

A Message From Rabbi Shuchat

Yom Kippur will never be the same again. It will never again be associated purely with the discussion of holiness and atonement. It will now also call to mind forever the perfidy and treachery of the enemies of Israel who exploited the holiest of Jewish days with the intention of destroying Israel.

It is ironic that the very holy character of the day was turned to the advantage of Israel. The Israel army usually issues its mobilization orders by means of radio. Since the radio was off that morning of Yom Kippur it wasn't being listened to by the masses, the mobilization orders were carried by runners who went immediately to the synagogues where most of the young and old of the community were gathered.

At this moment of writing the Israel army is giving a good account of itself. We pray that the fighting will soon end and that the security of the Jewish people will be firmer than ever before. One thing that has been demonstrated beyond any shadow of doubt is the inner security of the Jewish people. The well springs of love and affection, of tears and emotion that welled up from every Jewish heart this Yom Kippur and in the emotion packed and tumultuous and reverential gatherings of solidarity and unity that have since taken place - warm our hearts and are like soothing oil to our fellow Jews in Israel.

May the days and hours ahead, whether of anxiety at fulfillment of peace or hope be days of assurance for all of us - and for all Israel.

Am Yisroel Chai

Netzach Yisroel Lo Yeshaker

(The Eternal God of Israel will not let us down).

"Rock of Israel, arise to the help of Israel, and redeem according to Thy words, both Judah and Israel. Thou art our Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts is Thy Name, the Holy One of Israel. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, Redeemer of Israel."

at 8th

(The above words were written by Rabbi Wilfred Shuchat just prior to his embarkation for Israel to rejoin his family in Jerusalem).

*written Oct 23/73
received Nov 6/73*

For the past two weeks I have been living in the very center of those dramatic events that will determine Jewish history for the future and will certainly have a momentous effect upon the course of the world.

As I write these words, a cease fire is pending through the Security Council. Probably by the time these lines are read events politically and otherwise will have far outstripped them. Nevertheless, a number of conclusions are in order which are independent of what future events may bring.

In 1967 the Jews of the world had two weeks to orient themselves to the gravity of the situation facing Israel before the outbreak of war. In 1973 there was no such advance warning. But now, in retrospect, we see with horror, that the State of Israel faced the real possibility of a great catastrophe on that saddest of all Yom Kippur days. The fury that was unleashed on the State of Israel from Syria and from Egypt was on as vast a scale as the German invasion of Russia in the Second World War with technological equipment that was far more advanced.

The State of Israel was miraculously saved from this most base and deceitful military challenge. Military people I have spoken to still have difficulty in explaining how the invasion, particularly from the North, was stopped in those first two days. This brings me to my first conclusion. The State of Israel was saved from a great calamity, not by its politicians or its statesmen or its generals but by its kids - the eighteen, nineteen and twenty year olds who manned the barricades before the mobilization was completed.

A poem (by Yakob Urland) appeared in "Ma-ariv" a local afternoon paper called "Ha-Nearim Hallolu - Those Boys." It is very difficult to translate poetry but I will try to convey some inkling of what the author tried to get across and of that debt to our youth that everyone in Israel feels.

" 'Those Boys' who play paddle ball on the beach,
Who drink espresso on Dizengoff Square,

(End of first Instalment
or
to be continued)

Whose vocabulary is terse and who speak with periods and commas,
Whose grandfathers studied Gemorrah In the Bet Midrash
 And whose fathers conquered Canaan anew.
 But they remember none of these things
 'Those Boys' for they were not yet born.
 'Those Boys' whose impertinence is shameless,
 And who sometimes act as though nothing sacred exists,
 Are, in their very essence, a race of giants.
 There is a special Angel hovering over their fate,
 Marking time for their great obligation;
 Standing by for their great moment.
 For a day has come which is neither day nor night,
 When there will be demanded of them the ultimate obligation.
 The epitome of all our hopes,
 The response of all our inner yearnings.
 And they will fly like eagles,
 And appear like lions
 And will testify by their sacrifice and their behaviour
 That they are in no way
 Inferior to their forefathers."

Believe me, not only the State of Israel, but the Jewish people everywhere have reason to be grateful for this most remarkable youth who have always known that they might have to be called on to pay this debt and whose very best representatives paid for this knowledge and commitment with their very lives.

Rabbi Wilfred Shuchat

(End of first Instalment
 or
 to be continued)

The second conclusion that can be drawn from the terrible and awe-inspiring events of these days can be summarized in the Hebrew expression "Be-damayich Chayl" - which might be translated as "by your blood shall ye live." These words are spoken at a Brit Milah (circumcision) when the child is made to sip wine after the blessing.

Being in Jerusalem and in the thick of Israel at war has given me a more comprehensive understanding of the meaning of this phrase. It certainly does not mean that a Jew is expected to live by the spilling of his blood. But what it does teach is that whenever blood is spilled for a cause or an idea, and certainly when Jewish blood is spilled for the sake of the State of Israel and the Jewish people - the very shedding of that blood makes the land and the State very much more precious, infinitely more precious.

People whose minds operate only on the basis of strict logic might reason that the necessity to fight and spill blood might drive Jews out of Israel. The very opposite seems to happen. In an apartment building not far from us, a son was killed on the Golan Heights. The father, a well known surgeon, immediately volunteered for the medical corps and was flown to that very same front. The sacrifice of lives has that effect and not only on close relatives. Everybody who lives in this land whether citizen, visitor or temporary resident, feels an eternal obligation to those who died or who are wounded, or who in any way risked their lives. This obligation governs and will govern any decision that will be made by the government as to the future borders, or any of the other political problems facing the State.

We are constantly giving lifts to soldiers. One of our passengers was telling my children that this was his third war in Israel. "My relationship to Israel," he told them, "is greater than that of a Sabra, one who is born here. A Sabra is like a tree planted in its natural habitat and does not choose where to grow. Israel became mine by choice when I left France to become a real Jew. A lot of my blood was spilled in France and it was worthless. Here we all know that whatever the price - it is for something great and important, bigger than we are.

Rabbi Wilfred Shuchat

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My third conclusion may sound pessimistic but I regard it as a realistic assessment of our present situation. If the cease-fire had not been enforced by the super powers, there would have followed a resounding Israeli military victory that probably would have brought down the governments of both Egypt and Syria. However, the speech delivered by the ruler of Egypt and similar statements by other Arab leaders indicate quite conclusively that the victory whatever its dimensions, would not have been followed by peace.

I think it is pretty clear by now that whatever follows the cease-fire - the situation will not be one that can be described as peace. The Arab States have not reconciled themselves to the existence of the State of Israel. We on our part, have to reconcile ourselves to a situation where the State of Israel will be surrounded by tension and hostility and the ever present possibility of war not only during our generation but probably for the next generation, as well.

If this possibility discourages us it should be remembered that it has been the way of Jewish history ever since Abraham crossed the Euphrates River, as the Midrash puts it, to be on one side, while the rest of the world remained on the other side. (That, by the way, is the translation of the word Hebrew - Ivri - one who crossed over to the other side).

Jewish communities all over the world must understand this situation and adjust themselves to it. Help for Israel is not temporary but a permanent phenomenon so long as the attitude of hostility continues. And help for Israel is not help for the Jews over here - but for the Jews wherever they may be.

If there is one experience that living in Israel at this crucial time has embedded in my soul it is that Israel's wars are my wars. They guarantee my survival as a Jew and the survival of Judaism as a significant experience.

Nor do I believe that Aliyah will be hampered by the challenge of Israel having to face the possibility of a very long period of no peace, near-war, and maybe even more wars. This kind of realistic appraisal will have far greater appeal to idealistic young people all over the world who want to come to Israel to give of their talents, idealism and ability and not merely to take or to experience.

The period of pioneering in this country is not yet over. It is not only the land that

has to be pioneered. The struggle for peace and a working relationship with neighbouring Arab States still has to be pioneered. An Israel must be built that will in every way justify the sacrifices that have been and that must constantly be made for it. This, too, is pioneering.

I am convinced that a realistic appraisal of the future, without illusions, but with much hope, will arouse Jewish communities to a degree that they have not yet been summoned.

Someday everything will be fulfilled - a life of peace and blessing and goodness in this most exciting place. We have to go forward in this knowledge, confident of the rightness of our cause

(concluded)

Rabbi Wilfred Shuchat

Nov 23/73

ADDITIONAL WAR LETTER FROM ISRAEL

It is difficult to move from the discussions of war themes that are so pressing and gripping to more mundane or less violent levels of achievement. Perhaps before doing so, I might offer an evaluation of certain attitudes that the recent Arab-Israeli war revealed.

A friend of mine who has been in Israel for many years, and who has written many articles criticizing the theological concept of "The Chosen People" said to me recently "I want to choose my words very carefully. I have to admit that we are a most remarkable people."

We were evaluating some of the attitudes the war revealed, particularly the Israeli attitude to the loss of life. Every life lost in the war is a major disaster. When a family sits Shiva for a military bereavement, the knowledge is transmitted by word of mouth from Dan to Beer Sheba. The attitude to wounded is one of ultimate concern. The ~~attitude~~ personal attention given to the welfare of the individual soldier a matter of priority. This has military by-products as well. Rescue operations for flyers that are shot down or Israeli wounded in the field, or even for the dead who require burial are a huge priority even under fire.

Mind you, this humanitarian attitude to human life, its value and meaning, which is spiritually Israel's strong point is, militarily, one of its major weaknesses. The other side doesn't have this attitude. Maybe their nearest of kin are not immediately informed. Maybe their culture has a different attitude to death in combat. Whatever the interpretation may be, the difference in attitude is profound and fundamental. Compare the enthusiastic reception given to the wounded prisoners who returned to Israel with the cool and casual reception to similar returnees to Egypt as reported by Red Cross officials.

Maybe this is not the right age in which to use terms like "chosen" or "superior" lest they be misunderstood. Suffice to say that in Israel there has been revealed a most remarkable people.

Rabbi Wilfred Shuchat