

Rabbi David Wolpe's

Off The Pulpit

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A Very Great Distance

For the first time on this year's Israel Independence Day, there are over six million Jews living in the land of Israel. More Jews live in Israel than were murdered in the *Shoah*.

It has taken 66 years, one measure among many of the magnitude of loss in the catastrophe that defies description or understanding. Forever in the minds of Jews the two events will be linked, the loss and the founding, the endlessly echoing tragedy and the miraculous renewal of hope.

During this time of year we count the Omer, seven weeks that mark the span between the darkness of slavery to our standing at Sinai. This movement from despair to possibility, is the leitmotif of Jewish history. Almost like a B movie, just as the denouement seems certain,

when there is no apparent way out, God, Torah and the Jewish people combine to achieve the miracle of survival. The population of Israel reminds us yet again of the wry observation of I.B. Singer. When asked why he wrote in Yiddish, which was a dying language, the Nobel-winning writer said, "Well, in Jewish history, between dying and dead is a very great distance." L'chaim.