

Israel Connection

AN AIPAC HOLIDAY PUBLICATION FOR SYNAGOGUES

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 3 PASSOVER 5770

Passover: A Story to Tell

This special issue of Israel Connection is designed as a supplement to your Haggadah or it can be used independently. We hope the publication will invite discussion about the necessity for each of us to participate in the political process to ensure a strong U.S.–Israel relationship.

We also hope the supplement's readings will inspire you to share the story of your own political involvement and personal attachment to Israel. If you choose to utilize the Haggadah insert during your seder, we suggest you do so following The Four Questions. Chag Sameach!

AS WE FINISH THE RECITATION OF AVADIM HAYINU, the Haggadah reminds us, “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt.” Why the seemingly constant need to remind us?

Our teachers instruct that it is impossible for any free person to know what it is truly like to be a slave: Therefore, we must continue to remind ourselves and our children about the inhumanity of slavery so that no generation ever takes freedom for granted.

When we engage in the political process, we are helping preserve our country's freedoms. When we strengthen America's alliance with Israel, we are helping to ensure that Israel too will have a strong and vibrant future. There is no guarantee of that fact—unless we help guarantee it.

The second phrase of *Avadim Hayinu* states, “...but G-d brought us out from there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm.”

Our sages instruct that “a mighty hand” refers to the ability to extract the Jewish nation from Egypt by force. Yet what does “an outstretched arm” mean? We can interpret the phrase as a hand extended in hopes of a warm reception, such as the numerous times Moses negotiated with Pharaoh for his nation's release.

Today, we know that American support for the Jewish state is crucial to help Israel defend itself from forces wishing it harm. But American support also allows Israel to confidently engage in negotiations and take risks in its pursuit of a secure peace.

In good times and in bad, we can make a difference. We can help Israel go forward with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

The U.S.–Israel Friendship



FOR ALL THE TURBULENCE AND UNPREDICTABILITY OF THE MIDDLE EAST, one aspect of U.S. foreign policy has remained a constant: the strength of the U.S.–Israel relationship.

Since President Harry Truman provided Israel with critical international legitimacy by recognizing the state a mere eleven minutes after its establishment, American presidents and lawmakers from both parties have continued to stand by Israel, a fellow democracy and America's closest ally in the Middle East.

The two countries have developed a strong friendship, based on shared values and interests, that transcends which political parties are in power either in Washington or Jerusalem.

The alliance encompasses the vast range of issues in American political life. Israel is one of five countries participating in the U.S. Counterterrorism Technical Support Working Group, whose experts collaborate to develop anti-terrorism technology. The close partnership between the two nations also has yielded numerous military technologies used by U.S. soldiers all over the world.

Additionally, several binational programs allow American companies and universities to benefit from Israel's agricultural and high-tech expertise.

Washington and Jerusalem have come a long way together since Truman first recognized the Jewish state in 1948. Today, as partners in a special alliance, the two nations continue their joint efforts to counter global threats as they work together to seek a lasting and secure peace and a better world.





אני ישנה ולבי ער קול דודי דופק



**"I was asleep,
but my heart was wakeful.
Hark, my beloved knocks!"**

—Song of Songs 5:2

For My Sister

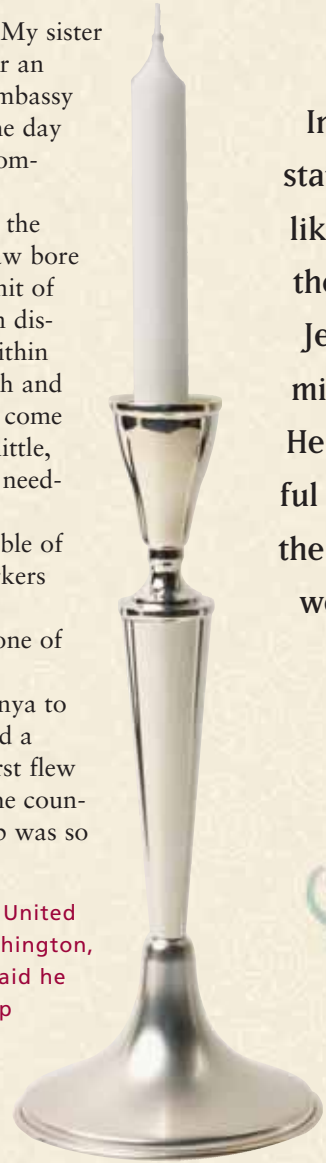
My family and I are from Kenya. My sister Josephine Nzilani was working for an NGO attached to the American embassy in Nairobi on August 7, 1998—the day al-Qaeda terrorists attacked the compound, taking 200 innocent lives.

When I arrived and approached the scene, the first rescue workers I saw bore the sign of the Star of David. A unit of the Israel Defense Forces had been dispatched to Nairobi and arrived within hours. One hundred seventy search and rescue and medical personnel had come to a country of which they knew little, because they knew their help was needed.

Under the smoke and in the rubble of that senseless act of brutality, workers were able to save many victims. Unfortunately, my sister was not one of them.

I had been planning to leave Kenya to attend school in the States. I added a stop. On my way to America, I first flew to Israel to touch the ground of the country which had sent help when help was so desperately needed.

Nicky Mutinda immigrated to the United States and worked in AIPAC's Washington, D.C., office for several years. He said he wanted to have the chance to help "the tiny nation that looked beyond its own shores to help my people in our time of need." He never shared the story of that awful day in August until his final day of work at AIPAC. Today, he is an IT executive residing in Baltimore, Maryland.



In the early years of the Jewish state, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik likened the knocks at the door in the *Song of Songs* to a call to the Jewish nation to respond to the miraculous rise of modern Israel. He warned that we must be mindful of our responsibility to support the young nation-state. Today, too, we must be ready and willing to awaken, to answer, to act.



Motivated by Memory

You hear the rhetorical question these days: Who knows how much damage Iran could do? I do.

I was four years old when my father, a leading rabbi in Buenos Aires, Argentina, was summoned to identify the bodies of those murdered by Hizballah terrorists, funded by Iran.

They killed 85 people who were studying, socializing, dancing, playing and working at Argentina's Jewish Community Center. They killed my best friend's father.

So I know the damage Iran can do.

My thoughts kept floating back to that day, almost 16 years ago, as I spoke to my members of Congress about the effect a nuclear Iran would have on our world. They fund Hamas. They fund Hizballah. Their reach is wide.

I heard myself speak, 'Their reach is wide.' I thought, how many worlds have they already destroyed?

Mijal Bitton is a senior at Stern College in New York. She and 300 fellow students traveled to Washington, D.C., during finals last winter to encourage members of Congress to vote for sanctions legislation, designed to pressure Iran and prevent the regime from obtaining a nuclear weapons capability. Two weeks later, the House of Representatives passed the legislation 412-12.

Start-Up Nation

Well-known author Daniel Gordis recently made the point that the past decade will be remembered as the time when Israel's main struggle shifted from military challenges to the fundamental legitimacy of the Jewish state. Clearly, this battle needs to be fought, but if all we do is defend Israel we, ironically, are playing into the hands of Israel's opponents. We are playing into the notion that Israel is a conflict, not a country.

And today, that country has a lot to be proud of. The fact is that one small, embattled nation has become the world's go-to source for technological innovation. Israeli start-ups have become an essential component of the global tech ecosystem and central to some of largest companies on Earth.

This is fact, not hype. For its size, Israel has more start-ups, receives more venture capital investments and spends more of its GDP on civilian research and development than any other country—by far.

Every country and big company is looking for innovation. Start-ups are concentrated innovation, making Israel the place to look not just for technologies, but also for the cultural and policy engines that drive innovation and entrepreneurship.

Israel—the Start-Up Nation—with all the gifts it has to offer, gives us yet another reason to care about the threats to Israel and, no less importantly, a reason to care regardless of the threats.

Saul Singer and Dan Senor are co-authors of *Start-Up Nation* (www.startupnation-book.com), currently on *The New York Times* bestselling business book list. The book, which explores Israel's surge in the world of high-tech, already is a bestseller in Singapore and soon will be published in China.

Remembering Yesterday, Shaping Tomorrow

It was May 1939. I was a little girl living in Cuba with my family. I remember the moment clearly. All eyes were on this large ship in the Havana Harbor. Everyone knew that it was filled with Jews desperately trying to escape Nazi Germany. I remember the kind of sick feeling of not being able to do anything.

It was only later that my family and I learned the fate of the passengers aboard the S.S. *St. Louis*.

Refused entry first by Cuba and then by the United States, the ship returned to Europe. An estimated 254 passengers perished in the Holocaust.

That deep sense of frustration and powerlessness had a lasting impact on me. So when my husband and I emigrated from Cuba to the United States in 1961, we were filled with a sense of gratitude, but also a responsibility to become involved politically—to utilize the American democratic system to advocate for the things we cared about.

The very first time I went to the office of one of my representatives and talked to him, I thought, 'Oh, I can't believe it. Here I am! And he's interested in what I'm saying about Israel.'

I will never be a silent observer to such tragedy again.

Pearl Kier and her husband, Ralph, are AIPAC members. They reside in Boca Raton, Florida.



Why AIPAC Matters: The Imperative for Our Involvement

He told the story often—the story about the night more than 60 years ago, the story that compelled him to a life-long devotion to Israel, the story of a father’s leadership and a community’s generosity. Abe Pollin told the story often—his story.

His father, Morris Pollin, locked the door behind him and issued what could only be called an ultimatum to the men in the room. “Nobody leaves here until we raise the money,” he said.

Seated around the table were 20 businessmen—leaders within the Baltimore and Washington, D.C., Jewish communities. World War II had just ended, and the horrors of the



Holocaust had become widely known. Jewish refugees in Europe needed help reaching the Land of Israel. Morris was determined not to sit idly and watch while the rest of the world did virtually nothing.

He convinced the men in the room to contribute every dollar they could. The next morning, the group purchased an old steamship in the port of Baltimore that would be used to transport Jewish refugees from Europe to British-controlled Palestine.

The men renamed the ship *Exodus*. The rest, as they say, is history.

Morris’ son, Abe, was in the room with his father that night. It was a moment that would stay with him for the rest of his life. So when Abe’s life ended late last year at age 85, it was only fitting that so many of his friends and family remembered and recounted the story Abe himself had told so many times before.

Abe learned from his father that the safety of Israel and the Jewish people could never be taken for granted. It was this lesson that motivated Abe to become involved in pro-Israel politics. It was this knowledge that encouraged him to devote his time and resources to AIPAC for decades.

Abe held tremendous clout in the nation’s capital. He was one of the most successful businessmen in Washington, D.C., and the longest-tenured owner of an NBA team. His interests and involvements were varied, but Abe’s number one priority in politics was to encourage lawmakers to support strong ties between the United States and Israel.

He never forgot his father’s leadership, the example set by those business leaders more than six decades ago, and the importance of having a dependable refuge for the Jewish people.

AIPAC National Board member Abe Pollin, z”l, (1923–2009) was a lifelong advocate for a strong U.S.–Israel relationship.

**Now it’s your turn.
Tell your story.**

