



April 13, 2021

Dear Friends,

This coming Thursday, we celebrate Yom Ha'Atzmaut (Independence Day), marking the 73rd anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel. Yom Ha'Atzmaut is preceded by Yom HaZikaron, the Day of Remembrance for all those who gave their lives in the defense of Israel. I cannot think of any other country that places side by side a solemn day of memory with a day of total celebration, acting as a sober reminder that Independence comes at a price.

The two loud ear-piercing sirens that ring through Israel's streets during Yom HaZikaron bring the entire country to a complete standstill. Cars, buses, and trains stop dead in their tracks as people stand while the siren wails. To an outsider, the scene may seem surreal. But, to us Israelis, this serves as a sharp reminder of over 25,000 Israeli soldiers and civilians who have lost their lives in wars, training accidents, and terror attacks.

As the siren starts to wind down, just before everything begins to move again, there is a brief silent moment every Israeli, wherever they are, no matter how old, always recalls. The silence of that moment is louder than any sound imaginable. It is the exact moment in which we remember; the very moment that stands out. This is when we pause, reflect, reset, and then keep on going. It is a moment in which we are deeply united as a country.

The transition from Yom HaZikaron to Yom Ha'Atzmaut is seemingly a sharp one. Within one minute, we raise the flag back to the top of the mast and the atmosphere through the entire country switches from sadness to celebration. In reality, all Israelis carry within themselves a bit of the somber feeling from Yom Hazikaron alongside the optimism and jubilation associated with Yom Ha'Atzmaut.

These two seemingly contradicting sentiments are at the core of our identity as a nation.

The History of the Technion is entwined with the history of the Zionist enterprise. The beginning of classes at the Technion over two decades before Israel declared its independence proved critical to the country's creation. During a 2014 visit on campus, the late Israeli President Shimon Peres said, "How lucky that the Technion was founded 24 years before 1948, thus laying the foundations for the future state of Israel. Had Israel been founded before the Technion, the road would have been much harder. There is hardly an important project in the country that didn't begin at Technion."

What sets us apart from other universities is that there is no other whose commitment to their country plays such a central role. Our founders perceived the Technion as the Jewish people's university, a role we are proud to fulfill to this very day.

As we look into the future, the challenges are considerable. One only needs to look at the rise of antisemitism globally and the rhetoric used by some to understand their scope and severity.

Overcoming these and other challenges will require a lot of hard work, yet we should remain confident thanks to our history as a nation, and optimistic as we look around us at the encouraging relief in the COVID-19 crisis and the sight of students back on campus.

I wish you all a Yom Ha'Atzmaut Sameach,

Professor Uri Sivan
President