

**AIPAC 2009 Policy Conference Gala Banquet Invocation**  
**Delivered by Rabbi Joseph H. Krakoff; May 4, 2009 in Washington, DC**

*Erev Tov*- Good evening. Just one month ago Jews across the globe- so many of us- gathered around our Passover Seder tables to tell the great story of the Jewish people and their age-old connection to the Land of Israel. It is a story of slavery and persecution but it is also a story of **freedom and liberation!**

And tonight, some 3000 years later, we are given the holy responsibility and distinct honor to follow in the footsteps of our beloved ancestors- working tirelessly and passionately to write the next chapter in our enduring history. Students and professionals, people of all religions and backgrounds are here this hour, united to affirm our commitment to a Land we love and cherish with all our heart and soul.

I share with you briefly one of my favorite synagogue stories about a young Bar Mitzvah boy named Yussel who was asked by the rabbi to lead the congregation in the evening prayer service. When the boy's father realized that his son was **so** excited that he forgot to put a kippah on his head, the father asked Yussel's little brother to cover his older brother's head with his hand until the prayers were completed. The little brother grew impatient after a few minutes and decided to remove his hand. The father insisted, "My son, this is **important**. Put your hand back on Yussel's head immediately." The little boy exclaimed, "What am **I**...my **brother's** kippah?"

Dear friends, we learn toward the beginning of the Book of Genesis, that indeed, **we are absolutely** our brother's and sister's keeper. AIPAC understands this charge fully and intimately, and so do the over 6500 of us together here tonight in this room. And it will be part of our sacred task to spread that love and understanding for one another tonight and especially tomorrow afternoon when we will lobby on the Hill. For as we know and as we have learned, relationships really do matter!

This year, as we excitedly mark the 61<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Modern State, we shout from the rooftops that our Zionist dream has become a reality. And so we pray: Eternal God, humbly we ask your Divine favor upon this impressive assembly of benevolent servants who continue to till and toil in the vineyard of Israel's redemption. We are drawn to You by bonds of hope and commitment, and we have translated these ties into bonds of strength and service. Bless us for the blessings we bring and for the work of our hands.

*Avinu Shebashamayim*- Rock and Redeemer of Israel: Enable the nations of the world to remove the hardened hatred from their hearts. Bless the State of Israel. Shield it with Your love and spread over it the shelter of Your peace. Guide its leaders and advisors with Your light and Your truth. Strengthen the hands of all who defend our beloved Land. Deliver them and crown their efforts with triumph. And most of all, may You bless the land with Shalom- full and complete peace- as you bless its inhabitants with safety and everlasting joy. This is our prayer now and eternally. *Am Yisrael Chai*- the People of Israel and the Land of Israel are alive and well. And let us say: Amen.