

Not Losing Sight of the Human Face

Dear friends,

As I take in the ongoing suffering, I return again and again to what has become for me a sort of grounding verse: Don't lose sight of the human face. Amidst all our anger and analyses, our condemnations and fear, to not forget the millions of human faces bearing the pain of this tragedy.

The latest message from my dear friend in Israel was simply: “really crazy and horrible here.” Each person kidnapped and each of their loved ones, each of the more than 1,400 killed in Hamas’ massacre and all of their loved ones, some of whom lost dozens if not hundreds of community members — each of their faces, a portal into a devastated world.

And in Gaza where the horrors unfold by the minute: over 6,000 killed, over 2,000 of them children, all in the midst of an unspeakable humanitarian catastrophe. Each of those faces, a portal into a devastated world.

In beholding these myriad human faces, I feel an unequivocal call of “no more.” And so I’ve been calling our congressional leaders to advocate for an immediate ceasefire and release of the hostages, and have signed [this letter](#) composed by a network called [Synagogues Rising](#). I understand that not all of you would sign it, but for me — out of moral heartbreak for what the people of Gaza are enduring, and out of love for Israelis and concern for how ongoing military assault will further deteriorate their safety, I hope and pray that it’s call will materialize. If you are so moved, I encourage you to sign it. Of course, there are many other ways to let our voices be heard, [this letter](#) from the New Israel Fund among them, and I encourage each of us who are moved to act to do so in the ways that feel right to us.

Because each of our faces, even from this distant place, are in some way bearing the weight of this moment. So I am working more than ever to behold each face I encounter. That's my invitation and challenge to each of us — even with people you disagree with, people you feel anger toward or disappointment in: to not make assumptions or projections about what others think and why, to not lose sight of one another’s human face.

As always, I am open to conversation, so please be in touch with me directly at benjamin.barnett@havurahshalom.org with any reactions to what I’ve written, or if you simply would like to talk further.

With blessings of shalom,

Rabbi Benjamin