

Foundation Stone – Rabbi Zoë Klein, *Rosh Hashanah, 5767*

Od Yavo Shalom Aleinu,
Peace will come to us,
We sang this song
Cantor and I,
And 40 congregants from Temple Isaiah
on a boat in the middle of Lake Kinneret
early this summer,

Floating between Tiberius
And the Jordanian mountains.

Od Yavo Shalom Aleinu,
V'al kulam,
'Peace will come to us,
And to everyone,' we sang
As the sky deepened
To shades of wine
Over the heart of the Galilee.

The drums pounded out a rhythm
And we sang,
Just north
Of the Jezreel Valley,
Where at least thirty four nations have battled
Over the past four thousand years,
Egyptians, Caananites, Israelites, Midianites,
Amalekites, Philistines, Hasmonaeans, Greeks,
Romans, Byzantines, Muslims, Crusaders,
Mamlukes, Mongols, Palestinians, French,
Ottomans, British, Australians, Germans,
Arabs, Israelis...ⁱ
To name a few.

Shalom aleinu v'al kulam,
The sway of the sea beneath us, we sang.

We drove through the rustic beauty of
The Golan Heights,
Skimming the Syrian border
As we wound through a quiltwork of
Date farms,
Vineyards,
Minefields
And sunflowers.

It was a wonderful journey,
From the beginning.
The drive to Jerusalem from the airport,
The road hedged with olive trees, rosemary.
Minnerets, steeples, domes,
Everywhere construction,
 (So much so that some say
 The national bird of Israel should be the crane...)
Ascending to Jerusalem,
 Not the highest mountain,
 No Mount Olympus where gods sparred
 With mortals and each other.
 The Greeks liked their gods living up high,
No, Jerusalem sits like a white-gold crown atop
A modest mountainette.
Perhaps our God lowers Himself
To be among us, to wrestle with us.

We ascended to the city
Toward which we'd turned all our lives in prayer,
 Holding in mind
That this was the journey
Abraham took with Isaac
For the sacrifice,
The journey
Thousands of Jewish pilgrims took throughout the ages ...

 Holding in mind
The longing of thousands of years...

Holding in mind
That not only we,
But others in Jordan,
In the dilapidated West Bank,
In the Gaza strip,
 The most densely populated piece of land
In the world...
Have for over half a century
Kept the keys to their original houses,
Long since destroyed,
With a pining that Jews can well understand.
 They swear on their children's lives
 That they will return.

There is a lake in Jamaica,

Small but deeper than you can imagine.
Miles deep, they say,
because it was the mouth of an extinct volcano.
To swim in that lake is deliciously disconcerting,
imagining what mythic or prehistoric creature
might bubble to the surface and snap you in two.
That's how it is in Jerusalem.
A small city, unfathomably deep,
with nuance in the nooks and angels in the ashlar masonry.
Its Roman arches and Herodian foundations
reach deep into the earth where
some molten lava once bled,
priests and prophets burned,
layers of lives were hatcheted,
stoned, and crucified,
spice-traders swept from three continents,
Asia, Africa, and Europe,
Where prayers warble with fire-breathing gutturals,
Thirty centuries of warfare and conflict,
Place of paradox, beauty, divinity and mystery.
Where time folds...

 The past pressing up against the present.
Where every encounter is a new mark
In a scroll that was started long before Moses.

In Talmud it is written:

“As the navel is set in the center of the human body,
so is the land of Israel the navel of the world...
and Jerusalem in the center of the land of Israel,
and the sanctuary in the center of Jerusalem,
and the holy place in the center of the sanctuary,
and the ark in the center of the holy place,
and the **foundation stone** before the holy place,
because from it the world was founded.”ⁱⁱ

Is it narcissistic to say that Israel is the center of the world?

Perhaps...and yet,
Sometimes it seems every road returns to it.

 We look at the environment
And the global scorching of our planet,
And there is Israel, in the center,
Surrounded by oil-drenched dictatorships,
 On the forefront of research for alternative fuels,
 Wind power, solar power,
 Relief from oil dependency,
The health of the planet,

Inextricably bound
With the safety of Israel.

The way we communicate,
 The technology of cell phones,
 Intel technology, instant messaging,
Which bring the world smaller,
Was developed in Israel,
 In this tiny crossroads of continents,
 And faiths.

And Jerusalem in the center of the land of Israel,
 and the holy place in the center of the sanctuary,
 and the ark in the center of the holy place,
 and the **foundation stone** the center of it all...

The **foundation stone** of the world.

That's quite a claim,
The **foundation stone** of the world...
 Jewish tradition holds
 That the platform of the Temple Mount
 Was built around the tip of Mount Moriah,
 And that that rock,
 The tip of the mountain
 Is the stone from which God created the entire world.

 This holy rock has a long history,
It was first a Jebusite place of worship.
Then the site of the Jewish Temples,
 It is believed to be the stone
 Abraham used as an altar for his son
 As well as the place of Jacob's night vision of the ladder.
After the Second Temple was destroyed,
It became the Sanctuary of the Roman god Jupiter,
Later the rock was capped by the Muslims' Dome of the Rock,
For a time Christians converted it into a shrine
They called the Temple of the Lord,
And later it became a Muslim shrine again.
 Underneath the stone is a small cave,
 Where sound resonates like inside a seashell.
 It is called the Well of Souls,
 And the sound is believed to be the rivers of Paradise
 As well as the voices of the dead
 Who wait to be reborn.

The Moslem religious council
Is in charge of the Temple Mount,
And today Jews are only allowed to visit there
One hour during the week,
And even then it is illegal
For a Jew to pray, to carry tefillin
Or a book of psalms.

You are hardly permitted to ascend
The Temple Mount,
But you can descend below it,
Walk through the recently discovered
Ancient tunnels that wind through arches
Under the Old City,
And at one point stand
In an amber-lit alcove
Directly across and under the place
Where the Holy of Holies once stood,
This close to the **foundation stone**.

The beginning of the summer
When the Temple Isaiah Family trip went to *HaAretz*
the country was happy,
Teeming with tourists,
Beaches crowded, hotels overbooked.

In the end of the summer,
I returned on a Solidarity Mission,
And it was deeply depressed.

In the beginning of July we boarded kayaks
In the tributaries of the Jordan river
Along the Lebanese border,
At the end of August,
I went back, to *Kiryat Shmonah*
To visit a wheelchair bound woman
And her elderly parents,
Who spoke of the day a rocket hit her home,
She and her parents were in their safe room
As the smoke became to seep through the house.

In the beginning of summer,
We prayed with our sister synagogue
Mevasseret Tzion,
Rabbi Maya Leibovitz welcomed us
With open arms.
The week we were there a young soldier, Gilad Shalit

Was kidnapped while patrolling along the Gaza strip,
And we prayed *Esa Einai* with their congregation for him.

In the end of summer I found myself
Standing outside Gilad Shalit's home
On his birthday,
Staring at the banner his parents had hung there,
Gilad, mechakim lecha babayit,
"Gilad, we are waiting for you at home."
His neighbor talked with me about
how shy and introverted he is,
no one could imagine such a quiet, delicate boy
in the hands of Hamas.

In the beginning of summer
We visited Mount Hertzl
The graves of Hannah Senesh,
Yitzchak and Leah Rabin,
In the end,
Rabbi Maya Leibovitz buried Uri Grossman there...
Son of the famous and beloved Israeli novelist
who just days before his son's death
Held a press conference calling, pleading for the violence to end.

In early summer
We visited Haifa
The magnificent Bahai gardens,
And late summer,
I drove through the port city again,
Buildings riddled and pocked
From the force of Katyushas.ⁱⁱⁱ

Early summer
We came this close to what both Jews
And Muslims believe to be
The **foundation stone** of the world
In the newly discovered tunnels under the city.
Late summer,
More and more tunnels were being discovered.
Tunnels from Gaza to Egypt.
Tunnels from Lebanon to Syria.
Tunnels to smuggle stockpiles of weapons,
Tunnels to squirrel kidnapped soldiers
Far and away.

Early summer,
We planted trees through the Jewish National Fund.

Late summer,
Forests in the north were burning.
And in the South,
**We stood overlooking the Gaza strip,
Where orchards had been leveled
In order to deprive Hamas
of places to launch Kassam missiles...**

A week after we returned from our trip
In early summer,
I stopped in New York for a few days,
My husband returned to LA.
He called me,
“It’s bad...” he said,
referring to his father’s cancer.
A few hours later he called again.
“It’s bad...” he said,
Referring to Israel.
And it struck me the same way,
Those cells metastasizing
In the body of the patriarch of my family,
And five thousand rockets falling upon
The body of the land of our patriarchs.

When someone is sick,
I visit their bedside,
I hold their hand,
Kiss their forehead,
Sing a prayer,
Mishebeirach imoteinu v’avoteinu,
I could visit my father-in-law,
Pick fresh figs for him,
Plant pumpkin seeds for him to watch grow,
Frame a cheery photograph,
I’m comfortable in hospitals.

But for Israel, what can I do,
What can we do,
Cantor was in Israel when the war broke out,
He told us of an Israeli supermarket chain
Sending baskets of food
To people in shelters in the north,
On a Friday night congregants and I
Sent word to Cantor
To get a few hundred baskets
From us at Temple Isaiah.

My mentor, Rabbi Jerome Malino,
Used to say to me: "The Torah once was a tank of war;
Now it has to be an ambulance of peace..."
I organized 17 Reform congregations
All across America
To contribute to purchasing
An Intensive Care Ambulance for Israel,
To be able to heal...
Or maybe, more honestly,
For a more strictly personal reason...
To be able to answer my son and daughter at night,
When they say, "What's going to happen to Israel?"
So I can say, "I'm trying to get an ambulance to help it be better."

When *Magen David Adom* said to me
They were trying to put together a Cantors' concert
In Los Angeles but no one was being supportive,
I said, confidently, "Talk to our Cantor,
He's the best."
Two weeks later, the Gindi auditorium
at the University of Judaism was filled.

In a hospital room, I read a poem, a prayer...
For Israel, what can I do,
What can we do,
I met with the family of
Ehud Goldwasser,
One of the soldiers who was kidnapped
On the border of Lebanon,
From whom we've yet to hear a sign of life,
One of two soldiers who's abduction
Triggered this war,
I sat at their table when they were here in Los Angeles,
Karnit, Ehud's wife,
She said that when at 11 o'clock that night
The news released the name of the last
Of the eight dead soldiers,
She said they were the happiest family in the world.
They knew it meant that Ehud had been kidnapped by Hezbollah,
But there was a chance he wasn't dead.
She said, "I'm intending to bring the moon to Udi...
So when you look at the moon, say a prayer for him."^{iv}
Ehud's parents looked raw with fatigue and terror.
I know what to do in a hospital room...
For Israel, what can I do,

What can we do...

I reached over the table and handed
Mr. Goldwasser a poem I had written for them,
One which began with a verse from the Song of Songs:

*"I must rise and roam the town,
Through the streets and through the squares;
I must seek the one I love..."*

And ended with another verse from Song of Songs,

*Scarcely had I passed them
When I found the one I love,
I held him fast, I would not let him go...*

Mr. Goldwasser began to weep and mouthed
"Thank you."

When someone is in need, our Temple Caring Community
Chaired by Ilene Knebel organizes to respond

What can I do,
What can we do for Israel,
We put together the Temple Isaiah Israel Action Committee,
Chaired by Uzzi Raanan
Along with our ARZA committee
Chaired by Roger McCracken
To explore options,
We've had exciting meetings
And initial successes,
And I hope many more people will
Be inspired to join.

In a hospital room
*You use your voice,
You use your music,
You use your hands,
Your silence, your words,
Your presence,
Your breath,*

For Israel, what can I do,
What can we do,
I wanted to go,
*To use my voice,
My music,
My hands,
My silence, my words,
My presence,*

My breath.

I wasn't afraid of going.

Others were...

I was afraid of not going.

Because the **foundation stone** of the world is there,

But what is built upon it is full of fissures.

Because Israel is not somewhere else,

It is in here, the heart, at the center,

Because Israel is the frontline

In the war against totalitarianism,

Because to be a Jew

Is to be an Israeli to the world.

In Europe today they look at a Jew

And see an Israeli soldier

Which is a mistake,

Because this year embassies were bombed over Danish cartoons,

And burka-clad women carried signs in Europe

Saying "Christians, your holocaust is coming."

In an interview on Al-Jazeera television

Translated from Arabic,

An Arab-American Psychologist named Wafa Sultan

Had the courage to speak out against what was happening,

She said:

"The Jews have come from the tragedy (of the Holocaust), and forced the world to respect them, with their knowledge, not with their terror, with their work, not their crying and yelling. Humanity owes most of the discoveries and science of the 19th and 20th centuries to Jewish scientists. 15 million people, scattered throughout the world, united and won their rights through work and knowledge. We have not seen a single Jew blow himself up in a German restaurant. We have not seen a single Jew destroy a church. We have not seen a single Jew protest by killing people. The Muslims have turned three Buddha statues into rubble. We have not seen a single Buddhist burn down a Mosque, kill a Muslim, or burn down an embassy. Only the Muslims defend their beliefs by burning down churches, killing people, and destroying embassies. This path will not yield any results. The Muslims must ask themselves what they can do for humankind, before they demand that humankind respect them."

When you are a Jew you are an Israeli to the world.

This year an American Muslim

Consumed with rage at what Israel had done to Lebanon

Opened fire in a Federation in Seattle

Killing Pam Waechter

And wounding many others.

We can forgive but not forget

Drunken words blaming the Jews for every war in the world,
In the Passion of the Egomaniac.

When Abraham bound his son
To the foundation stone of the world,
He bound us there too.

In early summer
Forty of us from Temple Isaiah went to Israel,
In late summer,
Before the Solidarity Mission there was such
An outpouring of love from this congregation...
I and past Temple president Randy Schwab
Joined five other rabbis from Los Angeles,
Twenty lay leaders...
Cantor is planning another Solidarity Mission
To Israel in January
Which is open to the congregation .
The truth it that when we were there,
it felt like all of you were with us...

My arms were your arms
When I embraced Gila,
A parent in the southern town of S'derot,
Terrified about sending her children back to school...
My eyes were your eyes,
When we passed the very school
And saw workers laying
Concrete and steel slabs on the roof
Fortifying it to protect children against rockets.

My ears were your ears...
When we learned about a tent city that had been
Established during the war on a beach
Near Tel Aviv,
3000 people and not one swimming
In the warm Mediterranean waters.
The children were depressed,
A band play for them,
To try to cheer them up.
During the concert
There was a popping sound from one the speakers,
Children started screaming and crying...

My hands were your hands
Comforting a woman, Simcha Tamam,
With shrapnel wounds,
Whose two brothers, Arie and Tiran, were killed

Running toward her bomb shelter.
My heart was your heart,
Meeting with an elderly couple
Who shared how the last day of the war
There were twenty four sirens,
And how difficult for them
To get down the stairs into the shelter.^v

The **foundation stone** of the world is there,
But what is built upon it is full of faults and fissures.
And the world that is build upon it
Is incomplete without us.
It is unstable, less beautiful.
It is upon us to help build a new world
From that potent place,
And we have essential material to give...
 And not just money,
 Although this war has been and continues to be
 A crisis of dollars,
 10 billion dollars which had been for education and welfare
 Diverted to military.
 A million people displaced in Israel,
 A million displaced in Lebanon,
 The Lebanese economy completely shattered,
 Businesses destroyed throughout Israel's north.

As Reform Jews we have something
Essential and unique to bring to Israel
Which is different than any other movement in Judaism.
We have the essential material to bring
To create a new world...

We bring *faith without fanaticism.*

We teach that you can believe in God
 And believe in each other.
Our belief in ongoing revelation,
In the idea that Torah wasn't just given once,
But continues to unfold,
That religion can change and adapt, is revolutionary.
 At the end of our trip, in early summer,
Cantor and I led Shabbat service on the beach in Tel Aviv,
An Israeli man joined us,
And even said *mishebeirach* for his daughter,
The tour guide, a devout Israeli secularist,
Told Cantor and I that we could make him
Go to synagogue again,

The cab driver who took Randy and I to the Old City
From Tel Aviv, after speaking with us for an hour,
Decided to visit the Western Wall for first time, to say a prayer.

At the end of our trip in late summer,
We had dinner with the Mayor of Tel Aviv,
And a young opera singer sat next to me,
She was astounded that we were all at one table,
Reform, Conservative and Orthodox,
She had never seen that before.
She confided that she loved to sing Jewish music most of all,
Perhaps the Reform movement would let her be a Cantor.
We represent the unlikely marriage
Between tradition and modernity.

Reserve Major General Shlomo Gazit,
Told us that he looks at this war as one more milestone
before we enter into a real peace with our neighbors,
Explaining that this war in Lebanon
Has already brought about a major discussion in the Arab world...
especially among the Arab moderates,
Asking, "Where do we stand,
Do we really stand with these radical fanatics?"
We bring to the Jewish *and* Muslim world,
The possibility of praising God
With eyes wide open,
Wrestling, loving, challenging, railing against Heaven,
When there is injustice...
The forty thousand Israelis who marched in Tel Aviv
Against this war after the devastation in Kana
Were all Reform Jews,
I'm convinced,
They just don't know it yet.

We bring a new language,
One that doesn't employ the same
Dictionary of poison and hate,
We come with foreign words like mutuality,
Respect, tolerance, coexistence.
We come with an understanding of *BeTzelem Elohim*,
Being made in the Divine Image,
But not only Jews, all God's children.
More than any other movement,
We welcome non-Jews into our Temple,
To be a part of our family,
We bring new interpretations,
New textbooks,

A new ethic of concern,
We bring new questions and hard critique...
We look at the leveled orchards and say
 And how far do you go
 As the missiles get more and more effective...
 And Hamas develops more and more methods,
 Like hiding among a flock of sheep,
 How much more do you cut away?
 All the way to Iran?
How much do you slash and burn?

As progressive Americans we bring our voice,
In Israel's history in the Middle East
There has been not one political agreement
Between Israel and Arab countries
Without the strong help and pressure of the United States.

Throughout this war, a verse from Esther,
chapter 4, kept coming to my mind,
In which Mordechai says to Esther,
“Do not imagine that you, of all the Jews,
will escape with your life by being in the King's palace...
Who knows, perhaps you have attained to royal position
For just such a crisis.”

Whether we admit it or not,
We bring royal position.

We bring dialogue.
We can say, this is the most justified war Israel has ever fought,
 We know that Israel had moved out of Lebanon,
 To UN approved borders,
 That every inch of land entirely legal,
 With no forces, no settlements, no claim at all...

But the decision to enter this war this way was wrong.
Air strikes never defeat guerilla groups.
 And who are we to say it?
 Who are we?
Partners in building a new world.

We bring art,
We bring music,
The Sukkot our services will feature a band
With Jewish, Muslim and Christian musicians.
We bring perspective,

Standing outside of blood feuds,
We challenge the boundaries of identity.
There is a Hebrew proverb,
“The prisoner cannot set himself free from prison.”
We bring new keys to old locks.
We come with a well-earned appreciation
For the value of life,
As the extermination of Jews
Was a study in how cheaply life can be disposed,
One can of Zyklon B
For a thousand lives,
Less than a penny a soul...
As one soldier told us in Israel,
Every life lost is a national treasure.
We know the value of life is incalculable.
And we know that the number one military law is
Do not target civilians,
And that a katusha launcher under your bed
Makes your home a military target,
And that Hamas and Hizbollah
Hide as civilians,
Hide among civilians,
Using civilians as human shields
And their deaths as photo opportunities.
In Newsweek a Hezbollah terrorist explained
Their strategy of trying to make Israel
Lose as many people as possible,
Saying, “Israel doesn’t care about (the loss of a) tank.
They care about the people.”^{vi} As if that’s a weakness.^{vii}

We come with a well-earned appreciation
For the value of life,
Because we were strangers in the land of Egypt,
Because our lives were incinerated like trash,
We bring the courage to stand up and say to Israel,
Do not become like them,
We have to mourn for our dead,
And mourn for theirs as well,
For the 1,500 Lebanese,
Because not to do so
Would cheapen life,
And dishonor the God of Life.

Israel is the navel of the world,
Through which God feeds the belly of the world.

And the center of that:
The **foundation stone**.

On August 31
At 5 in the morning, Amy and Mark Wolfe,
Jewish parents,
In Manassas, Virginia
Were visited by men in uniform.
They were told that their son,
Colin Joseph Wolfe,
18 years old,
Had been killed,
A bomb exploded under his vehicle
In the Anbar province of Iraq.
Colin had enlisted in the U.S. marines
14 months earlier,
to earn tuition for college.

There is so much death.
In a year Colin's parents will visit their son's grave
And will do what Jews do,
Place a stone by the graveside.
Some say the stone is just a marker to commemorate the visit.
Some say it is to weigh down the spirits of grief that haunt us,
anchoring our pain, so that we don't dismiss our destiny
and walk the path of mourners forever.

I like to believe that the stone
has more to do with "foundation,"
A **foundation stone**, laid in building a future
That at one time seemed inconceivable,
But it is here,
And today we begin to build a new future,
We rise up out of the dust
and begin to build a new world,
When we put down a stone,
We are making a commitment
To building a future
On the solid foundation of
All our loved ones taught us to be,
Of all they would want us to be,
Of all they believed we could be.

On September 11th
I waited for my plane, 7:45 am,
From JFK to LAX,

With my children,
The airport was empty.
I was already regretting that the children were eating Pringles,
And that we were not allowed to bring anything to drink on the flight.

(Yes, they were having Pringles at 7 in the morning.)

The television monitors at every gate
Were commemorating the fifth anniversary,
The site where the towers fell
A pool,
A beautiful pool,
President Bush and Laura Bush lay a wreath in it...
I wanted to come home,
To come back to this congregation,
I remembered five years ago
So many of us lined up with candles
Along Pico Boulevard,
Singing songs of peace.

Od Yavo Shalom Aleinu,
Peace will come to us,
Peace will come,
We sing,
A community of worshippers,
Sleepyhead dreamers,
National treasures,
Pure souls,
Lives, loves...

Od Yavo Shalom Aleinu,
V'al kulam,
'Peace will come to us,
And to everyone,' we sing,
The sky dark,
The sun swallowed
By the Pacific Sea
In ribbons of purple and red.

Salaam, Shalom,
Underneath the foundation stone,
The well of souls is whispering...

Od Yavo Shalom Aleinu,
V'al kulam,
Peace will come to us,
And to everyone,
If we build it,

Build a new world...
We can build a new world,
Together...
Peace will come to us
And to everyone
If we bring our sturdy material,
Bring our goodness,
Bring our voices,
Our music,
Our hands,
Our silence,
Our words,
Our presence,
Our breath,
Peace will come,
But we must build it,
Piece,
by piece,

by piece,

by piece,

by piece,

by piece.

ⁱ Pharaoh Thutmose III fought the first battle known in recorded history anywhere in the world. Other famous generals fought here, Deborah and Barak, Sisera, Gideon, Saul and Jonathan, Sishak, Jehu, Joram, Jezebel, Josiah, Antiochus, Ptolemy, Vespasian, Saladin, Napoleon, Allenby, many of whom were slaughtered here. The author of the book of Revelations predicted that in the end of days, the battle between good and evil will ultimately take place here. The word Armeggedon is a corruption of the Hebrew phrase Har Megiddo, Mount of Megiddo.

ⁱⁱ Midrash Tanchuma, *Kedoshim*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Throughout Haifa, soldiers were stationed outside every business, sometimes entire blocks where every shop window was blown out, with soldier after soldier standing guard, 24 hours a day until it was completely repaired. I kept thinking of our Gulf Coast. The distress, the looting, the sense of abandonment, where there are still miles of debris and death, thousands of houses marked with spray painted x's with the number of dead listed, the people who are left there, one of whom said it felt like they were rearranging deck chairs on the titanic, waiting for Godot.

^{iv} Ehud's father said, "There is no schooling for this."
He said, "Here it is so different than in Europe.
There they look at you with such hatred.

I'm just looking for my son.”

^v *My amazement was your amazement,*
Learning that the hospitals
Have to mirror the underside
Of ambulances and stretchers
Coming from the West Bank,
As they've found at times terrorists
Will fasten bombs underneath the stretchers
Their own people feigning illness on top,
That a country gripped by this kind of fear,
Could remain at the center of medical research...

^{vii} Rabbi Mark Diamond wrote in response: Hussein is right—Israel's civilian and military leaders care deeply about the lives of their people. People are our most precious and priceless possession. Even as rockets fall upon Israel's cities raining indiscriminate death and terror, we are confident that Israel's culture of blessing and cherishing life will prevail over the terrorists' culture of praising and extolling death.