

I wrote this prayer a couple months ago for Israel. Before I share it, I want to express the heaviness of my heart, about both the Time magazine article's story about how Israel doesn't want peace and about a number of recent decisions, including some this week connected to the kotel, which limit the ability of women to pray at the wall, and limit the ability of men and women to pray together. This year, more than ever, it is critical for us to be active on behalf of Israel – on behalf of the Israel we believe in. I know personally that our voices, and our dollars, can make a huge difference strengthening the organizations in Israel which fight for religious pluralism, for environmental sustainability, for concern for the weaker elements of society and I urge you to support those organizations, which help build the Israel of your dreams. For me this year, those organizations are Masorti (Conservative Judaism) and New Israel Fund.

Tzur Israel, Rock and Guardian of Israel,

It has been a tough year for the state of Israel. I pray that you protect Israel from all external danger and internal harm.

I pray that Israel's enemies turn from trying to destroy Israel, to learning how to live with Israel. I pray that the Israeli government and its leaders be guided by wisdom and sensitivity, not ego and conceit.

I pray that here in the diaspora, we widen our conversations about Israel to include all those who care about her, and not ostracize people with views different than our own.

I pray that we open our hearts to interacting with Israel, dialoguing with Israelis, hearing their voices – all of their voices, and partnering with them.

God, protector of soldiers, look after our 18 year olds, our 19 year olds, our 20 year olds who give of themselves and serve in the Israeli defense forces. Protect them and provide them with the wisdom and training to make thoughtful decisions from places of strength and not out of fear.

God, I pray that Israel live up to its ideals and be a home for all its inhabitants and be a home for all Jews, where no Jew is judged as better or superior because of their religious background or practice. God, stop Jews from using your name to hurt others and to labeling some Jews as lesser. Help your children understand that there is room for all of us, and all of us should be treated with dignity and respect.

I pray that Israel have the fortitude and strength to continue to wrestle with what it means to be a Light Onto the Nations, while remaining mindful of the challenges it has of living in a dangerous neighborhood.

I pray that there never ceases to be an Israel, an Israel to which I am deeply connected, and an Israel of which I am proud.