

President's Perspective...Perplexed About the Middle East

I don't know what to make of Middle East. Israel and I are about the same age. I expect Israel to outlive me. I vividly recall where I was during some of the most significant events in Israel's history. I was at a BBYO District Convention, with other Jewish teens when Israel won the Six Day War. I was in services at Shearith Israel when our rabbi gave us details about the Yom Kippur War and we all prayed for the survival of Israel given the sudden attack. I recall the brief euphoria over peace with Egypt and Jordan and the later Oslo Accords; but I also vividly remember with great sadness watching CNN coverage of Yitzhak Rabin's assassination 20 years ago. And I was frustrated when Arafat did not agree to the best deal the Palestinians may every get for peace. As many of us, I have anguished about the first and second intifadas, war with Hamas, Iranian threats, and the rise of anti-Semitism and anti-Israel sentiment in Europe and elsewhere. I used to think that I knew what was going on in the Middle East. But the more I try to understand, the more perplexed I am that there will be an appropriate solution.

I've only been to Israel once – the Anshai 2011 trip. I don't have any close relatives or friends there. I am probably like many of you when I say that this trip was transformative in my understanding and appreciation of

what Israel means to Jews. One of the things I took away from my trip was the attitude of Israelis that they can take care of themselves. Now, four years later, is that still true? I don't know.

All I want is for Israel and her neighbors to live in peace, but I have the gnawing uneasy feeling that this will not happen in my lifetime. So in my angst, I want to learn more. Ann and I will go to the AIPAC policy conference in March. We will take in as many speakers and educational opportunities as time will permit. And we will be at Anshai Torah on December 4 and 5 to welcome Dr. Kenneth Stein, the Director of The Institute for the Study of Modern Israel, who will spend the weekend with us so we can better understand the Middle East.

Dr. Stein is the Professor of Contemporary Middle Eastern History and Israeli Studies at Emory University in Atlanta, where he has taught since 1977. He has received numerous awards on and off campus and is a widely recognized scholar on Israeli and Middle East affairs. He's a smart guy! If you are as perplexed as me, this is an opportunity that you should not pass up. I hope to see you on December 4.

L'Shalom

Howard Rubin