

**KOL NIDRE**  
**SEPTEMBER 27, 2009**  
**RABBI MITCHELL WOHLBERG**

Tonight I am going to do what every Jew is supposed to do on this night ... I'm going to undergo a *cheshbon hanefesh*, take an introspective look at myself. But I do it with a special fervor this year because I was challenged to do it!

In December I delivered a sermon about an incident that took place in the city of Hebron which is located in what is called the West Bank. After Jerusalem, Hebron is our second holiest city. Let me remind you what it means to be our *second* holiest city. The Arabs claim that they must possess Jerusalem because it is their third holiest city ... following Mecca and Medina ... *third* holiest ... and yet they are prepared to die for it, and claim that they should control it, not the Jews. So keep that in mind when I say to you that Hebron is our second holiest city. Hebron is marked as being the burial place of our patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob ... and three of our four matriarchs, Sarah, Rebecca and Leah. Before 1967, Hebron was off limits to Jews ... Jews were denied the right to visit one of our most sacred shrines, the Meorat Ha-machpelah – the cave of Machpelah – where our forbearers are buried but over which the Muslims built a mosque. And then came 1967 and the Six Day War ... and the West Bank was ours, and Hebron was ours! And once again we were able to visit the cave of our patriarchs and matriarchs. And once again Jews moved into the city of Hebron; a city that had always had Jews living there but was made *Judenrein* by the Arabs who in 1929 conducted a massacre of the Jews of Hebron.

I told you about Hebron on this very night in 1983. I told you how that summer Asher Aharon Gross had been killed in Hebron. He was the son of Alex Gross, a classmate of mine at Yeshiva University ... and it was his son and others like him, who fueled by idealism and by a love for Israel and the land of Israel, had come to Hebron to study and to live. Those who came knew they were coming to a city filled with tens of thousands of Arabs who hated their guts. But they came because it is OUR city, OUR land, OUR country ... and someone had to do it! Asher Aharon Gross, Alex's son, was one of those who came. And on July 7, 1983, Asher was standing on the main road across from the open-air market in Hebron and suddenly three Arabs got out of a car, two held Asher Aharon while the third stabbed him to death. Asher Aharon Gross, all of 18 years old, gave his life so that we Jews could stake our rightful claim to Hebron. Many others over the years have done the same.

But in my December sermon I criticized the actions of some Jews living in Hebron who had acted like terrorists, attacking a Palestinian home and threatening to lynch the inhabitants. And I pointed out that what happened in Hebron that day was nothing new "because these Jewish terrorists have thrown stones at Israeli police and soldiers, they have uprooted the olive trees of Arabs, attacked Arab women and old people, have vandalized mosques and Muslim cemeteries ... all this by *Yiddische Kinder*."

It wasn't easy for me to speak those words. As you know, with all the threats and pressures that the people of Israel confront, I rarely criticize the actions that they take. But these

were not the actions of the government of Israel, these were the actions of some citizens of Israel. I felt this was too much and they had gone too far. The fact of the matter is, there were some here who were surprised by that sermon. But if some here were surprised ... there were some in Israel who were absolutely livid! By way of the Internet, that sermon got around. How far did it go? It went all the way to Hebron, where David Wilder, the spokesman for the city of Hebron, felt a need to respond. And he responded not by emailing me personally, he responded by writing an article which was published by *Arutz Sheva* – a popular right-wing news service and website in Israel. And Wilder began by saying: “Last Shabbat one rabbi, Mitch Wohlberg, the rabbi of a Baltimore Modern Orthodox congregation, spewed out a sermon whose subject was terror ...” This was the first time I can remember that anybody accused me of spewing! But what followed was his spewing out an attack on much of what I said, and much of what I didn’t say. And he concluded with this challenge to me, and I quote: “I suggest you stop breathing fire against kids who, despite their good intentions, may have erred and begin soul searching yourself: who are you ... what are you and what do you really believe in? Because judging from last week’s sermon, the answers to these questions are very, very unclear.”

Who am I? What am I? And what do I really believe in? Thanks for asking, David Wilder! Nobody ever cared enough about me to raise those questions! But on this night when those questions are supposed to be asked, I want to respond to them. I want to respond in terms of my feelings about Israel, because on this night for the past 30 years, you and I have had a remarkable *shidduch* in regard to Israel. I have asked you for money ... and you’ve given it ... for Israel! And you’ve given it in a remarkable manner. You have purchased more Israel Bonds than synagogues with larger, more affluent memberships. There is something you heard that resonated within you. So, after doing it for 30 years, let me tell you what it is ... who am I ... what am I ... and what I really believe when it comes to the state of Israel.

My love for Israel is part of my very essence, part of my upbringing. My father was an ardent Zionist; he wrote his doctoral thesis on the early religious Zionist thinkers, and he, himself, served as the President of the Religious Zionists of America. In 1935, my father had what some would consider the ideal honeymoon ... he went to Israel, without my mother! My father had been chosen to be a delegate to the World Zionist Congress and only the invited delegates could go. My mother gave up her honeymoon so that my father could go! And my mother – being my mother – never let him forget it! I remember in the early 1950s the joy my father had, and the support he gave, to a new university that was opening in Israel. It was to be a religious Zionist university and its name was Bar Ilan. And now I serve on its Board of Directors because Haron Dahan is that school’s greatest benefactor. So it seems that my connection to Israel was really part of my DNA.

But it went beyond that ... it went to the heart of the community in which I lived. I grew up in Borough Park, one of the premier Orthodox neighborhoods of Brooklyn in the ‘50s and ‘60s. In my father’s synagogue I came face to face with the Holocaust, as I would watch men roll up their sleeves to put on their tefillin, I would see the numbers tattooed on their arms. I went to right-wing Orthodox Yeshivot where many of my teachers – our Rebbeim – were survivors. Although none of us had been to Israel – we really hadn’t been outside of Brooklyn – we were all lovers of Zion. The picture in the Hagaddah that we used of an Israeli kibbutznik standing guard at the border with rifle in hand was an image that struck us to our core. A Jew

with a gun standing strong and proud and tall ... while all around us in Brooklyn neighborhoods were changing. The liberal Jews who were preaching civil rights were running to the suburbs of Long Island, rioting broke out in major cities in the 1960s and Jews became fearful. We no longer felt secure. In Israel the Jews were building a mighty army that was going to conquer the Middle East in the Six Day War, while in Brooklyn our parents seemed so docile, so passive ... just like, in our minds, a previous generation had been in Europe. We began to question and wonder and worry ... and into all this, along came Meir Kahane with his Jewish Defense League screaming for all of us to hear those words: NEVER AGAIN.

Here he was ... he was one of us, not a liberal, establishment assimilated Jew living in Scarsdale ... but an Orthodox, yarmulke wearing, Torah learning Jew growing up in Brooklyn! To us in Brooklyn, what a surprise ... a pleasant surprise ... to meet a Jew who stood up to the establishment, who stood up to the “*goyim*,” who wasn’t even afraid of the Russians! And so, while other adolescents were going through their rebellious stage and protesting against the Viet Nam war and whatever else, we – the Orthodox boys of Brooklyn – joined with Kahane in protesting for Soviet Jewry, in denigrating the Jewish establishment, in protecting our streets from crime. No, I wasn’t one of those on the front lines of the Jewish Defense League. If Louis Farrakhan’s henchmen at that time were known as the “fruit of Islam,” me – and a lot of my friends – could have been called Kahane’s “fruit of the loom!” Others did the fighting while we were influenced by his thinking ... his thinking, which provided us with a radical way of looking at the world and looking at our Jewishness.

But then, Kahane moved to Israel, while we – the Orthodox boys from Brooklyn – grew up and wisened up. His influence remained but we learned how to channel it in positive, creative ways. Many of us became the backbone of the Aliyah movement of the ‘70s and ‘80s, bringing new blood to Israel and helping to build the settlements. Others made their contributions here at home. Dov Hilkind, one of Kahane’s henchmen, is now an Assemblyman in Brooklyn. Alan Dershowitz and Nathan Lewin used to be Kahane’s lawyers, now Dershowitz is one of the most outspoken defenders of Israel. And Lewin spends much time arguing cases before the Supreme Court on behalf of Orthodox Jewish concerns. One of my college classmates, Rabbi Avi Weiss, is now one of the leading Jewish activists in America, while another one, Sheldon Silver, is the speaker of the New York State Assembly. Leon Wieseltier, graduate of the Flatbush Yeshiva – the same Yeshiva that produced my wife – is the literary editor of the influential *New Republic* while Yossi Kelin Halevi, another of Kahane’s Chasidim, is the Israel correspondent for that magazine. And the Wohlberg boys? We decided to do our share by going into the family business.

Now let’s skip ahead some 40 years. This past May when I was in Israel, I decided that I wanted to see Hebron once again. I had not been there in a while. Generally speaking, people don’t go to Hebron; after the Intifadas and the shootings and killings that have taken place on the West Bank and in Hebron ... Hebron is off the tourist map. None of the major tour companies go to Hebron. There is an ultra-Orthodox tour bus that goes once a week, both to Bethlehem and to Hebron, taking ultra-Orthodox Jews who want to go to the religious shrines – in Bethlehem to Rachel’s Tomb and in Hebron to the Cave of the Patriarchs. So I called and made reservations and the bus picked me up. It was a sight out of a Mel Brooks/Woody Allen movie. The entire bus was filled with Satmar Chasidim – the most extreme of all the Chasidic groups. Everyone

dressed in black with black hats, etc ... and me? ... me in my jeans, button down shirt and knitted yarmulke. They looked at me as if I was a specimen from Mars! And the tour started with the tour guide/bus driver – a man with a beard and peyos and tsitsis hanging out – giving all the details in Yiddish! Every once in a while he would throw in an English translation for ME ... not knowing that I know how to speak Yiddish and had understood everything he was saying!

And then we arrived in Hebron. Hebron is a city of over 160,000 Arabs, but you don't see any on the streets near the Cave of the Patriarchs. Those streets are cut off by the Israel Armed Forces who are there to protect the handful of ultra-Orthodox tourists who come to Hebron. I asked our tour guide if any non-religious Jews come to Hebron and he responded, "You came!" I came, I prayed at the Cave of the Patriarchs and I walked through the Jewish area which houses some 700 Jewish people. And we came upon the home of Boruch Marzel and spoke with him. Boruch Marzel is one of the most extreme of all the settlers; he has been arrested many times for his actions against police and Palestinians. You talk to him and he sounds very rational ... you look at his home, which really is not much of a home – it's more of a mobile home. This is where he is raising his family of nine children and you have to admire the man. This man is willing to put his life on the line for the Jews to have a presence in this, their second most sacred city on the face of the earth. You have to admire the man's courage, the man's dedication, the man's principles and the man's idealism. But while he and the others may be idealistic, I'm sorry to say, they are not realistic. The fact is, they are 700 in a city of over 160,000 and those 160,000 would like nothing better than to kill each and every one of the Jews like they killed Asher Aharon Gross. Even Bibi Netanyahu understands this. During his first term as Prime Minister, as part of the Wye Agreement, he agreed to return 80% of Hebron to Palestinian control. There is a little square in the town dedicated in Asher Aharon Gross' memory, but you have to forgive me for telling you that when I stood there I asked myself: was it worth it? Was it worth giving his life for this? And I have to tell you ... I don't think so! And I have to tell you ... I'm not the only one who feels that way. And I have to tell you that the majority of the Israeli people feel that way. And I have to tell you that my teacher, one of the greatest halachic authorities of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Rabbi Joseph B. Solovetchik, felt this way. Not just about Hebron but about the Western Wall itself!

Yes, there are things in this world for which a Jew is supposed to give his life. But for a piece of land? For a shrine? No! It's not worth it. And it's not worth it when, in fact, it oftentimes brings out the worst in us ... including in 1994 when a Hebron settler named Boruch Goldstein shot and killed 29 Arabs praying at the Tomb of the Patriarchs. To have this land requires the treatment of Palestinians in a way that goes against much of what the Jewish people have stood for.

Don't get me wrong! I genuinely believe that *all* of Palestine – from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River – every last square inch of it is the land God promised to the Jewish people! But God created a world where He doesn't call all the shots. He gave some of His power to groups like the United Nations and the European Union and Russia. Why He did this I don't know ... but I can't possibly imagine how there can ever be peace without there being a stop and return of most of the West Bank.

And I'm not the only one who feels this way. Ariel Sharon feels this way and Ehud Barak feels this way and Tzipi Livni feels this way and AIPAC feels this way ... Israel's Ambassador to the United States, Michael Oren, feels this way! So I didn't have a problem when, in his Cairo speech, President Obama called for a halt in settlements on Israel's part ... but I did have a problem when he didn't ask anything in return from the Palestinians. As I said at the time: If he had said that Israel should stop settlement building and in return the Arabs must ... "stop teaching their children hatred of the Jews" ... or "must accept Israel as a Jewish State" ... or, "start diplomatic relations with Israel" ... you fill in the blanks! Had he said any of this, I would not have criticized the speech. But he didn't say it! And there are a lot of things he said and didn't say that I criticized. And I got criticized in return! If a sermon of mine that went out on the Internet got me criticized from Hebron for being too much of a Dove, a letter writer to the *Baltimore Jewish Times* criticized me on the Obama speech for being too much of a Hawk! And he went on to write of me that in criticizing President Obama, "Here is a litany of his (Wohlberg's) bedfellows on the right: Ditto Heads, religious fanatics and Jesus freaks, NRA gun nuts, Right to Lifers, homophobes, Clinton haters, pro-torture Cheneyites, Xenophobes that drew the ire of the Latino community after last year's attempt at immigration reform, and the remnants of the Strom Thurmond, Jessie Helms and Saxby Chambliss school of politics." These are my bedfellows? These are the people I go to bed with? He should only know! And as if this wasn't enough, the letter writer went on to accuse me of something that some have suspected but no one had publicly ever accused me of. It was the lowest of all blows ... he went on to write of me: "He is a state of the art Republican."

Now I've been called a lot of things in life, but this was going too far! Just because I disagree with aspects of President Obama's approach to the Arab/Israeli conflict, does that make me a Republican? Definitely not! Although some of my best friends are Republicans, the fact is, I voted for Ben Cardin ... I voted for Jon Cardin ... and I'll go a step further and tell you that I voted for Bill Clinton for President and I voted for Al Gore for President. I even voted for Jimmy Carter! (What was I thinking?!!) My vote is not dependent upon the party, it is dependent upon the candidates' platform. And the fact that I disagree with the President's platform when it comes to his recent approaches to Israel, does that make him an enemy of Israel? Definitely not! We've got to stop doing that. And his Chief-of-Staff, Rahm Emanuel, is not a self-hating Jew! We can't accuse everyone who doesn't see things the way we might as being an enemy of Israel. George Bush never invited Yassir Arafat to the White House. Bill Clinton invited him eight times! And yet no one will ever convince me that Bill Clinton was not a friend of Israel or George Bush was not a friend of Israel. They just had different approaches. And I believe that Obama has a different approach as well. It's just not *my* approach!

The truth of the matter is, I don't trust the Arabs! And I don't trust the world! It's not just me; the majority of the Israeli people don't trust the Arabs. They DID ... they used to! As part of the Oslo Accords and the Gaza withdrawal, they most certainly did trust them, only to discover that that trust was misplaced. I believe that if the Arabs could, they would massacre and annihilate all the Jews living in Israel. Oh, it's not all the Arabs ... just tens or hundreds of millions of them! Over the years their acts of barbarity against Jews has known no limits. 80 years ago last month, Arabs came to a city in what was then Palestine and massacred all the Jews they could get their hands on, nearly 70 of them, hacking them into pieces with knives, clubbing them to death, raping their wives and daughters. You know the name of the city? Hebron!

Would they do it again? They did and they do with their terrorist attacks, bus bombings, suicide bombers and lynchings. Only Israel's security forces and security fence stops them. To this day, they still teach their children to hate the Jews. They still tell their people that they are going to be able to return to Israel proper. They still refuse to accept Israel as being a Jewish state. Prime Minister Netanyahu announces that he will allow for a Palestinian state if the Palestinians will accept Israel as a Jewish state ... and every Arab leader, Mubarak, Abbas, Assad – all the way down the line announce that they will never accept that. You tell me why! We live in a world in which 82 countries declare themselves to be Christian states, and 56 countries declare themselves to be Muslim states ... God Almighty: what is so terrible if on the face of this globe there would be one Jewish state?

And why does the world have such a problem with this one Jewish state ... a state which, if it would disappear, would get some beautiful eulogies while the world breathed a collective sigh of relief. On the one hand I tell myself: It's nothing personal. After all, the world didn't seem to care too much about the fate of the people in Darfur or Somalia, the Sudan, Zaire, the people in Rwanda, so why should they care about the people in Sderot? In fact, the world does not seem to even care that much about itself! It was six years ago that Britain, France and Germany gathered under the title of the EU3 and told Iran that they had one month to tell all there was to know about its nuclear development. Six years later Iran is still lying. Six years later nothing has happened! And so, if this is the way the world reacts to the world around it, why should I be upset when it reacts that way to Israel?

But then I say to myself: no ... it is not the same. It *is* something personal. There is something about how the world reacts to the Jewish state that is different from the way it reacts to other countries. There is definitely a double standard and the standard always works against the Jews. The examples are endless:

- The World Court goes crazy when Israel builds a fence that keeps out suicide bombers. But when America builds a fence to keep out illegal immigrants, or when Saudi Arabia builds a fence to keep out the people from Yemen, or when South Korea builds a fence protecting itself from North Korea, or India builds a fence separating itself from Pakistan, or Thailand between it and Malaysia, or Pakistan between it and Afghanistan or Uzbekistan and Tajikistan ... nobody has anything to say.

- France's President Sarkozy calls for the banning of the Muslim burqa in France, and everybody applauds this liberation of women. Imagine if the government of Israel called for the banning of the burqa on its streets? Wouldn't the world condemn this "suppression" of religious beliefs?

- Israel withdraws from Gaza – asking nothing in return – just wants to give Palestinians the opportunity to show what a Palestinian state could be like. The Palestinians, in return, use Gaza to fire 8000 rockets into Israel proper. When Israel finally retaliates there comes an onslaught of criticism from the world culminating with last week's U.N. report condemning Israel's so-called "disproportionate" response in Gaza, accusing Israel of war crimes and possibly "crimes against humanity." Now I didn't expect much balance from this report. After all, it was ordered by the U.N. Human Rights Council which in the last two years has condemned Israel 15 times ... while condemning no other country! And I was not surprised when the report's criticism was focused

85% on Israel and only 15% on Hamas, making it seem as if Israel was the terrorist group and Hamas the legitimate government. But I was totally shocked and appalled to read the report accuse Israel not of *accidentally* killing civilians, but *intentionally* killing civilians! That's a libel – a blood libel – especially when you consider that Israel may have been the first country in the history of warfare that dropped leaflets, made phone calls, sent SMS messages and more, warning Palestinian civilians to flee the combat zone.

Let me teach you a history lesson. This year the world commemorated the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day. I've been to Normandy! It's unbelievable! I read a book this summer, "*D-Day – the Battle for Normandy*," by Anthony Beevor, which points out that America and Britain minimized their casualties by first bombing places before their soldiers went in. As a result, during the war you know how many innocent French civilians were killed by American and British bombs? 70,000! 70,000 innocent civilians were killed in order to keep the casualty rate of American soldiers down! Did you know that? Has anyone ever condemned that? No! It does seem that whenever something like that happens amongst others, the world throws up its hands and says: War is hell! But any tactic used to save the lives of Jewish soldiers, the world seems to say: the Jews should go to hell!

Why this is, I don't know. There does seem to be something about the Jewish people that just "bugs" the rest of the world. I've read most every book I could get my hands on to understand the root causes of anti-Semitism, and I'm still not sure what it is. But one thing I do know for sure: given such a world, we Jews cannot put our survival in their hands. We've seen it time and time again ... how the world can turn against us. France sold Israel arms and then turned against it. Russia supported the establishment of Israel, and then armed our enemies. Sometimes it can change overnight ... it changed right here in America! Israel claims that the Bush Administration came to an agreement on the settlement issue, and now the Obama administration comes along and says there was no such agreement! But officials from the Bush administration, who should know better, say there was! And some never change! Last week Zbigniew Brezinski, Jimmy Carter's national security adviser, said that if Israeli airplanes tried to attack Iran's nuclear reactor, the U.S. Air Force should shoot them down! To this day Mr. Brezinski is a widely respected voice in the American establishment. If you were Israel, would you place your families' survival in a world of Russias and Chinas and Brezinskis and Carters and U.N. Security Councils?

And you can throw in all the European countries as well! It was 36 years ago this week when Israel's very survival was at stake in the Yom Kippur war, and the U.S. – to its everlasting credit – conducted a massive airlift, - re-arming Israel and every single European country refused to allow the U.S. cargo planes to land or refuel or even fly over their countries to help save Israel from destruction. The Psalmist said it all when he said: "*Al tivtechu bindivim b'ven adam sh'ein lo teshuah* – put not your trust in princes in a son of man who can bring you no salvation."

So who can Israel count on? It can count on God. It can count on its soldiers. And it can count on me – and you! And forgive me for saying it, but I worry about YOU. From its very inception, the political and financial support that American Jews have given to Israel have played a major role in its development and survival. But in recent years that support had grown weaker and weaker. During last year's Presidential election a survey showed that for American Jews the

candidates' position on illegal immigration played a greater role in their vote than the candidates' position on Israel. The truth is many Jews have bought into the lies hurled about Israel and have become embarrassed by Israel. Here in our own synagogue, despite my appeals over 30 years, a majority of you have never purchased an Israel Bond. To me it's unbelievable ... just unbelievable that so many of you won't spend – no, let me change that – that so many of you won't *invest* \$100 in Israel's future. Believe me when I tell you, had you done it, that investment would be in better shape today than the rest of your investments! But I have an even greater concern! Even amongst Israel's staunchest supporters there seems to be a weakening of will, a raising of doubts, a questioning of its path. Some of us are very uncomfortable with Israel's policies because they go against our natural, liberal, humanitarian sensitivities. Unfortunately, Israel lives in a corner of the world where those with natural liberal, humanitarian sensitivities are usually put in jail, tortured or just shot in the streets. But some Jews are so desirous of peace, are so saddened by the situation that Israel finds itself in, that they find themselves calling upon Israel to do things that just don't make any sense. I think of a recent statement made by Congressman Robert Wexler of Florida. Congressman Wexler, a Jew, is known as an ardent supporter of Israel. But after President Obama called for a freeze on Israeli settlements to get the peace process moving again, Congressman Wexler came out in favor of the freeze, saying, "I want to call their bluff. I want to see if Israel makes substantial movements toward a credible peace process, whether (the Arab nations) are willing to do it." It sounds logical ... it seems to make sense, the only problem is: Israel has done it again and again and again, and discovered that, in fact, the Arabs *were* bluffing!

Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin agreed to the Oslo Accords. Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered 97% of the West Bank and Gaza and a sharing of Jerusalem. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon gave back Gaza and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert called their bluff ... he offered just about 100% of the territory back to the Palestinians. Through all this the Palestinians have never even thrown Israel a bone! The only thing they have given in return are Intifadas, suicide bombers and rocket attacks. The only time the Arabs called our bluff, so to speak, was when Egypt's Anwar Sadat came to Jerusalem. Remember that? The people of Israel fell in love with the enemy and ultimately dismantled all the Sinai settlements and gave back every last grain of sand.

The world does not want to hear this. And many of us as Jews don't want to hear it. But for 30 years now I have tried to get you to hear it. And you have listened ... and you have responded! And for that, you and I are the lucky ones, for we are the ones who are not missing out on what might very well be the greatest story ever told. As a Jew I believe we are living in one of the great moments in history. It's as if we're living in Biblical times once again! It's as if we're living at a time when God's hand in history and the voice of His prophets, have come alive once again. President Obama told the Muslim world that they had to accept Israel because Israel came about as a homeland for the Jewish people after the Holocaust. Tell that to the people of Tel Aviv who are now celebrating that city's hundredth anniversary! Israel came about not because of the Holocaust, but because it was promised in a book that President Obama holds sacred, that Muslims hold sacred, that the Jewish people hold sacred. It was 3300 years ago in the Bible that God promised the Jewish people, "*v'shav Hashem Elokecha et shvuscha v'richamecha* ... If any of thine are dispersed, be in the uttermost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God will gather thee and from thence He will fetch thee, and the Lord thy God

will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed and thou shall possess it.” That promise was made to the Jewish people more than 3000 years ago, and we are the generation of our people who have seen it come true! Just think of what took place during those 3000 years ... we were destroyed by all of the great empires, by the Romans and the Greeks and the Babylonians and the Persians and the Egyptians ... those mighty empires never rose again. But we did! And it happened while you and I were alive! I’ve never been able to get over that! And I’ve never been able to get over the fact that I became a rabbi at such a glorious time in the history of our people. We’ve come back from the dead and we must do everything possible to make sure that the Jews are never put in that position again.

That’s what I believe ... and that’s who I am. I am a proud American and I am a proud Jew. I am proud to be a citizen of this country, the only country that provides so much support for Israel. And that is not a matter of Republican or Democrat. And I am proud to be a Jew because our people have known of frustration and despair, but we never descended to the barbarism of suicide bombers or blowing up buses. I am a great lover of America ... and a great lover of Israel. Does that mean that I have a dual loyalty? Absolutely! No different than the dual loyalty I had for my mother and father. I loved them both, and was loyal to both of them ... but when one was ailing, I gave that one more of my attention and support than the other. That’s life! And today when the United States is the most powerful country on earth, and my other love – the state of Israel – is the most threatened country on earth ... I have to give it my extra attention and support. And to do that, I need YOU. When I realized that I was not going to be able to live in Israel, I swore to myself that I would do everything possible from here to support the people there. And you, with your pockets and your hearts, have enabled me to do that. And I hope you will continue to do the same. So take a hold of your bond cards – every one of you – and do your share, knowing your share will be matched and doubled by The Associated and Hopkins Federal Bank. And feel good and proud knowing that you’re giving here, and the Jews living there, can proclaim to all the world: *Am Yisroel Chai* – forever and ever, Amen.

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