

SUBJ: Upcoming Trip to Israel

Dear Judea Reform Friends,

Please see the letter below, from myself and three other Durham-Chapel Hill Jewish community leaders, regarding our upcoming visit to Israel. The trip will be brief, busy, and devoted to establishing this Jewish community as a significant source of support to our sister community, Kibbutz Nir Oz, as they endure and navigate these devastating times. I'll be leaving after Shabbat, and returning midweek.

I look forward to sharing with you what I learn and the opportunities for us to engage in critical, transformative mitzvot in the days to come.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Soffer

Nov 7, 2023 / 23 Cheshvan 5784

Dear Durham-Chapel Hill Jewish Community,

The Talmud teaches, *kol Yisrael arevin zeh bazeh*, “all of Israel is responsible for each other,” and we feel this moment of strife puts our sense of solidarity and mutual responsibility to the test. We are writing to provide you with an update on one step we are taking, on behalf of the community, to show our love, care, and support for those in Israel whose lives have been completely uprooted by the terror attack of October 7th and the ongoing war with Hamas.

As you may know, the Durham-Chapel Hill Jewish community recently established a bond with our sister-community, Kibbutz Nir Oz, which is home to a number of our community members. Our community leaders from Jewish for Good, Beth El, Judea Reform, and Kehillah have been in close contact with members of Nir Oz. We have heard, with tears in our eyes, what they experienced and are currently trying to navigate, amidst the chaos of this trauma.

The four of us will be traveling to Israel to help show our friends and families in Israel how deeply our community cares. We will meet with many people, listening to them face-to-face and exploring how we can pool our resources here to provide real, concrete, and sustainable support for their recovery, resilience, and rebuilding. We will be delivering critical supplies, based on their immediate needs, including the needs of the many children. We will be in Israel from this Sunday 11/12 through Tuesday 11/14. When we return, we will share with the broader community what we learn, and, most importantly, we will invite you all into the mitzvot that are most impactful and helpful.

Rabbi Nachman of Brezislav taught, “if you believe you can destroy, then you must believe you can repair.” We hold no illusions about our limitations—about all that we cannot “fix,” including the grief over loved ones who have been killed or taken hostage. Nevertheless, there is nothing greater that we can do at this time than place the work of repair at the center of our faith.

If you would like to have a letter of support delivered to the families of Nir Oz, please drop it off at the front desks of Beth El or Jewish for Good by 4pm on Thursday. Letters, cards and drawings from children are encouraged.

B’virkat Shalom,

Rabbi Matthew Soffer, Senior Rabbi, Judea Reform Congregation
Ari Medoff, President, Jewish for Good
Dan Schnitzer, President, Beth El Synagogue
Sophia Abram, Logistics Manager