

Rabbi Felipe Goodman
Temple Beth Shalom, Las Vegas, NV

"The best part is seeing the conference through the eyes of a synagogue member who is attending for the first time."

Rabbi Haskel Lookstein
Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun, New York, NY

Experience it for yourself.

To register or to organize a synagogue delegation to the 2009 AIPAC Policy Conference, e-mail synagogue@aipac.org.



www.aipac.org



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