



Because of the Brave

By Pam Morris, Early Learning Center director

On the 4th of Iyar, *Yom HaZikaron* (Memorial Day), occurs in Israel. A moment of silence is observed throughout the entire country. A blast is heard and everyone, & I mean everyone, drops what they are doing and honors the memory of the soldiers who gave all.

The day after, on the 5th of Iyar, the country celebrates *Yom HaAtzmaut*, Israel's Independence Day. What a fitting message: our independence happened only because of those who fought for us.

I think this is a powerful message that is practiced by the Israelis: the sacrifices of the soldiers should be honored and commemorated and appreciated before we can think about rejoicing in having our own country. I liken it to a saying from the United States, "Home of the free, because of the Brave."

While the land of Israel has always been Israel, it wasn't until 1948 that it was given back to the Jewish people.

According to MyJewishLearning.com, "The official "switch" from Yom Hazikaron to Yom Ha'atzmaut takes place a few minutes after sundown, with a ceremony on Mount Herzl in [Jerusalem](#) in which the flag is raised from half staff (due to Memorial Day) to the top of the pole. The president of Israel delivers a speech of congratulations, and soldiers representing the Army, Navy and Air Force parade with their flags.

In recent decades this small-scale parade has replaced the large-scale daytime parade, which was the main event during the 1950s and '60s. The evening parade is followed by a torch lighting (*hadlakat masuot*) ceremony, which marks the country's achievements in all spheres of life."

Israel is older as a nation in history but younger as a country if that makes sense. Is that why there is such an honoring of the sacrifices of the Israeli soldiers? Is it because



Israel hasn't stopped having to defend itself since 1948 when it earned her independence (even after being granted the land by the British as an "Oops, our bad about the Holocaust.") Because really, who thinks the British and the then equivalent of the UN would have given the Jewish people their own country without the Holocaust? Not me.

Is the emphasis on honoring the soldiers because of compulsory military service? Maybe. If everyone has to serve (with some exceptions because all rules have exceptions, even the English language - think I before E, except after C...) then the country is more apt to honor said military service.

The celebrations will be cancelled this year due to the fires raging in Jerusalem. We send our prayers and strength to the first responders battling the blaze.

Whatever the reason, we owe the soldiers *kavod* (respect), those that fought and continue to fight in Israel and our soldiers here in America. Home of the free, because of the brave.

Shabbat Shalom.