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Yehudah ben Teima taught: There are varied milestones in a person's life. With every age, from our youngest years to our most mature, there are goals and there are accomplishments. While people mature at different rates, there are certain markers that are typically achieved. So Yehuda ben Teima explains: Five years old for the study of Torah; Ten for the study of Mishnah; Thirteen is the age for observing the *mitzvot*. He continues and teaches that at age sixty a person reaches maturity and seventy is the age of true seniority. (Pirkei Avot 5:20)

It is difficult to imagine that these same standards can be applied to a nation. It still feels as though Israel, at age 70, is in its infancy. Yet every accomplishment, whether it be in technology, agriculture, economics, art or science, speaks to a nation that has reached its maturity. Given that Israel has achieved such marked success on the backdrop of existential threats on every border and in every decade, makes those attainments even more miraculous.

We are so blessed to be able to draw inspiration from this still very young nation, to connect our destiny to such a vibrant democracy. There are challenges that lie ahead. Threats that aim to destroy Israel remain ever so innovative in bringing more violence to our beloved homeland. Challenges from within and outside the Jewish community have found voice and support in ways no other generation has seen. Yet we hope and pray for this modern miracle to continue to grow in vitality.

It is our honor to live in these times. This holy moment in history is truly the dawn of our redemption.

Rabbi Jay M. Stein