

Dear friends, in this past week I have moved from the joy of Simchat Torah to the shock and outright anger at the attack and slaughter by Hamas in Israel. I have thought all week of what to say right now. It has been hard to think. Utter grief and fear, the unknowns of what is happening, ongoing concern for the hostages, soldiers, friends, and family, Israel itself, is real and overwhelming. The shock, sadness, anger and fear has been palpable.

There is a poem, from decades ago:

here in this carload
i am eve
with abel my son
if you see my other son
cain son of man
tell him I...

The words fade off, there are no words. And so it is today. The horrors that occurred last Shabbat day, there are no words. This poem was written by Dan Pagis, decades ago, titled "Written in Pencil in the Sealed Railway-car". It is worthy of discussion, but not today. But it reminds us that the last time we suffered such slaughter was during the Holocaust.

Though there is much of this information in the news, I want to make sure to say the following: Any acts of terror must never be supported, tolerated, or condoned. Hamas is a

militant terrorist organization whose ideology and purpose is to decimate Israel and does not acknowledge Israel or its right to exist. The Hamas charter from 1988 and 2017 is on the internet and believe them when they say they will use any and all means including violence to achieve their goals. They put their own children in harm's way, using them as human shields.

Though he is gone, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks' words are here for us. He wrote, "The best response to terror is not anger, but the quiet strength to carry on, not giving way to fear. Terror fails and will always fail because it arouses in us a profound instinct for life."¹

Stories abound of people from all over rising to support Israel, reserve soldiers jumping in their cars, even planes, to return to serve in the IDF, others sending cards, letters, children's drawings, supplies, words of love and support, and money. It is all needed.

It is needed yesterday, today, and tomorrow. You know what to do.

What I want to convey tonight is the strength and fortitude that we must call upon within ourselves and together. Our Torah and our Sages teaches us to seek peace and pursue it.

¹ The Power of Ideas: Words of Faith and Wisdom. Pg 80-81.

We are a people who strive to heal the world, we are always seeking to do *tikkun olam*, to heal the world. Torah teaches us that we are each made in the likeness of the Divine and thus each human being is unique and precious. Torah also teaches us about the first brothers of the Torah, Cain and Abel, and that Cain killed his brother Abel. The rest of the Torah seeks repair of that first violent act of fratricide. Indeed my teachers and their teachers have always taught that the whole Torah comes to teach us to be a mensch. That's the whole Torah. And, at the same time, we must also hold the teaching: that if someone comes to kill you, you must rise up and be prepared to kill them first.

So we have opposing instructions – defend yourselves, and seek peace. We must take both instructions to heart, as difficult and heart-rending the first instruction is.

A famous quote speaks to this, and to the Jewish heart. May we keep this in mind as the days progress. It is by Golda Meir, the fourth prime minister of Israel, from her biography, *A Land of Our Own*. She said: “When peace comes, we will perhaps in time be able to forgive the Arabs for killing our sons, but it will be harder for us to forgive them for having forced us to kill their sons. Peace will come when the Arabs will love their children more than they hate us.”

Today I wish to end with the quote in your booklet from Elie Wiesel and speaks to a fundamental quality of being a Jew, and that is HOPE:

One must wager on the future. I believe it is possible, in spite of everything, to believe in friendship in a world without friendship, and even to believe in God in a world where there has been an eclipse of God's face. Above all, we must not give in to cynicism. To save the life of a single child, no effort is too much. To make a tired old man smile is to perform an essential task. To defeat injustice and misfortune, if only for one instant, for a single victim, is to invent a new reason to hope.

Just as despair can be given to me only by another human being, hope too can be given to me only by another human being. Mankind must remember too that, like hope, peace is not God's gift to his creatures. Peace is a very special gift--it is our gift to each other. For the sake of our children and theirs, I pray that we are worthy of that hope, of that redemption, and some measure of peace. (**Elie Weisel**, Reform Judaism Magazine interview by Aron Hirt-Manheimer in 2005)

Shabbat shalom,

Rabbi Lisa Bock