

# “Forty Years On We Remain Thankful”

By Rabbi David Wolpe

Forty is a powerful and symbolic number in the Jewish tradition. The biblical flood ceased after 40 days. Moses was 40 when he confronted the Egyptian taskmaster and twice 40 — 80 — when he first went to Pharaoh. The Israelites wandered for 40 years. Rabbi Akiba began studying at age 40.

All those events had a dark side. The flood left a trail of devastation. Moses' confrontation with the taskmaster forced him to flee. His confrontation with Pharaoh led to freedom, but also to desert wandering and war. The desert led to Israel, but it also led to trials in the land. Rabbi Akiba's great dedication ended in a martyr's death.

This past week we commemorated the 40th anniversary of the Six Day War. Many wrote, lamenting that the war has led to years of pain and struggle and loss. Our history teaches that every achievement exacts a cost. Had Israel not fought and prevailed would the Middle East be a panacea today? It is unwise to measure reality against an imagined perfection. Israel was not ideal in Joshua's time, and is not now. But 40 still carries its magic. We are here and we have a state. Do we have to do better? Yes. But there is a time to pause for a moment, look to the heavens and say *dayyenu*, we are thankful for our blessings.