

T'u B'Av 5778, July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018



## Our Very dear friends:

I'd like to write you an uplifting report, but how can I ignore the news from Israel - from fire and rockets and trouble at the borders to dramatic legislation that threatens our core values? In fact, as I write these lines, I get messages from beloved graduates in Sderot near Gaza after another sleepless night. Also not sleeping is our graduate, the mayor of Tiberias, after Syrian rockets fell in the Sea of Galilee.

HaTikvah - "The Hope", Israel's national anthem, which is displayed in every State school throughout the country, is a reminder that:

*"Our hope is not yet lost...  
To be a **FREE NATION** in our land,  
The land of Zion and Jerusalem."*

What kind of freedom does the anthem relate to? The answer is clearly given in Israel's Declaration of Independence (1948), which says that **"Israel will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex and will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture - to all."**

**"To all"**? We maintain that any deviation from the original intent of the founding fathers is a violation of Israel's moral foundations. What comes to mind is the United States' Declaration of Independence, and its continued relevance. On both sides of the ocean, our founders went out of their way to put humane

principles into writing, as a way to end needless suffering and create a just world for the future generations.

**In the face of realities**, I must share with you, that we, who have always felt we are your arm in Israel, must once again direct the limelight to the Declaration of Independence and teach it to our kids. We must tell them that this declaration carries the weight of 2000 years of exile and is not something that can be changed or discarded. It is the manifesto of our Zionist roots, written at the ultimate moment of truth - right after the greatest Jewish tragedy ever. It is a text that concisely contains the wisdom that our history has taught us and that we must never forget.

**Israel's Declaration of Independence is our moral and spiritual anchor**, our guiding light as educators, and this is not going to change. Governments may come and go, but the message that we are spreading throughout Israel is steadfast and consistent. We just know all too well how crucial it is to instill in the young generation the right values, to ensure a future in which Israel continues to be a beacon of light unto the nations, a democratic and inclusive nation where the rights of all human beings are respected and thoroughly kept.

As it says in HaTikva anthem, our hopes will never be lost - "Lo Avda Tikvatenu !"

Shabbat Shalom,

*as ever - Chaim Peir*

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