

“Come with Us for Israel’s Sake”

By Rabbi David Wolpe

When Iraqi Jews were first brought to the State of Israel shortly after its founding, the first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, met with a group of schoolchildren. He asked them the following question: “Do you know who the first Zionist was?”

The children answered variously: “Herzl,” “Weizmann,” even, in deference, “Ben-Gurion.” “No,” answered the Prime Minister, “the first Zionist was an Iraqi Jew, and his name was Abraham.”

From the first Zionist until today’s Zionists is an unimaginably long road. Still, Jews are not fully secure in their own home. Those of us who live outside the State of Israel bear a special, urgent responsibility to support our sisters and brothers who live in the State. That is why on June 2-4 we will be going from Sinai Temple to the AIPAC conference in Washington. I will be leading a delegation along with our cantor, Joseph Gole, and our president, Kurt Smalberg. We will be meeting with senators and members of congress, as well as hearing from top level officials in the administration and, no doubt, the candidates for President.

This year is not only the 60th anniversary of the State of Israel, but an election year. It is a crucial time for us to show whomever will take office that American Jewish support for Israel has not slackened, that we are not complacent or indifferent. From the days of the very first Zionist we have depended both upon God’s blessings and human efforts to realize the vision of the prophet that we shall live in our land in peace. Come with me to Washington and let your leaders and the world hear how deeply we still believe in that vision and support that dream.