

I am honored to be here to receive the Roger E Joseph Prize on behalf of all of the students, parents, teachers and staff at Hand in Hand in Israel.

Thank you to Linda, Roxanne, Ellen, and to Sarah, and the extended Joseph family for this honor. Thank you to Dr. Andrew Rehfeld and HUC, and to Rabbi Davidson and Temple Emanu-El for hosting me. And Mazal Tov U-B'Hatzlaha to the new rabbis being ordained here today.

This is not an easy time, for Israelis and Palestinians. It is natural and maybe even realistic to be pessimistic and have feelings of despair. But at this exact hour in Israel, over 2,000 Jewish and Arab youngsters are finishing their regular school day... together, at Hand in Hand's six schools across the country. These kids are becoming fluent in both Arabic and Hebrew and receiving a quality educational experience; for the youngsters, it is natural that Musa sits next to Moshe; that Ibrahim plays soccer with Avi, that Hanin has play dates with Yael. And the Jewish and Arab kids lead their parents into strong, enduring friendships and collaborations. In fact at Hand in Hand, over 3,000 Arab and Jewish adults are regularly engaged with one another, even in this difficult time.

In times of despair and pain, people need hope to counteract the pessimism and cynicism that is so widespread. Hand in Hand is one strong beacon of light and hope. Hand in Hand is building a model of what Israel *can* and *should* look like. A model of Jewish-Arab partnership and shared society.

At Hand in Hand, the Jewish and Arab students, parents, teachers and community members learn together, play together, listen together and mourn together. We believe we will get through these hard times together because the future is that Arabs and Jews must be able to live together in partnership and friendship in Israel. There is no other way.

Peace is not breaking out because of Hand in Hand; but as Margaret Mead once said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed individuals can change the world; in fact it is the only thing that ever has.

Thank you for this award and again Mazal Tov U'Bhatzlaha to those graduating and being ordained today.

