

One People, One Heart

Our 27 year old son just got married last week to a wonderful 27 year old young lady. It was a joyous affair. We danced and ate and gave thanks to God for their good fortune and for ours (and thanks, as well, to all those who offered us congratulations). Weddings in Jewish tradition are always connected with hope; hope for a peace, hope for love, hope for a new household that might bring redemption to the world.

Last week, another 27 year old Jewish man was celebrating his good fortune, the night before the engagement party, in a Tel Aviv pub with his 27 year old childhood friend. His name was Eytam Magini. Eytam and his friend Tomer Morad would not survive the night. A terrorist with a rifle gunned down these two young men, our son's peers, in cold blood, while taking the life of another, a father of three, and wounding several others. These senseless murders follow a string of recent terror attacks in Israel proper against civilians going about their daily lives. In one of the attacks, the terrorist was taken down by an Israeli Arab policeman, Amir Khoury, who was killed in his battle with the assailant.

A well-known tradition at Jewish weddings is for the groom to step on a glass marking the conclusion of the ceremony (except for kissing the bride). Of course, our son stepped on a glass at his wedding. Stepping on a glass symbolizes several things, but the most common understanding is that, at the time of our greatest personal joy, we are to remember that the world is still filled with broken bodies, broken dreams, and broken hearts. As Jews, we remember our people's long history of pain and loss, from the days of the destroyed Temples in Jerusalem, long ago, to the horror of the Holocaust in the last century. We also remember the shattered lives of others, like our Ukrainian brothers and sisters.

For me, the shattered glass at our son's wedding will always bring to mind Eytam and Tomer, our son's peers. Two 27 year old friends who, like our son, were celebrating the hope found in an upcoming wedding. They were murdered because an evil ideology has poisoned the minds of far too many in our world. Terrorists think that murdering civilians going about their daily lives will break the back of decent people who

seek only to live in peace. But they are wrong. Israelis are strong and resilient. The Jewish people are not strangers to the Land of Israel. It is our ancestral home. We have returned for good. Israel is now making peace with its Arab neighbors and I believe that, someday soon, Israelis and Palestinians will find a way to live in peace.

We, the Jews, are one people with one heart. We grieve for the loss of Etyam and Tomer and the other Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel who have fallen. May their families be comforted and may they receive the consolation of the merciful God that we worship.

May this Passover sweeten the bitter and bring redemption to all!

*B'shalom,
Rabbi Ben Shull*