

## COUNTING THE VOTES

Authored by Judith Halpern

It is November 29, 1947; I am 11 years old. My family, my Mom and Dad, my sister, Debbie, and me, are living in a tiny, one-bedroom apartment on Staten Island. We moved there 14 months earlier when my parents sold our 10-room house, overlooking the ferry slip in New York Harbor. It was an exchange arrangement with the buyer, a member of our congregation at the Jersey Street Shule. My father, a history teacher, sits us down in the living room and explains that the United Nations is going to vote tonight on whether to make a Jewish State in the land of Israel.



We knew what it would mean to have a state. To me it meant that the teacher couldn't accuse me of making up holidays when I missed school in the fall. It meant that the United Nations was really going to be able to create the peaceful solutions to world problems that I envisioned in my eighth-grade project on the United Nations. It also meant—though I didn't know this until later—that by selling our house to Reuben Gross (our fellow congregant), my parents facilitated his use of barn radio equipment to enable the shipments of munitions that were being sent in those years to arrive safely in Palestine.

At some point, the FBI tapped into Mr. Gross's communications, and he was arrested. This is how my sister and I learned of the activity. Fortunately for Reuben Gross and for Israel, once they were sure he was communicating with Palestine and not Russia, they dropped the charges. From these events, I learned that having a Jewish State meant having personal dignity and a safe haven, so when people needed to get away from Haman, or Hitler, they would have a place to go. I also learned that the state of Israel was worth risking your freedom and your family's security.

That night in November, the four of us gathered around the radio in the living room. My sister and I each had paper and pencil. We knew how many votes there were and how many we needed to win, and we wrote down the countries and the votes as they were announced. We kept track, and when

the tally reached the magic number we were screaming and yelling and jumping up and down. It was a night I have never forgotten.

The Arab League rejected the plan, and the United Kingdom refused to implement it. Fighting and terror attacks broke out in Israel immediately after the Partition vote and continued until after the United Kingdom ended the British Mandate on May 15, 1948, There have been many more wars since then. But Harry Truman recognized Israel, and the respect and the security that came with statehood have brightened my life.

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