



Message From Cantor Joshua Shron

Allow me to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to the members of our congregation for the honor bestowed upon me at our recent Israel Bonds Breakfast on May 22nd. The outpouring of love and support I received really touched me, and I am especially appreciative of those who purchased an Israel Bond in my honor. It was truly a beautiful morning, and I am grateful to the congregation for their enthusiastic support of the State of Israel.

For those who missed it, I thought I'd share some excerpts of my remarks from that morning:

I'd like to share with you the history of my love affair with the land of Israel. My first visit was at the young age of 13. As long as I could remember, I knew that I'd be going in honor of my bar mitzvah, and I couldn't wait to see the places I had learned about in yeshiva my whole life. So we went. We saw the sites, we took the tours, we ate the food, and we had a great time. But I'd be lying if I told you it was love at first sight. A nice place to visit, but look, I couldn't understand the television, I hadn't yet acquired a taste for Shawarma, and back in 1987, most Israelis hadn't yet discovered air conditioning.

Fast forward six years. I had met Mairov, the woman who would eventually become my wife, and we quickly became best friends. It's now May of 1993, and we were speaking with a friend of ours who was getting ready to graduate Rutgers University. During his years in college, he had been hosting the Israeli music radio show on the campus radio station, and was lamenting the fact that no one had stepped up to take over. I was embarrassed to say that I had never listened to his show, and I knew nothing about Israeli music. Sure, I knew Jewish music. My father was a cantor and we used to listen to Art Raymond all the time on WEVD. But a show that only played Israeli music? I was clueless.

But I've been a lifelong radio geek, and just wanted to be on the air. So I got my training, Mairov did it with me, and using the record library we had at the station, we just started playing random songs for an hour each week.

Well, soon I was hooked. I was having such a good time on the radio, that I tried to learn as much as I could about the music of Israel. We started going to concerts to see Israeli singers performing in New York City, we would interview the artists backstage after the shows, and I was having a great time. But it was the following winter when it all came together for me. Mairov and I took a trip to visit Mairov's grandmother in Rechovot, and by that time, I decided I was a "macher". I was scheduling interviews, meeting with record companies, arranging to attend concerts for free...it was great. And I felt CONNECTED. I wasn't just another Jew from the states coming to visit...I was immersed in the culture. I was a PART of the culture. It totally brought Israel alive for me.

And so now, 21 years later, I'm still at it. Every Sunday at 10:30 a.m., I gather together about 13 or 14 of the hottest Israeli songs and head over to the WRSU studios in the heart of Rutgers University. It can sometimes be a pain, it sometimes kills our Sunday plans, I'm actually supposed to be on the air right now, and I've never received a penny for doing it, just some free concert tickets and free music from time to time. But I'm having a ball on the radio and I still love the experience. I love hearing from people listening from all over the world each week, but most of all, I think I have the special privilege of helping others fall in love with Israel through the beauty and magic of music.

But the reason I'm telling you this story is not just to get you to tune into my show – on the internet at wrsu.org – but to tell you that I truly became connected to Israel when I became INVESTED in Israel. You know, we American Jews expect everyone to love Israel...just because. I tell the kids I teach, you need to love Israel, Israel is our homeland, Israel is a light unto the nations, blah, blah, blah. Yeah, it's all true. But I can honestly say that I'm not sure I'd have the same feelings towards the land of Israel if I had never been so involved in its culture. And so I'd like to suggest to everyone here today...find your way to become INVESTED in Israel. Whether it's through music, dance, art, food, politics, activism, by visiting Israel or just by purchasing an Israel Bond this morning...you will feel so much closer to the land if find your specific hook, your personal approach to what Israel means to you.

*Of course, an Israel Bond is a perfect way to do just that...to invest in Israel in order to strengthen your personal bond with Eretz Yisrael. We all know of the challenges faced by Israel on a daily basis, and you don't need me to go into them right now. But these days, the challenges take place all over the world. The BDS movement – boycott, divest, and sanction – is bringing anti-Semitism to all kinds of places it's never been before: of course college campuses but also to local governments and city councils, to corporations and anywhere else our enemies can bring their message of hate. So today, I'd like to ask that we join together as a community to **fight divestment with investment**. The BDS movement is encouraging anyone who will listen to DIVEST from Israel, so it's up to all of us to INVEST in Israel. Buy an Israel Bond, and **fight divestment with investment**.*

I'd like to thank the members of Congregation L'Dor V'Dor, not only for this wonderful honor, but also for providing me with the opportunity to strengthen my connection to Israel. You see, when you're sitting across from a group of teenagers who might not feel that connection, when you're teaching Israel appreciation and advocacy to a room full of adults who are eager to take their support of Israel to the next level, when you're talking one on one to a bar mitzvah student telling them why Israel should matter to a 12-year-old, you need to be rock solid in your convictions. You can't fake it. I need to come in to the room as Israel's biggest fan and cheerleader. I need to come in there believing 100% in the mission of the land of Israel, in the purpose of the land of Israel and in the future of the land of Israel. I want to thank this congregation for giving me the opportunity to do just that; to build up my own passion and my own enthusiasm, and for allowing me to share it with this very special community. May God continue to bless this community - as it says in the Psalms, "Ur'ay b'tuv Yerushalayim" – to see the goodness in the city of Jerusalem and in the entire land of Israel, and may we, as a community, raise our voices loud and clear in a strong and unified message of love and support for our Eretz Hakdosha, our holy land. Thank you very much.