



ISRAEL MATTERS!

Publication of the Israel Affairs Committee of Temple Beth Sholom
**CONTINUING THE CELEBRATION
OF ISRAEL @ 60**

Issue Number 15
June 2008

ISRAEL CELEBRATES 60 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

SECRETARY OF STATE RICE: U.S. WILL ALWAYS DEFEND ISRAEL'S SECURITY

In a speech marking the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of Israel as a Jewish state, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice spoke about American support for Israel.

"For sixty years now, American administrations - Democrat and Republican, liberal and conservative, have differed over many, many things, but one thing unites our government: we are committed to the freedom, the well being, and the security of our democratic ally, Israel," Rice said.

Secretary of State Rice reaffirmed U.S. support for peace between Israelis and Palestinians, a peace that would lead to two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side. That goal, she said, is under threat from extremists, like Hamas, who have chosen terrorism over politics. "They are refusing to renounce violence, refusing to recognize Israel's right to exist, and refusing to respect all previous Palestinian agreements with Israel. But perhaps of deepest concern, the leaders of Hamas are increasingly serving as the proxy warriors of an Iranian regime that is destabilizing the region, seeking a nuclear capability, and proclaiming its desire to destroy Israel."

"Let me be very clear," said Secretary of State Rice. "We will defend against any action, as we always have, that would compromise Israel's security."

Festivities began May 8th, at the end of Yom Hazikaon, the solemn, 24-hour day of mourning for the more than 20,000 soldiers and civilians killed in fighting that preceded and followed Israel's creation. Mostly, Israelis celebrated Yom Ha'atzmaut by going to parks and picnic sites. Nature reserves, picnic sites, and museums were open to the public and the IDF opened selected bases to the public.

Garrett Reisman, a NASA astronaut and the first Jewish crew member on the international space station, sent a greeting from space to the people of Israel. "Every time the station flies over the state of Israel, I try to find a window, and it never fails to move me when I see the familiar outline of Israel coming toward us from over the horizon," said the astronaut.



Buildings in Tel Aviv illuminated to celebrate Israel's 60th anniversary

Revelers throughout the world — including those in the New Haven area — tried to set a record for the most people singing a national anthem at the same time.

150 foreign paratroopers, from various armies around the world, came to Israel to take part in the celebrations and to salute the IDF. Representing the US, England, France, Spain, Germany, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Singapore, South Africa, Canada, Greece, Italy and Switzerland, they jumped together with the IDF as part of the ceremonies. Greek paratroopers laid a laurel at the IDF Paratroopers Memorial. A Dutch paratrooper, the grandchild of Righteous Gentiles, planted an olive tree at the memorial and met the family of the man saved by his grandfather. A paratrooper named Yoni, of the French foreign legion is named after Yoni Netanyahu, the commander who was killed in the Entebbe operation. He fulfilled his dream to wear the IDF's Paratrooper wings.

An air display off the Tel Aviv coast was the highlight of the celebrations. The aircraft also flew over about 20 other Israeli cities from Nahiriya, just south of the Lebanon border, to Sderot, the town on the edge of the Gaza strip, that is targeted almost daily by rockets fired from there. Israeli naval vessels also led a flotilla of hundreds of private yachts in a stately procession down the coast.

Thousands of police, including special units, were on duty to secure the events, as police raised their alert to the second-highest level, amid warnings that Arab militants might try to mar the festivities with a major attack.

WHITE HOUSE HOPEFULS VOW TO BE ALLIES OF ISRAEL

White House hopefuls hailed their ties to Israel and vowed to stand by it as Israel celebrated its 60th anniversary. All three senators in the contest to succeed President George W. Bush in November's election appealed to voters, particularly Jewish-Americans, by highlighting America's support for Israel. The likely Republican nominee, Arizona Senator John McCain, said that "when president Harry Truman recognized the new state of Israel 60 years ago, he formalized a deep and enduring relationship between two great peoples. "Challenges to Israel have perhaps been the norm, rather than the exception, and its people have been tested in the crucible of conflict time and again," he said. "Let no one doubt that, while the challenges will continue, Israel will survive and it will flourish. There will always be an Israel, and there will always be a vital bond between our two peoples."

. "What I love about Israel is it is such a robust democracy and ... they are committed to principles like rule of law and civil rights and civil liberties," said Illinois Senator Barack Obama. "So it is critical that we send a message around the world, we will stand with Israel, we want them around not just for 60 years but for 600 years and when I am president of the United States they will have an unwavering ally in me."

His Democratic rival, New York Senator Hillary Clinton, applauded the Israeli people for building a "strong and vibrant democracy," but warned that despite "all that Israel has achieved, we know that the Jewish state is still not safe." The former first lady said, "In every generation, Israel faces serious challenges to its security and threats to its existence," adding that America and Israel are "united by shared values and strong bonds of friendship." Clinton said that as president, she would "be proud to continue and strengthen these bonds, so that the State of Israel will continue to grow, from generation to generation, in security and peace."

COMMANDER OF "EXODUS" DIES

Yossi Harel, barely 30 years old, commanded the legendary ship, Exodus, carrying some 4,500 Jewish refugees and Holocaust survivors from Europe to British Palestine in 1947. Harel died April 26th, at age 90.

The ship sailed from a small port near Marseilles, France, on July 11, 1947. The British authorities, determined to stop the immigration of Jews to Palestine after the war, adopted a new policy to return ships to their European point of embarkation. It had warships accompany the ship once it left French territorial waters.



On the morning of July 17, a refugee named Dvora was on deck of what was then still named the SS President Warfield, watching the

British warships approach. "That morning, our ship's name was not yet the Exodus.... Late in the afternoon, I saw a friend of mine, a Belgian boy, struggling with a long piece of cloth and some paint. He explained he was going to paint the name of our ship on the sheet: Hagana Ship, Exodus 1947.... After a while, the job was done. That is how our ship became Exodus," she wrote in her memoirs. That night, the British rammed the ship and brought it to a stop outside the territorial waters of Palestine. Soldiers forcefully boarded the ship. After a harrowing two months at sea and ports, and clashes, hunger strikes and defiance, the immigrants once again found themselves back in the Europe "that for us meant only misery and horrible memories," Dvora wrote. They were forcefully removed from the ship in Germany.

ISRAEL'S UN ENVOY - JIMMY CARTER 'BIGOT'

During April, Israel's U.N. Ambassador Dan Gillerman said former U.S. President Jimmy Carter was a "bigot" for meeting in Syria with the leader of the Palestinian militant group Hamas. Speaking at a gathering in New York organized by The Israel Project,



Carter lays wreath at grave of Yasser Arafat in Ramallah.

Gillerman said that he was saddened by the meeting and that in his mind Carter had become "what I believe to be a bigot" for having the meeting.

Carter "went to the region with soiled hands and came back with bloody hands," he said.

The Carter Center in Atlanta was not available for comment. The former U.S. president, has said Hamas would "accept a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders if approved by Palestinians."

The United States brushed off the comments, arguing that Hamas' basic stance, which includes a call in its charter for the destruction of Israel, had not changed.

The State Department has said it urged Carter not to meet with Hamas, a position restated by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, but Carter denied this. Hamas, which controls Gaza, is viewed as a terrorist organization by the United States, the European Union and Israel.

Hamas seized control of Gaza in fighting during June 2007.

TBS SUPPORTS THE ISRAEL DEFENSE FORCES!

Earlier this year the Israel Affairs Committee put out a call to the congregation for contributions to support our "adopted" Nahal unit of the IDF. The response was unprecedented and more than \$3,000 was raised in an incredibly short time. The funds were transferred to Israel and the unit was able to purchase their much needed, expensive, high-intensity lights for use during extremely dangerous night operations. Recently we received a thank you note from our contact in the unit, Josh. In his note of appreciation for the support, he wrote, *"I took some pictures this week, some with the Petzlim flashlights. As you'll see the guys here are very happy to have them, and have been putting them to use at night before we go out on missions and also putting them on their helmets or in their vests to use in the field. I'm really glad you were able to provide us with the ability to get them and that they're being used a lot, too. In the end we bought 32 of them, five super-high quality 'unbreakable' ones for our three Medics and two navigators, the rest, 27 very high quality and reliable Petzlim you will see in some of the pictures. We ended up buying more than 22 because my team/unit was put together with an older, more veteran unit (of ten guys who went into the army a year before us) who we operate with now."* Josh informs us that the unit has funds remaining with which they expect to purchase multi-purpose pocket knives/tools. *"Again, a million and one thank you's from me and the rest of my unit. Happy Yom Hatzmaut to you!!! All the best - Josh"*



Pictures sent us by Josh (lower left, large photograph) show members of his unit with the lights purchased. To all who contributed we say: *"Kol HaKavod! – All the Honor!"*