

Prayers and Kavanot from Rabbi Aaron Weinger During the Mission to Israel

July 17, 2014

I am preparing to leave for Israel as part of the Rabbinical Assembly's solidarity mission and grateful to represent Adath Jeshurun Congregation. When I land, it will be with the hopes of our community, words of support for our brothers and sisters in Israel and for my colleagues and me on the mission. I wrote this traveler's prayer, the quoted selections at the beginning and end come from the Shema and its blessings.

"Shine a new light on Zion." May the long days of summer pour their light into darkness to reach those who suffer and awaken those who sleep. May that light shield me from a false sense of certainty and allow me to see what I don't know. Grant me the courage to walk in Israel as one carrier of light, in peace, and the vision to find sparks in all who seek Your light, in love. "Praised are You, Holy One, Creator of lights."

July 19, 2014

As Jerusalem moved from the calm of Shabbat to the rush of the week, I had the pleasure of being with a number of our Adath teens and their USY Pilgrimage groups. The Jerusalem breeze washed over us in our singing of zemirot past the "official" end of Shabbat. I heard the return of traffic on the streets but didn't want to let go of this liminal moment before havdalah. One of the staff members asked me, "rabbi, what do you think the solution is to the current conflict?" How to answer?! All I had to do was turn around and look into our circle. Our kids, their presence in Israel, their voices and questions, hopes and doubts give me renewed vision for how to engage-- to take the light of the havdalah candle, the light we choose to put forward in this world and to one another, and make sure it does more than simply "not go out." Shavua tov. May it be a good week. May it be a week to hear the voices of our kids, to have curiosity, to radiate the light of that candle and amplify the voices of dreamers precisely when it feels darkest and hardest-- for us, for Israel, and for all humanity. May it be a week of peace.

July 20, 2014

I couldn't be prouder to stand with our Adath USYers in Jerusalem. The Talmud points out the similarity between the words "banayich" (children) and "bonayich" (builders) in the same passage that it holds out the promise of peace for those who engage our tradition, our Torah, with love. These Adath banayich, our teens, are our bonayich, our builders. At a time when fear can easily become the cornerstone, they are building something with heart at the core. As we read the news, I pray their act of building is our blessing. It is that yet-to-be filled space for peace.

July 22, 2014

"Out of the depths I call to You" (Psalm 130). On our way to Magen Avraham, Adath's sister congregation in Omer, we had to duck below window level on the bus as a siren went off. The

same happened earlier. Both times my heart opened wider to hold the prayers I am carrying from my Apath family. There is so little we can control but the love we carry, the vulnerability we touch, the peace we pursue. Prayer helps me access the preciousness of being alive.

July 25, 2014

"Heetoreri heetoreri, wake up, wake up!" Sunset will soon splash across Jerusalem stone, revealing a golden city so much in our view yet so hard to hold together in peace. Will I be awake enough at sunset to realize its beauty? When I see that golden image this Shabbat, don't let fleeting sight blind me from enduring vision. Holy One, give me the strength to be awake at the end of this week, to walk through the streets of Jerusalem and imagine what's yet to be in the glow of golden light. May the quiet of Shabbat allow me to listen for one person to say to the other, "Ki va orech kumi ori, your light is coming, get up and shine!"