

Dear haverim,

Rabbis across the world have been offering their assessment of the JCPOA (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action), commonly known as the Iran agreement. I feel as though I have shirked my responsibility for not having shared my views with you during the course of the past few weeks. With all that has transpired for Wende and me, I have found it difficult to put my thoughts together in an organized and intelligible form until now.

David Ben Gurion declared Israel's independence late on a Friday afternoon--May 14, 1948; a Shabbat celebration ensued that was felt around the world. Eleven minutes later, the United States of America acknowledged Ben Gurion's declaration and welcomed the state of Israel into the company of nations. Acting against the advice of his political confidantes, President Harry Truman proudly registered the United States of America as the first country in the world to express support for the fledgling state of the Jewish people. With that courageous and auspicious gesture, an extraordinary relationship was birthed between the United States of America and the State of Israel--the world's two greatest democracies.

Today, 67 years later, the United States of America and the State of Israel share an esteemed relationship. Defending democracy, fighting terror, promoting Western values, investing in technology, and many more areas have deepened and secured the relationship between these two countries. One country is the world's leader in so many categories. . . a 239-year experiment with democracy and the capitalist idea; the other is a modern day revival (a 67-year-old miracle) of a 4000-year-old dream to serve the world as a light unto the nations.

Both countries find themselves engaged in the war against terror. Israel has been fighting this war since the day of its independence. The United States was cast into the modern expression of this fray on September 11, 2001 (9-11). While the United States has experienced periodic expressions of this threat (some more devastating than others), Israel continues to face these brutal realities every single day in her backyard. Over the course of years, these two countries--the United States and Israel--have led the world in its attempt to corral the outrageous forces known as ISIS, al Qaeda, and countless other expressions of Islamic fundamentalism.

Ever aware of this unique relationship between the United States and Israel, it deeply troubles me to acknowledge the level of rhetoric defining the relationship today. It has been stated countless times that Iran represents an "existential threat to Israel." While I refuse to minimize that threat, I am gravely concerned about the threat to Israel's existence posed by the deteriorating relationship between the leaders of our two remarkable countries. As if sitting on an island surrounded by shark-infested waters, Israel is starkly alone--constantly singled out as the cause of all evil throughout the world. Time and again, it has been the United States, and often only the United States, willing to stand up for Israel at the Security Council in NYC, in Durban, South Africa, and across the often vile continent of Europe. Yes, there have been rocky periods in the

relationship between the two countries, but never before has the Prime Minister of Israel stood before the US Congress and ridiculed the President of the United States as has happened recently. I fear our hubris has taken us too far.

I fear the Iran nuclear agreement negotiated by the P5+1 will not deter the aggressors from establishing a caliphate that threatens the world into submission with its accompanying nuclear threat. I fear the level of discord that has escalated regarding the efficacy of this agreement will threaten the relationship between our two great countries. I fear the lingering distrust, denigration, and misrepresentation characterizing the relationship between President Barak Obama and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will have a deleterious impact on the extraordinary relationship Israel has with the American public and the United States Congress in particular.

I have little question that the Obama Administration negotiated to the best of their ability with the best of intentions; however, the final product seems to leave us so far distanced from the goals established at the outset. Yes, technically Israel's greatest concern--Iran's procurement of nuclear material--was addressed; but the compromises made by the United States of America and its fellow negotiating nations are difficult to fathom. The release of sanctions, the forgoing of immediate access to nuclear laboratories, the 15-year window inviting Iran to develop nuclear capabilities, and so many related concerns have to leave the interested observer more than concerned.

I remind you, I am not a scientist; I am not a politician. I have had no more access to the details of the agreement than you. I am simply a concerned citizen of the United States of America who treasures the value and security of our spiritual homeland, the State of Israel, as well as the freedoms often taken for granted by the world at large. I can hear Prime Minister Netanyahu scolding all in attendance when he said at an AIPAC Policy Conference *if it walks like a duck, and talks like a duck, it must be a duck*. . .referring to the schemes proposed by the Iranian government committed to the destruction of Israel and the elimination of the United States of America.

We exercise our rights and responsibilities as members of this great country when we register our desires with our congressmen and women. We have an obligation to speak out on this issue. I would hope that obligation is always translated into words that speak with deference and respect for the person with whom we are engaged.

May we, the inheritors of an American world view that is deeply rooted in the Hebrew Bible, never forget the shared bonds that define the invisible bond linking the United States with the State of Israel.