

October 2016 Message from Rabbi Dubin

Dear Friends,

On Monday morning, September 19, I had the distinct honor of joining twelve area rabbis for an intimate meeting at the [Metro West Jewish Federation](#) office in Whippany with the newly appointed Consul General of Israel, Dani Dayan. Like so many in public service, Consul General Dayan is a passionate man with fervent beliefs. As former Chairman of the Yesha Council – which is the umbrella governing organization of Israeli Jewish communities in what some call Judea and Samaria, others call the West Bank, others call the Administered Territories, others call the Occupied Territories, and still others call the Palestinian Territories – he is adamant in his position that the Settler Movement is necessary for Israel’s survival.

With the policy of seeking a “Two-State Solution” through negotiation as the Israeli Government’s official stance, however, Dayan explained to us he is not closed to the possibility of trading land for peace. In fact, it is what he hopes will happen at some point. The problem as he sees it, though, is that such a deal cannot and will not produce positive results until the Palestinian leadership becomes both genuine in its desire for peace and also stable enough to guarantee peace will actually result from such a trade.

Unfortunately, Consul General Dayan shared with us that he does not see these conditions being met in his lifetime. Given his political affiliation with the Settler Movement, I wasn’t surprised to hear him say that.

To say that Consul General Dayan and I approach questions of Israel’s wellbeing from different perspectives would be entirely accurate. At the risk of oversimplifying the situation, he sits squarely in the “Hardliners” camp, and I align myself with those who are more aggressive in seeking middle ground through negotiation. While I was certainly disheartened by the Consul General’s (self-fulfilling?) prediction that peace cannot be achieved in his lifetime, there are at least two other issues on which we could not have been more in agreement!

Over the course of 75 minutes, he said at least three times that he did not come to America to “preach to the choir.” Understanding himself to be just as much an ambassador of the American Jewish community to Jerusalem as he is Israel’s ambassador to NY, he plans to go the extra mile in creating as many opportunities as he can to dialogue with those who disagree with the official policies of the current Government of Israel.

During the time we spent together, it was abundantly clear that our group of American rabbis had a wide range of opinions regarding a wide range of current issues in Israel. Since we had such a clear invitation and easy access to the Consul General, therefore, a number of us were not shy about sharing our various frustrations. Some talked about the Settlements, some talked about the lack of religious pluralism (including the Women of the Wall controversy), and some talked about publicly funded financial

grants to support Ultra-Orthodox men as they study Torah rather than fight in the army. Punches were not held.

What made our meeting so encouraging, though, was the fundamental framework in which Consul General Dayan extended his invitation to disagreement:

“It’s legitimate for one person to think settlements in Judea and Samaria are necessary for the security of Israel while another should think settlements are pushing peace farther away. It’s legitimate for some Jews to believe strict Orthodoxy is the last defense to protect our people from extinction, while others believe an Orthodox approach to religion is actually suffocating our people. If it is legitimate for Israelis elected to the Knesset to disagree with Government policies, so too is it legitimate for every other person in every part of the world to disagree with Israeli Government policies. So long as it is the policy of Israel’s Government that is being challenged, and not the right itself for Israel to exist as a free Jewish state in the first place, it is legitimate for Israelis, for Jews, and for all people everywhere to have whatever perspective they want about official Israeli policy. The one only perspective we, as Jews, do not have a right to hold when it comes to the State of Israel and her people is one of indifference.”

I am proud to say that we at the JCNWJ are not indifferent to Israel. Though some of us support the current Government while others of us oppose the current Government, whatever our individual politics may be, together, we are indeed a community that loves Israel, which is why it was announced at the September 18 General Congregational Meeting that we are currently in the initial planning phase of creating a congregational trip to Israel within the next 18 months. This is an exciting venture that we hope and predict will be met with great enthusiasm.

If you are interested in learning more about our plans, or, better yet, if you would like to take a leadership position in the planning process itself, please let me or Howe know. It will take significant work and commitment for our small community to pull it off, but together there is nothing we cannot do.

L’Shanah Tovah,

Rabbi Dubin