

**Remarks Prepared for Delivery at the Dedication of IRAC's Offices at HUC-JIR/Jerusalem**  
***Gary Perlin, June 30, 2010***

Amy and I are grateful for the opportunity to be part of this very special moment. We are particularly energized by the presence of so many of you who share our commitment to ensuring Israel's strength through pluralism. We are delighted that members of our Israeli family and dear friends are able to join us here in Jerusalem. And we are honored that Amos Oz will speak to us in just a few moments.

The Reform and Zionist movements – while spending their early years going in very different directions – both emphasized a sense of universal ideals, whether in the form of political democracy or a commitment to economic equality. Reform Judaism and Zionism were both deeply rooted in the belief of pluralism, tolerance, and human rights. These are the values our family holds most dear, and they are the heart and soul of IRAC. We have never had difficulty in reconciling our commitment to Reform Judaism with our commitment to Israel. That is why we are so grateful for the opportunity to see them come together here this afternoon.

Now, you might be wondering what brought us to this point.

If you ask Amy, she'd tell you that it started for her when she was sixteen years old, as a student at Beit Sefer Kadourie at the foot of Mount Tabor, where she experienced Jews and Arabs learning and living together. She was inspired to study Arabic as part of her Near Eastern Studies curriculum at college, so she brought to her rabbinate not only the Judaic background provided by HUC but also a dream of pluralism and justice.

Although I first visited Israel with my father in 1965, my path here is of a more recent vintage. About a year ago, Anat Hoffman spent a weekend at our home and with our congregation in northern Virginia, about 20 miles outside of Washington, DC. After speaking from Amy's bema on Friday night, Anat joined me for a Shabbat morning walk, about 5 miles around a lake in a park close to our home. We spoke about IRAC's accomplishments and challenges, and started to brainstorm about its future.

Amy could tell how excited I was about what I learned, and together we heard from Anat how concerned she was about making sure her staff had the space and equipment they needed to pursue IRAC's mission. Then Anat shared with us the offer that Naamah Kelman of HUC here in Jerusalem made to provide a home for IRAC. What a dream to have the entire Reform Movement in Israel on one campus – if only there were a way to retrofit this space, and ensure that there would be furniture and technology to support the brilliant and dedicated staff at IRAC. It didn't take long before the three of us were sketching plans. Even after Anat returned to Jerusalem, we exchanged blueprints and budgets. Amy and I soon realized that we could help make this dream a reality.

When Americans want to test how serious you are about something, they challenge you to "put your money where your mouth is." For us, it's more a matter of "put your money where your heart is, but where your mouth can't be." As American Reform Jews we feel that we have a deep stake in Israel's future, but only a limited capacity to shape it. Our voices can never be heard with the same impact as IRAC's. This is why it is so important to us to make sure that IRAC's voice, and that of the Reform Movement, is heard loud and clear in the halls of the Knesset, before the Israel Supreme Court, and for all those in Israel – regardless of religion or national origin – who have no voice.

Amy and I are grateful to be part of this mission so important to the soul of Israel and the Jewish people. Thank you, todah rabah.