

Flushing-Fresh Meadows Jewish Center
 193-10 Peck Avenue ✦ Flushing, New York 11365 (718) 357-5100

THE BULLETIN

May-Jun 2013 Iyar/Sivan 5773
 Vol.8, No.7 Rabbi Gerald M. Solomon
Cantor Aaron Katz

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES, MAY

Friday, May 3 - Mincha/Maariv.....	7:00 P.M.
Candle Lighting Time.....	7:35 P.M.
Saturday, May 4 - Parashiot Behar-Bechukotai	
Shabbat Mevarchim Services.....	9:00 A.M.
Shabbat Ends.....	8:44 P.M.
Friday, May 10 - Mincha/Maariv	
Rosh Chodesh Sivan.....	7:00 P.M.
Candle Lighting Time.....	7:42 P.M.
Saturday, May 11 - Parashat Bamidbar	
Shabbat Services.....	9:00 A.M.
Shabbat Ends.....	8:51 P.M.
* SHAVUOT	
Tuesday, May 14 - Erev Shavuot	
Mincha/Maariv.....	T.B.A.
Candle Lighting Time.....	7:46P.M.
Wednesday, May 15	
First Day Shavuot Festival Services.....	9:00 A.M.
Mincha/Maariv.....	T.B.A.
Candle Lighting Time.....	8:55P.M.
Thursday, May 16	
Second Day Shavuot Festival Services.....	9:00A.M.
Yizkor.....	10:45 A.M.
Festival Ends.....	8:56P.M.
Friday, May 17 - Mincha/Maariv.....	7:00 P.M.
Candle Lighting Time.....	7:49 P.M.
Saturday, May 18 - Parashat Naso	
Shabbat Services.....	9:00 A.M.
Shabbat Ends.....	8:58 P.M.
Friday, May 24 - Mincha/Maariv.....	7:00 P.M.
Candle Lighting Time.....	7:55 P.M.
Saturday, May 25 Parashat B'haalotecha	
Shabbat Services	9:00 A.M.
Shabbat Ends.....	9:04P.M.
Friday, May 31 - Mincha/Maariv.....	7:00P.M.
Candle Lighting Time.....	8:01 P.M.
Saturday, June 1 - Parashat Shelach	
Shabbat Mevarchim Services.....	9:00A.M.
Shabbat Ends.....	9:10P.M.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES, JUNE

Friday, June 1	
Mincha/Maariv.....	7:00P.M.
Candle Lighting Time.....	8:01 P.M.
Saturday, June 2	
Parashat Shelach	
Shabbat Rosh Chodesh Services.....	9:00A.M.
Shabbat Ends.....	9:10P.M.
Friday, June 7	
Mincha/Maariv.....	7:00P.M.
Candle Lighting Time.....	8:06P.M.
Saturday, June 8	
Parashat Korach	
Shabbat Services.....	9:00A.M.
Shabbat Ends.....	9:15P.M.
Friday, June 14	
Mincha/Maariv.....	7:00P.M.
Candle Lighting Time.....	8:09P.M.
Saturday, June 15	
Parashat Chkat	
Shabbat Services.....	9:00A.M.
Shabbat Ends.....	9:15P.M.
Friday, June 21	
Mincha/Maariv.....	7:00P.M.
Candle Lighting Time.....	8:12P.M.
Saturday, June 22	
Parashat Balak	
Shabbat Services.....	9:00A.M.
Shabbat Ends.....	9:20P.M.
Friday, June 28	
Mincha/Maariv.....	7:00 P.M.
Candle Lighting Time.....	8:13P.M.
Parshat Pinchas	
Shabbat Services.....	9:00 A.M.
Shabbat Ends.....	9:21 P.M.

CENTER NEWS

CONDOLENCES

To **Sue Dunaisky** on the passing of her beloved mother, Harriet Kooperman.

To the family of **Larry Fyman** who passed away this month. Larry was a long time active member of Flushing Jewish Center and FFMJC.

To **Beatrice Finkelstein** on the passing of her beloved husband **Daniel**.

On the passing of **Ramah Cohen**, beloved mother of Ezra Morty and Matilda

SISTERHOOD

Welcome back to all the Snowbirds
 We had a successful first meeting of the new season and enjoyed watching the "Gefilte Fish Chronicles".
 For the next meeting on May 23rd we are honored to have Evelyn Pike Rubin tell us about her experiences as a refugee in Shanghai during the war. She is the author of Ghetto Shanghai and has spoken at many places.
 The monthly book club meetings continue. The book for May 30th is "My Name is Asher Lev" by Chaim Potok. In June there will be a discussion of "Destiny of the Republic" by Candice Mittard. All are welcome at 10:30 AM.
 The June Sisterhood meeting is scheduled for June 20th. Watch for the announcement.
 The exercise program has restarted and will continue on Tuesday mornings at 11 AM. If you have not tried it come down and see if you like it. It is good for your health!
 See you soon!
 Joan and Marilyn

NOTICE

A member asked if the attached notice could be placed in our bulletin. I know the family is in need of the service requested.
 Rabbi Solomon

Seeking home health aid for elderly man living at home with his wife in Flushing, Queens. Is receiving at-home hospice care but requires additional hours of help during the day. Requires assistance getting around the house and in and out of bed and chair. Light housework as needed. Hours during the day are flexible. Compensation based on experience. If interested, please call 410-490-0164.

Sisterhood

"The Simcha Cake Project"

The following Simchas were announced at the April 11, 2013 meeting

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| Judy Levy | On son Richard's April birthday |
| Anita Seelig | In memory of Muriel Packers 1 st yahrzeit |
| Marilyn Brown | Welcome back everyone |
| Anita Bernstein | Mazel Tov to granddaughter |
| Maggie | on her acceptance to Math for America Program |
| Inge Lewkowitz | Good health and happiness to all my kids |
| Susan Gastman | Congratulations to my grandson Eric on his acceptance to Grad school |
| Sylvia Udasin | In honor of grandson Eric's engagement |
| Bette Glasser | Welcome back to everybody |
| Rochelle Mendelow | Good health to all |
| Joyce Warshowsky | Good health to all |
| Lucy Gutman | In honor of my grandsons |
| Rita Kurz | In honor of my great-grandchildren Sadie and Elias |
| Inge Berger | Best wishes to everyone |
| Sandy Godnick | In honor of my grandson's graduation |
| Sarah Sokol | In honor of my granddaughter's second term at Barnard |
| Marcia Blank | On birth of twin great-granddaughters |
| Florence & Luisa Cvern | Happy birthday Erin |
| Ruth Lasky | Happiness for all |
| Edith Dressler | on my grand-niece's college graduation |
| Larry & Joan Corn | In honor of our 60 th wedding anniversary |
| Eva & Walter Beckhardt | On engagement of our great-nephew |
| Michael Green | On being alive |
| Ephraim Klamka | In honor of grandchildren |
| Rae Mishler | In honor of Israel's 65 th anniversary |
| Evelyn Hurr | Good health to my grandchildren |
| Goldie Kerstman | For my daughter-in-law Marilyn's good health |
| Janet Pearlmutter | In honor of my twin grandson's graduation from college |
| Eleanor Frommer | In honor of Andrew Fierstein's good health |
| Goldie Kerstman | In honor of good health for Eleanor Pearlmutter |
| Rosalie Weiner | Welcome back snowbirds |

FFMJC CHOIR

The choir is exploring for interest in adding women to the choir.
 If you are a woman and are interested in participating in the choir, please call the Office (718-357-5100) and leave your name with Marcia.



RABBI'S MESSAGE

(The following are excerpts from the rabbi's sermon delivered on the seventh day of Passover.)

By all accounts the president's visit to Israel was well received by its government and its people even as the Israeli government and its people were well received by President Obama. Among all the rhetoric surrounding President Obama's visit to Israel, I found these remarks most significant and most revealing.

"US President Barack Obama, in his remarks upon his arrival at Ben Gurion Airport in Israel. Invoking the Jewish people's 3,000-year history in the land, he referred to modern Israelis as President Obama said that his visit was "an opportunity to reaffirm the unbreakable bond between our nations, to restate America's unwavering commitment to Israel's security and to speak directly to the people of Israel and to your neighbors. We stand together because peace must come to the Holy Land. I am confident in declaring that our alliance is l'netzach, eternal, is forever." (Jerusalem Post, New York Times)

"We extend our hand in peace to the Palestinians. Israel has proven time and again it is ready for concessions in exchange for real peace, and the situation today is no different. With a Palestinian partner, that is willing to hold negotiations in good will, Israel will be ready for a historic compromise that will end the conflict with the Palestinians once and for all—Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in his opening remarks upon the arrival of US President Barack Obama to Israel.

"Thank you for the hopes you carry with you. In a few minutes you will be on your way to Jerusalem. Our ancient capital. The cradle of all believers, of all prayers. You will see the hills and mountains where our prophets preached. Where the soul of the Jewish People was born. Where the State of Israel was created. America and Israel are somewhat different in size. In size, not in destiny. The American dream stems from the bible. The Israeli spirit is inspired by American exceptionalism. Israeli President Shimon Peres, in his opening remarks upon the arrival of US President Barack Obama to Israel."

"Our history is replete with lies... [including] the lie about Al-Qaeda and the September 11 events, which asserted that Muslim terrorists committed it, and that it was not an internal American action by the Freemasons." Hassan Ouda Abu Zaher, from an op-ed article in the official PA daily, , just prior to the arrival in Israel of US President Barack Obama. (, March 18, 2013)

In a speech in Jerusalem on Thursday, March 21, 2013, directed to the people of Israel, President Obama said:

*While Jews achieved extraordinary success in many parts of the world, the dream of true freedom finally found its full expression in the Zionist idea - to be a free people in your homeland. That's why I believe that Israel is rooted not just in history and tradition, but also in a simple and profound idea - the idea that people deserve to be free in a land of their own.

*We've made it clear, time and again, that Israel cannot accept rocket attacks from Gaza, and we have stood up for Israel's right to defend itself. And that's why Israel has a right to expect Hamas to renounce violence and recognize Israel's right to exist.

*A people who have a living memory of the Holocaust [are] faced with the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iranian government that has called for Israel's destruction. It's no wonder Israelis view this as an existential threat. But this is not simply a challenge for Israel - it is a danger for the entire world, including the United States.

*Strong and principled diplomacy is the best way to ensure that the Iranian government forsakes nuclear weapons....But Iran must know this time is not unlimited....America will do what we must to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran.

*Israel is the most powerful country in this region. Israel has the unshakeable support of the most powerful country in the world. Israel is not going anywhere. Israel has the wisdom to see the world as it is, but - this is in your nature - Israel also has the courage to see the world as it should be.

Rabbi Herschel Schacter died recently at 95 after a career as one of the most prominent modern Orthodox rabbis in the U.S. On April 11, 1945, Schacter was the first Jewish chaplain to enter the Buchenwald camp in Germany, which

had just been liberated by Gen. George S. Patton's Third Army. He would remain at Buchenwald for months, tending to survivors and helping to resettle thousands of Jews.

Schacter said afterward, at first it seemed as though there was no one left alive, with hundreds of bodies strewn everywhere. He was led to filthy barracks where men lay on raw wooden planks stacked from floor to ceiling. "*Shalom Aleichem, Yidden*," Schacter cried in Yiddish, "*ihr zint frei!*" (Peace be upon you, Jews, you are free).

As he passed a mound of corpses, Schacter spied a small boy, Prisoner 17030, hiding in terror. "What's your name, my child?" he asked in Yiddish. "Lulek," he replied. Rabbi Schacter discovered nearly a thousand orphaned children in Buchenwald. He and a colleague, Rabbi Robert Marcus, helped arrange for their transport to France - a convoy that included Lulek and the teenage Elie Wiesel. Lulek, who eventually settled in Palestine, grew up to be Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, the Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Israel from 1993 to 2003 who is now the chief rabbi of Tel Aviv. (*New York Times*)

So last but not least, excerpts from the words of former Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau to President Obama: . . . **"Rabbi, he said, (referring to a gentleman he met at a speaking engagement in Seattle, Washington) 'I was one of the liberators of Buchenwald. I served with General Patton. When I heard you are coming to Seattle, I asked to meet with you after 67 years to ask your forgiveness for being late. We came too late.'**

Yesterday, Mr. President, you promised us that we are not alone. Don't be too late. Remember, we need your support. We need your friendship. We appreciate your love to us and the entire world. . . We pray for the peace in Israel, in the Middle East and the entire world. And you will help us together to have the great days of light after the dark tunnel. Thank you very much."

**Best wishes to all for a joyous summer.
Happy 65th Birthday to Israel!**

Rabbi Gerald M. Solomon

A PRAYER FOR ISRAEL

May 14th is the secular date of the 65th anniversary of Israel's statehood. It behooves us at this time to offer our continued love and support to both Israel and the United States as well as our talents to encourage our families and friends, our neighbors, and our leaders to do their share in seeing to it that the relationship between Israel and the United States does not deteriorate but improves with the passage of time. The president's recent trip to Israel did much to restore the friendly and mutually cooperative relationship the two countries have enjoyed in the past.

For American Jews, celebrating Yom Ha'atzmaut has been a way to express solidarity with the state of Israel and to strengthen their alliance with it. In many communities, it is one of few occasions in which Jewish organizations and synagogues of different ideologies and denominations cooperate in forming a common celebration. Let us show our love and support for Israel at this time by celebrating its 65th anniversary even as we affirm our devotion to our beloved America.

Please Say:

"Our Father in Heaven, Protector and Redeemer of Israel, as we observe the 65th anniversary of the State of Israel's independence, we ask that you bless the State of Israel which marks the dawn of our deliverance. Shield it beneath the wings of Your love. Spread over it Your canopy of peace; send Your light and Your truth to its leaders, officers, and counselors, and direct them with Your good counsel. O G-d, strengthen the defenders of our HOLY LAND. Grant them salvation and crown them with victory. Establish peace in the land, and everlasting joy for its inhabitants. Remember our brethren, the whole house of Israel, in all the lands of their dispersion. Speedily let them walk upright to Zion, Your city, to Jerusalem Your dwelling-place, as it is written in the Torah of Your servant Moses: 'Even if you are dispersed in the uttermost parts of the world, from there the Lord your G-d will gather and fetch you. The L-rd your G-d will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it.'

Unite our heart to love and revere Your Name, and to observe all the precepts of Your Torah. Shine forth in Your glorious majesty over all the inhabitants of Your world. Let everything that breathes proclaim: The L-rd G-d of Israel is King; His majesty rules over all." Amen.

SHAVUOT

The Festival of Shavuot or "Weeks," is one of the Shalosh Regalim (Exodus 23:14); one of the three main pilgrimage festivals. It comes at the end of the seven-times-seven (a "week of weeks") cycle of the Omer, which begins on the second day of Pesach. This year Shavuot begins on May 14th. Candle lighting is 7:46 P.M.

The Festival of Shavuot is somewhat unusual. Not only is it not assigned to a specific date, but there is no real explanation given in Torah as to the meaning of the day, nor how it is to be observed ritually. In Biblical times, the period of counting seven weeks marked the transition from the very first grain crop (barley) of early spring (at Pesach) to the beginning of the summer grain (wheat) harvest (at Shavuot). Thus names for Shavuot given in the Torah are Chag Ha-Katzir - the Festival of the Harvest - and Chag Ha-Bikkurim - the Festival of the First Fruits (Cf. Exodus 23:14-19; Leviticus 23:9-22). The day is identified as a holy occasion to be observed as a Sabbath, and specific sacrificial offerings are to be brought to the Temple. But beyond that, there is no special ritual prescribed.

These agricultural origins of Shavuot probably sufficed for the agrarian society of ancient Israel while they lived in the promised land. But they didn't really allow for a meaningful holiday for Jews once they were outside the Land of Israel, where farming was on a different cycle and there was no Temple to which one could bring the seasonal offerings. In exile, Jews were left with a commanded festival with no apparent meaning. But tradition abhors a vacuum. So what inherent meaning could be found for Shavuot?

The meaning of Shavuot became apparent after considering the relationship of Shavuot with Pesach and Sukkot. All are Biblically ordained festivals. All have an agricultural connection, assigned to a specific harvest season. But Pesach and Sukkot both have historical associations as well. Pesach commemorates the Exodus and the liberation from Egyptian bondage. Sukkot, and the dwelling in the Sukkah, recall the Israelite's experience while wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. So, our sages opined that Shavuot must fit into this paradigm as well. But how? Well, 50 days after leaving Egypt, and before they set out to wander in the desert, the Israelites found themselves camped out at the base of Mt. Sinai, awaiting the revelation of God's teachings. And so, in this historical sequence, Shavuot naturally became associated with an extraordinary and significant event: the revelation of the Torah to Moses on Mt. Sinai. While Shavuot had no 'historical' event associated

with it in the Torah, and the event of Revelation had no holiday to mark it, it was a perfect match. Conveniently, since Revelation and Shavuot both do not have an actual date in the Torah, the Rabbis were able to determine that Revelation coincides with Shavuot. The Rabbis had a vested interest in this transformation as well. They saw themselves as the legitimate heirs to the Temple and priestly leadership. Instead of sacrifices, Torah learning must be at the center. How could there not be a holiday to acknowledge the giving of the Torah?

The sages came to refer to Shavuot as **“Z'man Matan Toratenu”**- **“The Time of the Giving of our Torah.”** As the anniversary of revelation, Shavuot evolved into a celebration of Torah. In the synagogue, the account of the revelation at Sinai and the Ten Commandments are read as part of the service. Among Ashkenazic Jews, a custom also developed associating the Megilat Ruth- the Book of Ruth with Shavuot. There are a number of links that make this an appropriate text. Particularly, the setting of the story is at the harvest time, and Ruth's conversion to Judaism is seen as analogous to the Israelite's acceptance of the covenant at Sinai. In addition, King David, who tradition teaches was born and died on Shavuot, is identified in the book as being descended from Ruth.

Another popular custom, which originated with the Jewish mystics in Safed in the sixteenth century, is the practise of staying up all through the night of Shavuot studying Torah. This practice, called Tikkun Leil Shavuot is based on a Midrash that explains that the Israelites slept late on the morning of the revelation at Sinai, and thus almost missed the giving of Torah. By staying up all night, we atone for this lapse of our ancestors, and demonstrate our appreciation of revelation and our eagerness to recommit ourselves again and again to Torah.

Rituals and Customs

There is a custom on Shavuot to eat dairy foods, such as cheese blintzes. This custom is of uncertain origin; perhaps it is an ancient echo of the agricultural seasons when in the early summer the calves and kids would be old enough to wean, so there would be plenty of milk for the farmers. Another explanation suggests that Torah is like milk and honey (see Song of Songs 4:11). Another theory suggests that prior to the Revelation on Shavuot, the consumption of meat would have been inappropriate because of the laws of kashrut which were to be given in the Shavuot Revelation of the Torah.

There is a beautiful Sephardic custom of erecting a Chuppa (bridal canopy) over the lectern on which Torah is read on Shavuot and honoring recently married couples. The custom extends from the notion that Shavuot is like a wedding between G-d (the groom) and Israel (the bride), with Torah serving as the Ketubah-

(marriage contract). Special Shavuot ketubot are also written and read.

Other customs include decorating the synagogue for Shavuot with flowers and green plants, again echoing the ancient holiday of the “first fruits,” and “Confirmation,” a relatively new ritual (only a hundred years or so) through which teenagers are given the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to Jewish life and living.

It has often been asked why Shavuot is known as "The Season of the of Our Torah," when perhaps it's more important for us as Jews to recall that not only did G-d give Torah to Israel, but that we freely accepted and committed ourselves to it. Shavuot, then, becomes not only Z'man Matan Toratenu - the time of the giving of our Torah, but also Z'man Kabbalat Toratenu - the time of the of our Torah. The giving of Torah is an historical event, that happened just once. But the acceptance of Torah by individual Jews is a continual process that happens every day, anytime a Jew makes a decision based on Jewish values, wholeheartedly recites a Jewish prayer, or makes a conscious effort to better the world. Each and every experience of our lives provides us with a new context to learn and understand Torah and put it into action in our lives. This is referred to as progressive revelation. We were given Torah just once, thus allowing for this yearly anniversary of Shavuot. But we “accept” Torah continually, allowing us to live a renewed Jewish life every day

ON HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY, RE-IMAGINING THE SHOAH

Jerusalem Post, Apr 04, 2013

One of the most disturbing and paradoxically important questions to arise out of the ashes of the Holocaust is not so much the question of why six million Jews and millions of others were systematically annihilated by the Nazis, but the question of “what if...?”

What if more people had stood up in the face of the Nazi tyranny to say “no” to anti-Semitism, racism and bigotry? What if there had been more righteous gentiles in countries across Europe willing to take the risk of hiding and protecting their Jewish neighbors? What if there had been more rescuers such as Schindler and Sugihara and Wallenberg? What if there had been more countries like Bul-

garia, who refused to hand over their Jewish populations on the orders of Hitler and his Third Reich?

The short answer, of course, is that more lives would have been saved, that fewer victims would have suffocated in the Nazi gas chambers. We know from history, and particularly the Holocaust, that whenever and wherever good people stood up to defy the genocidal ambitions of the Nazis, Jews lived, Catholics lived, homosexuals lived, Roma lived, and others lived.

Of course, the bigger “what ifs” involve larger questions. What if Winston Churchill’s words were heeded early on in the 1930s before Hitler had amassed huge military strength? What if the U.S. had not retreated into isolationism after World War I? What if the League of Nations had real authority early on to stand up to German aggression? There are many such larger historical questions that need to be asked. But for me as a survivor who was rescued by a caring and compassionate woman, I think of the question on a more personal, individual level.

Jews around the world commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day or Yom HaShoah as it is known in Hebrew, on April 7 this year. It is at this time of year that we light candles and remember the six million whose lives were cut short by the Nazis. We also take a moment to reflect on the nature of hatred, and ask why and how so many people could so blindly follow the orders of a genocidal lunatic in his single-minded purpose of persecuting and killing millions of innocent men, women and children.

As a survivor, I often think about the more than 1.5 million children who perished, and how I might have been counted among them were it not for the heroic actions of a poor, illiterate Catholic Polish woman who I was fortunate enough to have as my nanny. In 1941, when the order came for Jews to be assembled into the Ghetto in the Lithuanian city of Vilnius, this good and simple woman offered to take me from my parents, pledging to keep me safe until their return. For the next four years she kept my Jewish identity hidden, had me baptized by a priest and raised me as a Catholic. Her actions saved my life.

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Miraculously, my parents survived the Holocaust and returned to reclaim me, their only child, after the war was over. I was only 5 years old by the time, but I have struggled for my entire adult life with the memories and the quandary of why I survived when so many others perished simply because they were Jewish. This is one of the reasons I devoted my life’s work to the fight against anti-Semitism and hatred. One of the lessons of the Holocaust was that Jews could no longer remain silent in the face of anti-Semitism. We had to speak out to prevent another Holocaust from happening. And we had to encourage other good people to speak out so that we could prevent future acts of hate.....

Abraham Foxman is National Director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL).

HAPPY 65th BIRTHDAY ISRAEL!

By David Harris

For many nations, a 65th birthday may not generate much excitement. But if the country happens to be Israel, which celebrates its birthday this year on April 15-16, it's another story.

Israel has the dubious distinction of being the only UN member state whose right to exist is regularly challenged, whose elimination from the world map is the aim of at least one other UN member state (Iran), and whose population centers are deemed fair game by Hamas-controlled Gaza and Hezbollah-dominated Lebanon.

None of the countries that are serial human-rights violators--not Iran, North Korea, Belarus, Zimbabwe, Sudan, or any of the others--gets anything near the relentless, obsessive, guilty-till-proven-innocent scrutiny that democratic Israel receives from UN bodies, with their built-in, anti-Israel majorities, in New York and Geneva. Indeed, Israel is the only nation in the world which has a permanent, separate agenda item at the UN Human Rights Council. All other countries in the world are lumped together under another agenda item.

No other country is the target of such non-stop, well-funded, and highly-organized campaigns to discredit, delegitimize, and demonize a sovereign state.

No other country faces systematic attempts to launch boycotts, divestment campaigns, and sanctions against it, not to mention flotillas and flytillas. All the while those behind the efforts, claiming to speak in the lofty name of human rights, studiously ignore places like Syria, where more than 70,000 have been killed in the past two years alone and numberless more wounded, homeless, exiled, and detained. Why this lack of interest in Syria? Presumably because no Israeli connection can be claimed.

No other country has its right to self-defense challenged as Israel does, even though it acts no differently than any other nation would if confronted by periodic terrorist assaults and deadly missile and rocket attacks.

And no other country is as microscopically examined in the media, from the BBC to the , from CNN International to the wire services, leading to such typical whoppers as the headline on April 4th - "Tensions Rise As Israel and Gaza Swap Strikes." Rockets were fired from Gaza at Israel, Israel responded to defend its citizens, and to the newspaper of record, it's an antiseptically 50-50 equation between the attacker and the attacked.

I have enormous admiration for Israel - for its resolve, resilience, courage, and ingenuity.

What it has achieved in the past 65 years is breathtaking: the rebirth of a state with a rock-solid democratic foundation; the ingathering of millions of refugees and

immigrants from just about every corner of the world; the creation of a world-class economy; the building of a first-rate army; and a determination to overcome one seemingly insurmountable obstacle after another.

Other nations might have succumbed, after 65 years of uninterrupted hostility, to enemies trying everything under the sun to destroy them, and short of that, to demoralize and isolate them. But Israel has not flinched. It refuses to cave. It keeps confounding its foes.

Its commitment to a two-state accord with the Palestinians, polls repeatedly reveal, remains unshakeable, even as many Israelis can't help but wonder if the Palestinians, given one chance after another for sovereignty, truly share Israel's aim of Jewish and Palestinian states living side by side in peace and harmony.

Moreover, in global surveys Israel comes out among the "happiest" countries in the world; Tel Aviv ranks as one of the top "go-to" destinations for young people; and Israelis' life expectancy exceeds that of Americans'.

How can it be, Israel's adversaries ask, that these "sons of monkeys and pigs," as radical Muslim preachers openly refer to the Jews (and as Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi declared three years ago, while a Muslim Brotherhood leader), manage to stand tall, strong, and, yes, optimistic? How can it be that this nation of just eight million, grown from only 650,000 at its birth in 1948, repeatedly defeats far more populous Arab foes that have arrayed themselves against it? How can it be that these Jews, seemingly led to slaughter like sheep by the Third Reich, suddenly learned how to defend themselves and vanquish larger Arab armies, within three years of V-E Day? And how can it be that Israel, with no natural resources to speak of until recent natural gas findings, could achieve a first-world economy, catapulting it into the OECD; double-digit winners of Nobel Prizes; top-three ranking in new NASDAQ listings; and global recognition as a leader in innovation and entrepreneurship?

Too often, Israel's adversaries have come up with misguided if self-satisfying answers, usually elaborate conspiracy theories inspired by anti-Semitic tropes.

In reality, though, the answer is much simpler. It derives from an age-old connection among a land, a faith, and a people. Many have tried to sever the link. All have failed.

Consider the words of Ezekiel, expressed some 2,700 years ago:

Or, to fast forward from the ancient prophet Ezekiel to the prophetic Winston Churchill:

Churchill added that the state's establishment was "one of the most hopeful and encouraging adventures of the 20th century."

Indeed, so it continues to be in the 21st century.

To be sure, Israel, like all democratic societies, is a permanent work in progress. Much remains to be done.

From grappling with a less-than-ideal electoral system to dealing with religious zealots who invoke a "higher authority" than the state, from addressing a yawning gap between rich and poor to balancing the Jewish and democratic nature of the country, from the decades-long pursuit of peace with its neighbors to the defense of the country in an ever more turbulent region, Israel has no shortage of challenges.

But, above all, Israel is a wondrous "adventure." I feel privileged daily to see the fulfillment of the prayers of generations longing for a return to Zion from forced exile.

Witnessing Soviet Jews arriving at Ben-Gurion Airport even as Saddam Hussein's Scud missiles came raining down, while Israel did not miss a beat in welcoming the newcomers, reveals the country's character.

So, too, being in Rambam Hospital in Haifa during Hezbollah missile attacks. One minute, a siren would sound and everyone would calmly go, or be moved, to the bomb shelters. The next minute, after the all-clear signal, the scientists would return to their labs to continue cutting-edge research in cancer, diabetes, and stem-cell therapy.

Or visiting Barzilai Hospital in Ashkelon, where victims of Hamas strikes against Israel were taken for medical care, and seeing Palestinian patients from Gaza in rooms adjoining the Jewish wounded.

Or getting to know Save a Child's Heart, an Israeli program that provides life-saving pediatric heart surgery. Many of the children come from Arab countries that deny Israel's very existence.

Or seeing the scrawling on a Tel Aviv wall shortly after 21 young Israelis were killed at a discotheque -- "They won't stop us from dancing."

Or watching an Israeli Arab Supreme Court justice -- who, incidentally, refuses to sing Israel's national anthem -- sit on a panel that upheld the conviction of an Israeli ex-president on charges of rape.

Or imagining the role Israel could one day play in the region in helping advance food security, water security, energy security, environmental security, public health security, and knowledge security, all of which will be towering issues in the 21st century.

No, this Israel may not now feature prominently in the media, I'm sorry to say, but it is the Israel that pulsates daily with a love of life, of freedom, and of the land.

Happy 65th Birthday, Israel!

(David Harris is the Executive Director of the American Jewish Committee)

Last month, one of my Hasidic grandchildren got married. Next month, one of my reform-congregation grandchildren will marry. This is a poem about the two different ceremonies.

(Lois Greene Stone is the daughter of a past president of Flushing Jewish Center)

outside-in/inside-out

Ivory satin. Rented.
 Were the other wearers
 also nervous, excited.
 Full-bearded men in
 long black coats hoist
 poles topped with cloth.
 Sheitels are smoothed
 as women remember
 maidenhood. Ivory
 satin. Purchased.
 Couples sit in pews
 waiting to witness
 the rite; some hold
 hands recalling their
 own vows. Different
 ceremonies. A constant
 is a ketubah and a
 chuppah.




Lois Greene Stone

MAY 2013

IYAR/SIVAN, 5773

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i> ^{24 Iyar} Behar- Bechukotai  7:35 <i>Ends 8:44</i>
<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i> ^{1 Sivan} Rosh Chodesh  <i>Ends 8:51</i>	<i>11</i> ^{2 Sivan} Bamidbar
<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>14</i> Shavuoth Dinner 6:00 PM  7:46	<i>15</i> Shavuoth	<i>16</i> Shavuoth	<i>17</i>  7:49 <i>Ends 8:58</i>	<i>18</i> ^{9 Sivan} Naso
<i>19</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>23</i> Sisterhood Program & Luncheon 12 Noon	<i>24</i>  7:55 <i>Ends 9:04</i>	<i>25</i> ^{16 Sivan} B'Haalotecha
<i>26</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>30</i> Sisterhood Book Club "My name Is Asher Lev" 10:30 AM	<i>31</i>  8:01	

JUNE, 2013
SIVAN/TAMUZ, 5773

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						<i>1</i> 23 Sivan Sh'lach <i>Ends 9:15</i>
<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>  8:06	<i>8</i> 30 Sivan Korach Rosh Chodesh <i>Ends 9:18</i>
<i>9</i> 1 Tamuz Rosh Chodesh	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>14</i>  8:09	<i>15</i> 7 Tamuz Chukas <i>Ends 9:20</i>
<i>16</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>20</i> Sisterhood Meeting 12 Noon	<i>21</i>  8:12	<i>22</i> 15 Tamuz Balak <i>Ends 9:21</i>
<i>23</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>27</i> Sisterhood Book Club "Destiny of The Republic" 12 Noon	<i>28</i>  8:12	<i>29</i> 22 Tamuz Pinchas <i>Ends 8:18</i>
<i>30</i>						