

OUR NAME IS YISRAEL - JULY 2014

No doubt you have been, like me, closely following the horrible news coming out of Israel and Gaza over the last three weeks. Regardless of one's political sensibilities, we must agree that this war is taking a terrible toll. What seems to have started (but not really) by the deaths of four teenagers, has now spilled over into the deaths of so many more: combatants and bystanders alike. I pray that it will end soon and that Israelis and Palestinians will dig deep within their collective souls to find the compassion and the wisdom and, above all, the strength to do what is necessary to end this conflict and make peace.

Having said that, I write to you today to affirm my support for the State of Israel. Moreover, I encourage you to do the same.

Indeed, in the face of world opinion (weighing in on both sides of the equation), taking sides can be experienced as emotionally precarious business. Whether we see ourselves on the political right or left or the more likely "confused" somewhere in-between, what cannot be denied is that Israel is under attack. And so are Jews. This is as much our struggle as it is that of Israel. When Hamas indiscriminately sends rockets into Israel hoping it kills anyone, it becomes clear that its target transcends the State and simply wants to kill Jews. And so Hamas says in its charter. As a dear American friend of mine wrote from Jerusalem last month, this is personal.

No doubt in your attempt to make sense of this, if you are like me you have spent a good amount of time reading as much as possible. Because we desperately want to understand. To that end, I share with you an essay from today's Op-Ed page of the Israeli daily HaAretz. Written by Ari Shavit, author of the highly acclaimed *My Promised Land*, Mr. Shavit insightfully and succinctly frames the current conflict in a way that I believe is accurate. I recommend it to you.

<http://www.haaretz.com/mobile/.premium-1.606865?v=79FBBAD31BD3987E397F1AF91DE743E>

Over here, summertime seduces us with its prospects for escape. (As I write this I am preparing for a vacation to Quebec.) But well we know, Israel knows no such vacation. These days leading up to the month of Av (next week) wherein we commemorate the anniversary of the destruction of Jerusalem do not afford Israelis the luxury of relegating Jewish existential angst to the world of intellectual discourse. It is as real to them today as our wondering what the weather will be like when we get up in the morning. Simply put, let us not lose sight of a fundamental teaching of Judaism: כל ישראל ערבין זה לזה. All Jews are intertwined (Talmud Yerushalmi). Lest we forget, the name of the Jewish people is ישראל / Israel.

Stand with Israel. And keep in your hearts the children. For their sake, pray for the peace of Jerusalem.