

How Do We Cope With This Anguish?

God implored the prophet Isaiah: *Nachamu, nachamu...* comfort My people.

Such a verse in the bible is a bit baffling for me—we pray to God for such needs, yet God urges the prophet to do this for God's people. It is the perfect advice that we yearn to hear right now—we pray to God at this moment of crisis. We yearn for God's protection and the stability that faith provides as we grope for answers in wake of the atrocities that we witnessed in the land of Israel over the last week. But as God reminds Isaiah—the power to comfort and heal is in our hands just as much as it is in God's!

Let's acknowledge the pain. Nearly 50 years to the day that Israel was invaded on Yom Kippur, Hamas launched a brutal assault on Israel. We are reeling from the full scope of the nightmare that has unfolded and the full extent of the losses—over a thousand dead in Israel and 2500 wounded, approximately 150 missing presumed to be hostages. Babies slaughtered, women raped, people decapitated. And then there is loss on the Palestinian side—there were terrorists who were killed for sure, but there are also the civilians who died as well. Hamas' heinous, murderous attack is a gross violation of international law and constitutes an abhorrent crime against humanity. This is one of the most shocking massacres in the history of Israel, and indeed in the entire history of this century. The horror and pain are difficult to process and comprehend. At a time when celebrations should be filled with dancing as we marked Simchat Torah, we sobbed and felt so vulnerable. Not since the Holocaust have we witnessed such brutality inflicted upon our people.

I urge us all to set aside political differences and attitudes about the policies/practices of the Israeli government. Stand with Israel—help them to pursue justice and not merely to extract revenge. Their war-time government was formed to show unity and we Jews and those who love us need to do the same. I am not a political scientist but this I do know-- this is ugly and painful; I fear that the suffering will only get worse! Our solidarity with Israel is not carte-blanche to say that Israel can do what it wants in response to this

unprecedented attack. We must voice our pain, keep the focus on the safe return of the 150+ hostages, and plead for a measured response that deters future assaults. We must denounce Hamas' tactics and demand that their presence be eradicated from Gaza.

As much as Israel needs our solidarity right now, we should acknowledge that we need each other. We will not solve the problems of the Mid-East from Schenectady, but we can reassure each other that we are not alone. In our unity there is a degree of safety. I plead with you to come to services Friday night or log in to the Live-stream. We need each other... and to be blunt, I need you— it is essential that this community flexes its strength so that others will know that “*Am Yisrael Chai*”—the people of Israel [the entirety of the Jewish people] will live!

God implored the prophet Isaiah: “*Nachamu, nachamu...* comfort My people.” There are so many unanswered questions right now, but our prayer can be with the support from each other.