



A Modern Orthodox Congregation

19 Tishri 5778

B'SD

Putting Life in Perspective

Over the recent three-day holiday, I commented that for a few days I felt peace in my world. I didn't watch TV or read the newspaper. There was no negative news to fray my nerves. No news about North Korea or the gains made by right-wing political parties in Europe. My mind was not occupied with neo Nazi rallies or bombings in Somalia. For three days there were no hurricanes, uncontrolled fires, or devastating earthquakes. I didn't read about UNESCO or anti-Israel propaganda. For the first time since I moved to Florida, I heard only the early morning sounds of birds chirping and the pitter patter of small marsupials on the brush.

Yet, following my days of serenity, life immediately reverted to normal. Sadly, as much as we would like to ignore reality, we can't wave our magic wand and make life's miseries and tragedies disappear. Even if we tried, bad news finds a way of intruding on our personal space. Moreover, yesterday's heroes are often tomorrow's villains and we are often ill prepared to deal with that reality. Sadly, numerous Harvey Weinstein's walk among us and ignorance only serves to increase their control over the disempowered innocent.

But as I was sitting in my gated community wallowing in self-pity, fearing what tomorrow might bring, I received an email from Israel that put matters in perspective. I realized the fears we face, albeit real, are unlike what Israelis face every day. In Israel, young men and women are risking their lives every day to protect and safeguard the country and its citizens. Danger lurks at every corner and their fear and trepidation is based on strong probabilities and not theoretical possibilities. We may call ourselves Zionists, but the email below portrays who the true Zionists really are.

ספטמבר-אוקטובר 2017

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Shalom Uv'Racha Miriam and Rabbi Jack

As you know from my Dad, I am an officer and squad commander in a fighting infantry unit in KFIR, called G'dud Nachshon 90. For obvious security reasons, I have to keep this document as safe as possible. There are 25 soldiers in my squad including 2 medics (God forbid, we should ever need their help). My soldiers train hard and we work under terrible pressure and stress during our operational missions (which sadly are much too often, but we must do what we must do). After

extensive training and operations, it is time to re-kit my soldiers with new battle vests. I may not say anything about the IDF's budget or the situation of stocks for new battle vests. It's enough to say that the reply (from up the ladder) that is given to squad commanders is that we can continue using our existing, worn out, "vermatted" vests, and, indeed, they are probably correct.

BUT, and it's a big **BUT**, that new battle vests to infantry fighters who are 24/7 operational, are big morale boosters. It's as simple as that. Our operational *chayalim* need to be in perfect body and perfect mind at all times. I try take care of both aspects in my squad! So, I have taken upon myself to raise the money privately to achieve this goal.

It is in this spirit that I am reaching out to people overseas who love Israel and who especially love the IDF, to assist me in this mini-project to re-kit my chayalim with new battle vests.

There are many different types of vests from different Israeli factories but I have selected one that is not the top of the range and not the top price either but it will do the job just fine. Here is the link. <http://azimutgear.com/en/vests/battle-vests/army-vest-idf>

As I am busy with my duties 24/7, I don't have time or abilities to manage the collection of money. My idea is to keep this simple and to ask people who want to help us, to pay directly to the vest factory and they will deliver the vests directly to our army base when all 25 vests are paid for. (I have my own battle vest so this is only for my *chayalim - soldiers*).

By coincidence, the family that own the vest factory are ex-South African (surname is Hoffman) and they will give us full cooperation to receive directly specific money for our specific project and then deliver the vests to us when they are all paid for. Already, I have 10 vests paid for directly to the vest company by family and friends.

Also, I am enclosing the page that the vest factory helped us to prepare regarding how to pay them for the vests.

My Dad said that you might be able to assist us with families in your community who feel strongly about the IDF? It is important that everyone knows that this is a private/unofficial project and there are no "donation plaques" or public ceremonies to the people who do help us. I can promise that my 25 soldiers who give their guts and *kishkes* in training and operations, let alone put their lives on the line for *Am Yisrael*, will appreciate this gesture beyond words and tears.

We need another about 2,650 dollars to reach our goal for the battle vests and I realize this is a lot of money but don't you agree the benefits far outweigh the costs? Please can you discuss this further with Dad and hopefully tell him how you can help me achieve this goal for these amazing IDF "gladiators"?

Best regards and drishat shalom chama from Eretz HaKodesh.

Gilad M

Dear Gilad,

No words can describe the respect we have for you and your soldiers. Thank God, our community survived the recent hurricanes, albeit with financial loss and serious hardship. However, as tragic as those natural events may have been, they pale into insignificance in comparison to soldiers risking their lives. I also want to thank for giving us a better perspective on our own difficulties.

I am honored that we can help you and your troops. You should receive confirmation from Azimut Gear that all the vests you requested have been ordered. I would hope that other communities continue this project and ensure the safety of every soldier serving in the IDF. As American Jews it is the least we can do to help keep our chayalim keep safe.

Regards,

Miriam and Rabbi Jack

PS: For those interested in sharing in this mitzvah please send your checks to Anshei Emuna (Israel vest project) or contact Eileen at 561-499-9229.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Jack Engel