Dear KH family and friends,

The Jewish psyche is an amazing thing. We arranged our calendar so that Israel's Memorial Day falls immediately before Independence Day. In Judaism a day begins at sunset, which means that the two holidays literally bump up against each other. The result is that we simultaneously hold both deep sorrow and deep joy (as well as fierce pride) in our hearts.

How does a nation go from mourning the dead of the many wars it has fought, to just an hour or so later celebrating its independence with bonfires and fireworks?

I believe it is a uniquely human ability to take this leap of faith. We have learned to look past the present into the future, and although we are not certain of what is to come, we strive to improve it. It is inherently human to be able to take this leap, to try to make the world a better place. Despite all evidence to the contrary.

I once believed that the Jewish people were unique in our willingness to take that leap. But time and again I have seen us Americans take the leap. And every day on the news I see the Ukrainian people, led by their Jewish president, do the same.

A pandemic tried to push us apart and yet we persevered, and found new ways to stay in touch. A backwards movement is trying to take away women's rights to rule their own bodies, yet we demand self-determination. The world is full of sorrow, yet we seek joy. And nations continue wage war, yet we seek peace.

F. Scott Fitzgerald once wrote: "One should… be able to see that things are hopeless yet be determined to make them otherwise."

Or, as a great man of my acquaintance said at the Kaplan family Seder this year, "This is a lousy world. I am asking you to do one thing in the coming year: Do whatever you can to make it better."

Thanks Uncle George. Excellent advice.

Shabbat shalom, Rabbi Jennifer

PS. After a VERY long hiatus, we will finally begin sharing kiddush together after services, in addition to challah. And as always, there is the option of juice instead of wine for anyone who so chooses.