

KOL NIDRE - TEMPLE EMANUEL – 5767
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I remember the moment I learned Saddam Hussein attacked Kuwait. I had just bought the Jerusalem Post and boarded the bus in Beyt Hakerem in South Jerusalem to go to school at HUC near the King David Hotel and the Old City. What that meant was that in the near future I would spend some time in sealed rooms after sirens wailed, and have to carry my gas mask with me wherever I went. I also remember my cousin's restaurant in the center of Jerusalem, without tourists, opening for lunch for the first time in 50 years of existence. I remember walking on Ben Yehuda street on a misty afternoon, usually bustling with tourists and musicians and young Israelis empty, except for me and my friend. It is worse, now.

I remember the moment I learned that Israel was at war with the Hezbollah terrorists in Southern Lebanon. I was walking in Brooklyn holding my daughter's hand when my cell phone rang and my sister-in-law asked me if I'd heard. What that meant was that in the immediate future Israel would be bombarded with ketushah rockets in its Northernmost cities – Kiryat Shemona (where I once bought a pair of jeans), Carmiel (where I once saw the sun set), Nahariya (where I played paddle ball on the beach with a 10 year old Israeli boy), Sefad (where we watched the sofer write the shema on the claf that sits in the mezuzah on our front door), and Haifa (where Michelle and I spent the last night of the twentieth century, and the first morning of the twenty first). What it meant was instead selling jeans, sitting on the beach, writing sacred scrolls or celebrating together, they were in bomb shelters, celebrating Shabbat amidst the thunder of shells and war. It meant that many Israeli lives would be lost once again in defense of the State of Israel. It meant that another generation of Israeli children will grow up with war during their lifetime.

No matter what your place in Israeli politics. No matter what your views on the military strategies the Israeli Defense Force employed. No matter what your views on the media coverage, or the how Israel looked, or for that matter, how you feel about war. The people of Israel are like you and me. The people of Israel live with the same values that we uphold. The people of Israel go to work every day, earn a living to feed their family, take care of their parents, tend to their gardens and pets and entertain their friends. The people of Israel need us. It is not the government that needs us, nor the army. It is the people like you and me. The one's who are about to lose their businesses. The one's who can't yet return to their blown up homes.

According to a report by the Union of Local Authorities, the total cost of the war to 60 of the 100 local authorities in the North totals 404 million New Israeli Shekels, which is close to 100 million American dollars, including lost revenues, lost property taxes and water payments, shelters, additional manpower and day camps and social and welfare services. That's not even counting the costs of each individual Israeli that was not able to make a living during the war, or relied on tourism as their major source of income.

Israel doesn't need us to grieve for her. Israel needs us to show up, to get to know her better, to get to know her people up close, so that you can feel her heartbeat. Israel

doesn't need us to feel sorry for her, she needs us to give generously. Right now, tomorrow, next month, at the end of the year when you've got to give money – give to our brothers and sister who ensure the survival of our State by giving their lives to it, by toiling in it, by surviving its toughest times and rebuilding stronger.

All we see on CNN are the battlefields. Go there and get to know the playing fields, the back yards, the coffee shops, the lives that are going on as we speak. Yehuda Amichai wrote a beautiful poem that speaks of how we should consider Israel. It is entitled, the tourist.

*Visits of condolence is all we get from them.
They squat at the Holocaust Memorial,
They put on grave faces at the Wailing Wall
And they laugh behind heavy curtains
In their hotels.
They have their pictures taken
Together with our famous dead
At Rachel's Tomb and Herzl's Tomb
And on Ammunition Hill.
They weep over our sweet boys
And lust after our tough girls
And hang up their underwear
To dry quickly
In cool, blue bathrooms.*

Once I sat on the steps by a gate at David's Tower, I placed my two heavy grocery baskets at my side. A group of tourists was standing around their guide and I became their target marker. "You see that man with the baskets? Just right of his head there's an arch from the Roman period. Just right of his head." "But he's moving, he's moving!" I said to myself: redemption will come only if their guide tells them, "You see that arch from the Roman period? It's not important: but next to it, left and down a bit, there sits a man who's bought fruit and vegetables for his family."

Go to her, for the man who is bringing groceries to his family. Go and get to know the people, get to know our people. Go with Rabbi Geller's trip next summer. Fill two busses worth. Go and meet the families of the many Israeli families in this congregation. If you're going to Israel, talk to one of these families, visit their loved ones in Jerusalem, or Afula, or Tel Aviv, or Hertzeliyah, or Haifa, wherever they are, find them, give them your love, give them your prayers, and if you can, give them your business. 6 degrees of separation? I'm sure that most of us are 1 or two degrees separated from Israel's people. They are our family, they are our friends. Go to them.

Give to her. To the Federation, where 100% of the money goes directly to aid Israel. Give to hospitals that treat the victims of terrorist attacks and ketusha rockets. Give your business to Israeli companies. Give to the Jaffa center, with whom we have a close relationship, an organization that works with underprivileged children from poor and

broken homes. Give to our sister school in Nahariya, the Usishkin school, with whom we've just begun a relationship in the Day School because two members of our staff are from there.

Go and give for Israel's future. Pray that the day will come when Isaiah's words will be true, "When nation shall not lift up sword against nation, and there shall be war no more." Pray that the next generation will grow up with peace. Pray for the hope of the future.