

A Message from Yerushalayim from Rabbi & Mrs Emanuel Feldman

Shalom to our beloved Congregation Beth Jacob:

My wife and I and family here greatly appreciate your many messages of concern. They strengthen us and we are grateful for them.

These are difficult days for us all. Not only daily air raid alarms – our dancing with the Torah on Yom Tov was three times interrupted by air raid alarms – but hundreds killed, thousands wounded, atrocities committed, hostages taken – and now, many funerals. This is not an ordinary war, but a medieval, Nazi-like, cold-blooded massacre and pogrom against Jews.

There are lessons to be derived. Moshe Rabbeinu in Devarim 8:17 long ago warned about reliance on *Kochi veotzem yadi*, about ordinary mortals saying, “My strength and my power has created all this.” We in Israel have not been very mindful of this. Many of us were convinced that our armed forces and air-force were invincible and that the sophisticated electronic sensors and Iron Domes and electrified fences would protect our borders. Now, tragically, we are living the truth of Psalm 127:1 “...im Hashem lo yishmor ir...” Unless Gd protects the city, in vain is the watchman wakeful.

Note that the two most damaging assaults on us occurred on Yom Kippur and Simchas Torah. On one level these were strategic assaults: Israelis would be distracted, many soldiers would be home on leave, our guard would be down. But on a deeper level, these were religious assaults, an attack on the foundation stones of Judaism: Prayer and connection with Gd, which is Yom Kippur; and on Torah itself, which is Simchas Torah. It is Ishmael yet again trying to destroy his brother Yitzchak by attacking the great pillars of Judaism.

Thus, this is a wakeup call. Not only to reevaluate our military strategy and our defense capabilities, but to reevaluate our spiritual attachment to that which so enrages our murderous enemies: prayer and Torah.

Israel will respond and subdue our enemies physically. We will “pass the ammunition” and destroy the enemy, but we dare not forget to “praise the Lo-d.” That is, we must *also respond* by enhancing that which was the

deeper object of their hatred: our prayers, our Shuls, our study halls, our personal Torah studies. They hate our prayer; we daven better. They hate our Torah learning, we study Torah more. They act with savagery, we intensify our interhuman relationships, our help to one another, our kindness to strangers, and increase our giving of tzedakah. Our enemy is beastly; we counter this by becoming more human. For these, says the Mishnah in Avos I, are the pillars on which the world stands: Torah, *Avodah*(worship) and *Gemilus chasadim*, acts of lovingkindness.

It would also be appropriate to admit that we are vulnerable. To admit one's vulnerability is to step closer to Gd; to declare one's invincibility is to step away from Gd. Ironically, to acknowledge vulnerability is the beginning of true security.

May we all be blessed with peace - *shalom* - in all of its many connotations. May we all emerge from these difficult days more *shalem* - complete and whole – than ever before. Although today we mourn, ultimately we will prevail and will emerge a people stronger and more unified than ever before.

Shalom from Yerushalayim,

Rabbi and Mrs Emanuel Feldman

Suggestion: In addition to our daily davening, it is appropriate to recite Psalms 83, 130, and 142 every single day. At the very least, recite Psalm 91.