

October 7, 2023 at 2:04 am PDT

Israel Has Been Attacked

Chevre

50 years ago almost to the day, on October 6, 1973, Israel was attacked on the holy day of Yom Kippur. Today, October 7, 2023, Israel has again been attacked on the holiday of Shemini Atzeret. Once again, our people and nation have been attacked; all reservists have been called up; and Israel is again fighting for her life.

Hamas terrorists infiltrated into Israeli communities through the Gaza strip, and launched a surprise attack in conjunction with over 5000 rockets fired into Israel. A video from Gaza showed a lifeless Israeli soldier being trampled on by an angry crowd; and Hamas is asking that all Arab nations attack Israel immediately to "set the earth on fire". The Hamas commander, Mohammed Deif, specifically asked all terror groups in Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq; all of which are funded through Iran, to join in a war against Israel.

We must all pray for our brothers and sisters in Eretz Yisrael, that they remain safe and protected, and that they quickly triumph over these terrorists who worship death, destruction, and hate.

If you wish to learn more as it happens, accurate coverage from the Times of Israel can be found here:

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog-october-7-2023/>

I ask that you join me in your hearts, souls, and voices...

Ribbono Shel Olam, Master of the Universe; Shema Koleinu, Hear our voices. Keep the men and women in the IDF safe and protected as they defend our people and our nation. Protect the civilians, and lead our people to a speedy and safe victory over those who seek to destroy us and have attacked us on this Holy Day of Shemini Atzeret.

Remember the covenant that you made with our ancestors to always protect us.

Remember the promises you made to Sarah, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah; and keep their children safe now in these times of war. Keep our people safe, and let your healing light keep our bodies and souls strong and whole. Bring healing to the bodies of our brothers and sisters in the IDF; and healing to the hearts of these Arab terrorists so that they put down their weapons and totally cease their hate for us. Please God, please, bring peace and healing swiftly to the Jewish people so that we may worship and live safely in the land you gave to us through our forefathers. May You, the One who makes peace in the Universe, make peace upon us and upon all Israel. And together, let us say, Amen.

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 7, 2023

22nd of Tishrei, 5784

October 7, 2023 at 12:00pm PDT

Prayer and Action

Chevre

During this celebratory holiday of Shemini Atzeret, I have spent much of the last 12 hours in tears and prayer. The terrible attacks in Israel bring back all too vividly the pain and shock I experienced 50 years ago as a child in Yom Kippur services when we were attacked on Oct. 6, 1973. We are taught that tears are some of the deepest and most honest prayers, and if this is true, I know that many of us have been praying with all our hearts.

The horrors that are going on in Israel right now are beyond comprehension. There are videos available on Twitter and The Times of Israel that Hamas has proudly put out that are beyond disgusting. Please do not watch these if you have a weak stomach, for what these terrorists are proudly doing is beyond the capability of any sane human being to conceive. The conscious attacks and kidnapping of civilians; the parading and desecration of naked Jewish bodies in the street; and the joy that is being taken at doing these animalistic acts can be easily seen, but are degrading to the soul. These terrorists have surrendered any sense of humanity in favor of barbarism.

And in the streets of Tehran, which is the source of Hamas' funding, they are shooting off fireworks in celebration of these atrocities.

But we are Jews. We choose to have faith that darkness will always shift to light with God's guidance and help.

I know it is so difficult to have faith right now in anything, and this is when our faith is most important. We are a religion of faith and action, so I ask that you do both on this Shabbat of Shemini Atzeret. Please support Israel in action by giving financially to any Israel organization such as friends of the IDF. Please withdraw support for any organization that condemns Israel in any way. We need to be unified in our support of the Holy Land in this time of crisis. Even the judicial protestors in Israel have publicly put aside all protests and controversy and made it clear that everyone must step up to support and serve Israel. We must come together as Jews in acting in support of Eretz Yisrael.

And I ask that you pray. Really pray. Please take at least a few moments today and do two important steps. Think for a moment of the pain going on in Israel; of the horrors being perpetrated against our brothers and sisters there; the personal incidents that help you feel the pain. If you cannot emotionally get in touch with the pain, then watch some of the videos that Hamas has proudly released that show them desecrating the naked bodies of Jewish soldiers and civilians. And I ask that you allow yourself to feel the pain of our people so deeply that the tears come.

And then, I ask you to pray for peace. Let the tears and pain carry your prayers to the Holy One.

When we truly cry out, God listens. We cried out to be released from the pain of slavery in Egypt, and we became free. We cried out to return to Israel from Babylon 2600 years ago and we returned. We cried out for almost 2000 years to return to Israel and have a homeland, and the modern State of Israel was born.

Please, please, cry out for peace. And with the help of the Holy One, our cries will be answered fully and quickly.

Ribbono Shel Olam, Master of the Universe, please keep the people of Israel safe and protected. Help the soldiers of the IDF fulfill their duties safely, and repel the terrorists who attack us on this holiday of Shmini Atzeret. Bring peace and healing to all of Eretz Yisrael, and allow the Jewish people to come together in this time of crisis and support each other and the State of Israel. May You bless us with your peace and guidance, and bring Israel and her people to safety, healing, and peace. Please God, shema koleinu...hear our prayer.

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 7, 2023

22nd of Tishrei, 5784

October 7, 2023 at 8:30pm PDT

Simchat Torah - More Important Than Ever

Chevre

Tonight through tomorrow night is Simchat Torah, the holiday where we celebrate the Torah, God, and Judaism.

In this time of war, when our brothers and sisters in Israel are under attack; when civilians are being killed and kidnapped; and when the very survival of Israel is at stake...it is more important than ever to pray together and renew our commitment to God, Judaism, and the Torah.

Some have asked how we can observe this holiday given the war in Israel? It is because of the war that we MUST observe it. The phrase "Simchat Torah" is usually translated as "the joy of Torah". But it can also be translated as "the Ordination of the Torah". We need to elevate the Torah as the Crown of God, and together as a community, we must appeal to God to swiftly end this war in triumph for Israel and the Jewish people.

Our observance of Simchat Torah will be significantly more subdued, but we must remember, now more than ever...

It is our love for Torah and God that will help us achieve peace faster and more fully. I invite you to come join in prayer and song as we honor the Torah tomorrow night, Sunday October 8 at 7:30pm at our Sanctuary.

B"shalom u'vracha

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 7, 2023

22nd of Tishrei, 5784

October 9, 2023 at 7:51am PDT

How to Help Israel in This Time of Need - You Can!

Chevre

Many of you have asked how you can help Israel in these difficult times. One of the most important ways is to help the Israeli hospitals and medical facilities that are so overwhelmed by this war.

I received the letter below from my dear friend Eyal Tiberger, whom some of you met months ago when he spoke at our temple. The letter is self-explanatory, and I enjoin you to read it fully as it contains all the information needed for you to directly help.

PLEASE, PLEASE consider helping with this specific cause that will save so many lives. I personally know of the amazing work at Bnai Zion Medical Center in Haifa, and guarantee that your help will save Israeli lives.

Dear Rabbi Barclay ,

Thank you for your recent message and words of support in this difficult time when we are in the midst of the war and suffer so many casualties of soldiers and innocent civilians.

As you know, I am on the board of Bnai Zion medical center in Haifa.

Yesterday I got an emergency call from the CEO of the hospital Dr. Ohad Hochman who said that due to the emergency situation and the fact that thousands of soldiers and civilians got injured he has to prepare the protected ER in order to accept the injured. The hospital needs immediate support in order to purchase an ANESTHETIC DEVICE that cost is \$100k in order to provide the wounded the best treatment and operations .

I would appreciate if your community can support us in this difficult time.

Any donation will be highly appreciated and will enable us to purchase lifesaving machine,

Please transfer your generous donation to:

Healthcare for Israel, Inc.

269 South Beverly Drive #1606

Beverly Hills, CA 90212

1) To donate online, please use the following link:

<https://healthcareforisrael.org/donate>.

Select the blue "Donate Now" button and you will be redirected to a site where you can donate by debit card, credit card, or PayPal.

2) To donate by check, please make the check out to:

Healthcare for Israel, Inc.

269 South Beverly Drive #1606

Beverly Hills, CA 90212

3) To donate by wire transfer, please use the following numbers:

Account Number: 966812130

Routing Number: 021000021

4) To donate by direct deposit or by an ACH transaction, please use the following numbers:

Account Number: 966812130

Routing Number: 322271627

Eyal Tiberger

Bnai Zion medical center

For further question please approach

Amanda Maddahi

310-913-3420

Co-Founder & Director

Healthcare for Israel

Supporting Bnai Zion Medical Center in Haifa

Chevre...please help with this in any way you can, and may God bless you many times over for this mitzvah, and bless Israel with healing, safety, and peace.

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 9, 2023

24th of Tishrei, 5784

October 9, 2023 at 5:43pm PDT

The Wounded in Israel Thank You for Your Help!

Chevre

Thank you. In the last 10 hours, our community has already donated over \$16,000 dollars to help wounded Israelis.

You humble me, and I am so grateful to be the Rabbi of such a loving community.

B'shalom u'vracha

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 9th, 2023

24th of Tishrei, 5784

October 10, 2023 at 11:07am PDT

All Jews Worldwide Praying at 11:30am PST Today

Chevre

The chief rabbis of Israel, Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef and Rabbi David Lau, call on the general public to unite in one prayer together, the entire House of Israel in Israel and in the diaspora, for the healing of the wounded, for the success of the soldiers and security forces, and for the release of the kidnapped.

The chief rabbis call to stop and unite in prayer at 13:30 Israel.time (11:30am PST) and read chapters of Psalms: 121,130, 142, 91

I enjoin us all to connect ourselves with the entire House of Israel in prayer at this time.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 10, 2023

25th of Tishrei, 5784

October 10, 2023 at 2:00 pm PDT

Info from Israeli Government

Chevre

Please read this important message that was forwarded to me.

In a few hours, Hamas terrorists will be posting photos and videos of hostages and torture on all social media platforms. The Israeli Government requests two things that you can also do:

1. Absolutely do not share these videos or photos; they are part of psychological warfare against Israel and even against you.

2. Absolutely prevent your children from watching them; they are not suitable for children and will be terrifying.

So, perhaps it's a good idea to have a conversation about this and make it clear that, aside from being Jewish and Zionists, which we appreciate, these are human beings who are being objectified and exploited for visibility, likes, and to compromise our Jewish Spirit.

Also, please lobby the social media companies to not allow those posts, which violate their own rules.

Please be aware that there are many levels to this war, and we need to be vigilant for our spirits and minds as well as our bodies.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 10th, 2023

25th of Tishrei, 5784

October 10, 2023 at 4:49 pm PDT

From Our Soldiers to Bring Us Hope and Faith

Chevre

In these dark times, we must retain hope and faith. These videos of our beloved IDF soldiers say it all....

Am Yisrael Chai - The People of Israel Live!

and

Kol HaOlam Kulo - All the world is just a narrow bridge, and above all is not to be afraid!

(words of Rebbe Nachman) <https://youtu.be/Ohw4mBiw1Qg>

Watch these courageous defenders of our land, gain faith from them, and pray for them, the people of Israel, and the land of Israel

...and above all, do not be afraid

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 10, 2023
25th of Tishrei, 5784

October 11, 2023 at 9:06 am PDT
Hezbollah Has Attacked Israel

Chevre

Hezbollah has attacked Israel in the North. Despite their repeated commitments to stay out the war, they attacked us from the air with rockets, paragliders, and drones.

This is a major escalation, and Hezbollah, which is financed, trained, and supported by Iran, is now fully at war with Israel. Unlike Hamas, Hezbollah rockets are extremely accurate; and they are infiltrating Israel with paragliders and attempting to attack small northern Israel communities.

The hospital we have been raising money for will now be the major center not only for civilians from Gaza, but for the wounded from northern conflicts. You can support the need for medical supplies at www.healthcareforisrael.org

Please say prayers for the people and land of Israel. May our soldiers and civilians be safe and protected by God, and may we speedily end this war

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 11, 2023
26th of Tishrei, 5784

October 11, 2023 at 2:52 pm PDT
How To Stay Human in the Midst of Hell

Chevre

The Torah teaches that we are to “blot out the memory of Amalek” (Deut. 25:19), and that God himself will “be at war with Amalek from generation to generation” (Ex. 17:16). It is a seemingly cruel dictate until evaluated under the understanding of our

Sages. Amalek was the enemy in Moses' time who attacked the ancient Hebrews from behind: attacking the children, women, old, and weak first. The verse is teaching us that when confronted with an "Amalek", we are not to negotiate, but to utterly destroy a perpetrator who has so lost their soul that they consciously attack the weak.

Let us be clear: Hamas is a modern Amalek, and must be completely and entirely destroyed. Like rabid animals, they have surrendered their souls through their horrific actions and need to be put down. Netanyahu phrased it appropriately today when he said, "every Hamas member is a dead man".

And yet, it is more important than ever that we remember other teachings so that we do not lose our own humanity in the process of destroying evil.

There is a midrash that when the Egyptian soldiers of Pharaoh were drowning in the Sea of Reeds that the angels rejoiced. God stopped them, chastising them that the work of His hands was being destroyed and there was no joy in this. We cannot allow ourselves to be happy that we are ever forced to kill others, even those who are truly evil.

Years ago during the second intifada, I walked into a cigar lounge to the sound of a group of men cheering while watching the tv as if at a football game. They were yelling that I had to watch the replay on CNN of Palestinian terrorists being blown up as they tried to attack Israel through a terror tunnel. I stopped them (using very un-Rabbinic language) and told them that they were idiots as there was nothing to rejoice about. We had just made 40 parents lose a son; and orphaned 40 or more children. We had to destroy them, but this was nothing to cheer about.

We must remember this aspect of the war we now are experiencing. Hamas has demonstrated that they are Amalek, and must be entirely blotted out of existence. But for the sake of our own souls, we must not allow ourselves to do this in vengeance, hate, or anger. We must kill every one of them, and it is profoundly sad that we have to do this. Although evil now, each of these men were born with pure souls, which were quickly degraded as they grew older until they became the animals that we see killing babies, kidnapping hostages, and personifying evil.

If you owned a dog that got rabies, you would do everything you could to heal the animal. But the moment the animal attacked a child, you would put it down. And you would probably cry at the loss of what the animal once was. In the same way, while we put down these animals of Hamas, we need to mourn that we they have forced us to do this. We must mourn not for their benefit, but for the benefit of our own souls.

As the days go on and Israel, with the help of God, utterly destroys Hamas and salts the earth with their ashes, let us remember to take no joy in what we need to do... for our own benefit.

For if we rejoice in the killing that we are obligated to do, we become no better than the animals that we need to eradicate. Through rejoicing at their demise, we lose the real war: the war for our very souls.

Golda Meir elegantly phrased this truth in her autobiography when she spoke about what could happen in the future during a time of peace. "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 making us kill their sons. Peace will come when the Arabs will love their children more than they hate us."

May God bless us to speedily and safely annihilate Hamas and all modern Amaleks entirely. And may we be blessed to retain our humanity and never rejoice in this obligation to destroy human lives...even those like Hamas who have chosen to abandon their own humanity.

B'shalom u'vracha

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 11, 2023

26th of Tishrei, 5784

October 11, 2023 at 7:13 pm PDT

Be Conscious and Situationally Aware This Friday As Hamas Calls for Global Attacks

Chevre

It has now been officially confirmed that Hamas leadership and the enemies of Israel have called for an "Al-Aqsa Flood Friday", asking all Palestinian sympathizers to "take to the streets" globally in a "moment of application (jihad)".

I have waited to send out this email until it was undeniably confirmed that all Jews worldwide are being put in harm's way this Friday, which happened only within the last

hour. <https://www.jns.org/hamas-calls-for-worldwide-mobilization-against-israel-on-friday/>

Please stay out of large public gatherings if possible on Friday, and please stay situationally aware. Most people are not violent enemies of Israel, but there are many who are. The Director for the Center of Defense at the Heritage Foundation has said that "this is a global call to arms", and it will be heeded and there will be blood".

If a crisis occurs, God forbid, please call 911 immediately; and then call me at (310) 980-5189 and I will make sure help gets on its way.

Also please remember two important things:

1: Do not start to see everyone as our "enemy". Part of this declaration against us is, to quote former Israeli Prime Minister Lapid, "psychological warfare"

2: Have faith, reject fear, and don't be foolish. God is always on our side, but that does not mean you should go into your favorite falafel joint in an Arabic neighborhood wearing a sign that says "Jews for Judea". Be aware, and please try to avoid placing yourself in a questionably dangerous situation.

Most importantly, have faith in God and also look out for each other. Let us all make sure that we check in to support each other in all ways: psychologically, physically, and emotionally.

Be safe, have faith, and know that this too shall pass.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 11, 2023

26th of Tishrei, 5784

October 12, 2023 at 1:24 pm PDT

We Must Not Forget

Chevre

This horrific war is not even a week old, and we are already seeing the world starting to blame Israel. The United Nations has already condemned Israel's siege in Gaza to stop Hamas (<https://www.aljazeera.com/program/newsfeed/2023/10/10/un-condemns-complete-siege-of-gaza-2>), and the condemnations of Israel will increase daily as the war continues.

This condemnation will increase over the coming days and weeks as Israel roots out and destroys Hamas in Gaza. We will see more and more images of "Palestinian victims", and more and more media attacks on Israel as an "apartheid state" that brought this upon themselves.

Do NOT allow yourselves or those you know to buy into the publicity campaign that is being waged against us. Hamas is Amalek reborn, and must be entirely destroyed. They have killed babies, attacked civilians, raped and desecrated Israelis, and spawned as much evil as they can. They have killed parents in front of their children, and children in front of their parents.

And they commit these atrocities with joy and pride. They have repeatedly taken the cell phones from their hostages from the music festival and recorded the murder of the phone's owner on the phone...and then emailed and texted those videos to their parents and family members...from the deceased's own phone! They are consistently displaying a sadism that is beyond the brutality of any animal.

We must not lose our own souls and rejoice at what we must do to Hamas and their allies. But we must do it. They must be rooted out, destroyed, and their ashes used as fertilizer to create a new Gaza...a Gaza of peace that fully rejects Hamas and its depravity.

Please also remember that in 2005, Gaza was given self-determination in their government....and in 2007, **90% of Palestinians voted for Hamas!**

If you at any point at all start to question whether Hamas needs to be entirely destroyed, you can remind yourself of their horrors by clicking any of the two links at the very bottom of this email. **PLEASE KNOW THAT THESE VIDEOS ARE EXTREMELY GRAPHIC, AND SHOULD NOT BE WATCHED UNLESS/UNTIL YOU REALLY NEED THE REMINDER OF WHAT HAMAS TRULY IS...EVIL INCARNATE.**

Also, please remember to be safe tomorrow as Hamas has asked its worldwide supporters to attack Jews worldwide tomorrow. This is not publicity, it is a very credible threat.

May we all see a speedy end to this war, see our soldiers return safely, and ultimately see a new situation in Israel and the region of peace and prosperity.

Here are the links to some of Hamas' horrors: Please do not damage your own souls by viewing this unless you really need to be reminded of the horror.

https://twitter.com/Rabbi_Barclay/status/1712557432696979779?t=JuzmcG1OBncnfukiVlf7lw&s=19

https://twitter.com/Rabbi_Barclay/status/1712364035713450048?t=61XAdCqxH0qyJfb9VuGcQ&s=19

May the One who ordains peace in the Universe bring peace bring peace upon us, upon Israel, and upon all the world.

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 12th, 2023

27th of Tishrei, 5784

October 13, 2023 at 9:45 am PDT

Be Safe and Let These Inspire You

Chevre

Shabbat Shalom! May it be a Sabbath of Peace, and may we all stay safe during this Hamas "day of rage".

These two videos were sent to me by friends, and are a reminder to stay strong. The first is an amazing speech by Mayor Adams of New York; the second is Shabbat wishes from Israel.

<https://youtu.be/RTCl-ybWnoQhttps://youtu.be/RTCl-ybWnoQ>

https://youtu.be/jxpS_ckpeZg

Gut Shabbos, stay safe, and have faith

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 13th, 2023

28th of Tishrei, 5784

October 13, 2023 at 7:02 pm PDT

Rejuvenate Your Soul this Sunday Night

Chevre

As we are about to enter Shabbat, we need to remind ourselves of the beauty of Creation, lest we lose our souls in the hell that is going on around the world.

To facilitate that remembrance, we are hosting a concert with the Conejo Valley Youth Orchestra this Sunday evening, October 15, at 6:00pm. Most of you have heard some of their music as it was one of the CVYO musicians who played Kol Nidrei at our services, and their Director, Alexander Tseitlin who played violin during the Yom Kippur afternoon break.

And so I ask you to join Temple Ner Simcha as we create an evening of hope, peace, and healing through music on this Sunday evening at 6:00pm. Tickets are \$25 in advance and \$30 at the door, and you can pre-purchase your tickets by clicking the "Get Tickets Here" button below.

Get Tickets Here: [Donate \(paypal.com\)](https://www.paypal.com)

I hope that you will join in this evening of rejuvenating our souls, allowing us to continue to fight evil over the next days and weeks.

May this be a Shabbat of peace for our souls, and the entire world. And may the Holy One and His Presence bless our Israeli forces with safety and success, strength and courage, and ultimately, after this evil is destroyed...bless Israel and the whole world with peace.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 15, 2023

28th of Tishrei, 5784

October 15, 2023 at 9:17 pm PDT

End of Weekend Update & What We Can Each Do

Chevre

Israel is preparing for the offensive against the terrorists in Gaza, and sadly, for a war that may continue for weeks, or God forbid, longer. We all can help Israel and her armed forces and civilians in multiple personal ways, and I thought we could all spend some time reviewing and choosing some personal ways to support her this week. I have divided the methods into a few categories to make it easier for you to peruse and find the way of supporting Israel that sings to your heart.

---**Combatting the Lies:** The lies about Israel, Palestine, Hamas, and history have already started. Some of the lies include: Israel brought this on herself; Israel stole Palestinian land and is occupying it; Israel is not abiding by the "principle of proportionality"; Israel is killing Palestinian children; etc. IF you would like to have the information to combat these blatant and dangerous lies, please email or call me at 310 980-5189 and I will give you the resources and information to stop them. As a starting point, here is a good video that directly deals with three of the big lies:

<https://www.facebook.com/61551860351378/posts/122115293072062011/?mibextid=37120aUUPrDeJY5x>

You can also follow Israel's Story on facebook, twitter, and instagram for other visual resources.

---**Directly Helping Israelis:** There are a few ways that I recommend helping Israelis that are easy to do. A 747 has been chartered and is leaving on Wednesday for Israel with tactical gear for IDF soldiers, but there is room in the hold for bringing requested items to families forced to live in bomb shelters or displaced by destroyed homes. Specifically, the following items are needed: Dried Baby Formula; Wipes; Diapers (all sizes); Rechargeable Head Flashlights; Portable/Inflatable Mattresses for bomb shelters; Blankets; Arts and Craft kits for children 3-10; Large First Aid Kits; Coffee, tea, kosher canned food, oil, flour, sugar, pasta, long life milk; hygiene products; new clothing; toys; new tools of all sorts. If you would like to donate any of these items, the drop off

address is **Israel Friends Social Warehouse** at 253 Vineland Ave, City of Industry, 91746. Please deliver all items by Tuesday evening at the latest.

---**Financial Help**: All organizations in Israel need funds right now. Our synagogue has been helping Bnai Zion Medical Center in Haifa with raising funds for medical equipment. Through community members and personal relationships, **our community is personally responsible for raising over \$105,000 so far!** This equates to saving hundreds of lives in the immediate future, and thousands of lives over time. This was greatly helped by a community member who lives in Hong Kong; and by Sebastian Gorka, who publicized the donation information on his television show tonight because of a community member. Dr. Michael Savage, is also reaching out to his audience for their help, and there are many other media hosts who are helping that I am unaware of. If you have a friend in the media who can publicize this and help us raise more money for the Bnai Zion hospital, which needs more equipment and is built inside a bomb proof bunker; please encourage them to reach out to me or email **Amanda@healthcareforisrael.org**. **If you would like to personally make a donation to either the Bnai Zion hospital or to Magen David Adom, which provides emergency care to wounded, please make your donations at:**
www.healthcareforisrael.org (Bnai Zion Hospital)
Or www.mdais.org/en/donation (Magen David)

---**Prayer**: Judaism is about the integration of action and prayer. Please remember to continually pray for the safety and security of Israel, her people, and her land.

As you can see, there are many ways for each of us to personally make a difference. Please find the way(s) that most suits you, and help with all of your heart and soul.

Thank you for being kind to Israel and the Jewish people, and may we always have faith that Am Yisrael Chai...the people of Israel Live!

B'Shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 15th, 2023

1st of Cheshvan, 5784

October 15, 2023 at 10:35 pm PDT

A Smile From Tonight

Chevre

With so much darkness around us, it truly was wonderful to host musicians from the Conejo Valley Youth Orchestra at our temple tonight. Alex Tseitlin, the Director of CVYO phrased it perfectly when he talked about the difference between functionality and beauty...and how music makes the world more beautiful. The evening featured multiple duets and solos, and concluded with ten musicians performing a Bach Brandenburg Concerto.



As we traverse through the challenges of war in Israel and anti-Semitic hate at home, let us remember to give ourselves the blessing of listening to meaningful music, reviving our souls, and being grateful to God for such beauty.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 15, 2023

1st of Cheshvan, 5784

October 17, 2023 at 7:57 am PDT

What Not to Do During These Difficult Times

Chevre

I keep sending out emails which I hope are helpful about how you can help and what to do during these challenging times. Someone suggested also making some recommendations of what not to do, so....

---**Retail:** Please don't support any business that advertises "free palestine"...in the current climate, this is just code for wanting Israel destroyed. Also, please boycott the

following companies who have expressly said that they support the palestinian cause and/or hamas and/or blamed Israel for this war:

Starbucks

Sephora

Lush

Hugo Boss

Turkish Airlines

Gela

Charlotte Tilbury

Huda Beauty

---**Non-Profits:** Please do not support BLM or any organization that supports BLM. 4 years ago, I wrote about the problem that BLM calls for the destruction of Israel in the charter manifesto, but people chose to ignore those words in their charter. In the last week, they (most notably BLM Los Angeles and BLM Chicago) have published some of the most horrific one frame "memes" as well as statements about Jews that have been seen since Nazi Germany...including a supportive image of a palestinian hang glider that was attacking the dance party last Saturday and the caption "I stand with Palestine (you can see the image here:

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12617059/amp/BLMs-Chicago-chapter-backs-Palestine-using-image-PARAGLIDER-like-Hamas-terrorist-flew-peace-rave-massacred-200.html>. Additionally, BLM has repeatedly, and again this week, published statements in support of Hamas and calling for the destruction of "colonial" Israel. Please withdraw all support from them, and urge everyone to do the same.

---**Situational Awareness:** There is never a reason to be fearful, and we also don't need to be foolish. Be aware of your surroundings and the people around you. If you see people with Palestinian flags or anti-Israel clothing on, keep your distance. We are in challenging times when all too many people have lost their sense of proper behavior, and are starting physical confrontations at the drop of a hat. Please stay aware of your environment.

Rebbe Nachman teaches that "All the world is a narrow bridge, and above all, is not to fear". There is nothing for us to fear in our personal lives, this nation, or Israel. Combine faith, action, connection with community, and commitment, and support Israel directly and also by avoiding the challenges above.

May the Holy One bless us and Israel with all that is good, and safely speed our soldiers to victory, and ultimately, a lasting peace

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 17, 2023

2nd of Cheshvan, 5784

October 17, 2023 at 8:28 pm PDT

Update on Israel, Accusations, and Truth

Chevre

You may have heard the "news" that Israel attacked a hospital in Gaza and killed 500 Gazans; and that the world should condemn Israel. Friends or family might be starting to question Israel. That is Hamas' intent, and we must stay committed to Israel and defend her against this fallacious and dangerous publicity attack.

This not only a blatant lie, but part of Hamas' (so far only partially successful) attempt to turn the world, and especially the United States, against Israel. Moreover, it actually seems as if this might have been a conscious "false flag" operation by Hamas; who has consistently shown no caring for Palestinian civilians.

Each of us needs to have information so we can expose the lies about Israel that are all too common. Let's look at this most recent incident.

Conservative estimates from non-Israel or non-Arab sources place 20% of all Arab rockets fired from Gaza in the August, 2022 flareup misfired and killed Gaza citizens, causing over one-third of the deaths in that conflict. There is arguments about whether those misfires were accidents or "false flags" designed to kill their own citizens in a way to blame Israelis. Either way, it is a consistent reality for years that between 20-40% of all Hamas rockets fired from Gaza end up attacking Gaza itself.

The reality is that at 18:59 on October 17, Al Jezeera and other Arab outlets have footage of a barrage of rockets being fired from Gaza. At the same exact time, 18:59, a hospital was hit in Gaza. At the end of this email I will provide links to videos you can view and show others. Additional IDF footage and geo-tracking show the same thing.

The only question is whether Hamas attacked the hospital by accident or on purpose. Hamas has a consistent history of attacking its own citizens if it will benefit them; not only using Arab babies as shields, but in the last 48 hours actually bombing and attacking Gazan citizens who were trying to evacuate to Egypt. This video from an Arab family trying to evacuate is a heartbreaking and disturbing image, but one that demonstrates again how despicable Hamas really is:

<https://twitter.com/israelsstory/status/1713956991658303607?t=53UZSKrr0LIEIPYfkjmbA&s=19>

Sadly, Hamas demonstrates over and over that they have no regard for life, and have surrendered their souls fully to their yetzer hara (evil inclination).

Whether Hamas destroyed the Gaza hospital as a false flag or accidentally, the result is the same: before information or video was even available, the BBC and the world media blamed Israel.

When you love someone, you protect them against lies. It is the responsibility of every one of us to defend Israel by exposing the lies about Israel attacking any hospital; and showing every one we know that it is actually Hamas, once again killing their own people.

Reports have just come out as well that Islamic Jihad consciously fired on the hospital based on intercepted communications. As of 8:00pm PST this is being reported by the Times of Israel, but I have not seen any definite confirmation yet. The report can be found here:

https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/idf-military-intercepted-communications-indicating-islamic-jihad-fired-hospital-rocket/

Remember, that Hamas will try, God forbid, to use this tragedy at the hospital as a way of dragging the rest of the Arab nations into this war.

Abbas, the leader of Palestine, is using the excuse that Israel attacked a hospital as a way of backing out of the conference he was to have in Jordan with President Biden. Again, this is a falsity. Abbas had no intent of ever speaking with Biden until he knew that Biden would turn his back on Israel. It is common belief that a conference between Abbas, Biden, King Abdullah of Jordan, and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi will only happen when Abbas is confident Biden can be manipulated into pressuring Israel

For almost 40 years I have been a member of the Magic Castle; and I enjoin everyone to be like a magician as we read the news, and "look behind the curtain"... realizing that it is the goal of Hamas to destroy Israel and the Jewish people. Do not accept what media, especially the BBC (nicknamed for years as the "Baghdad Broadcasting Company" in Israel) says. Instead, look at the IDF twitter feed, Jerusalem Post or Times of Israel; and remember that each move by Hamas, including killing their own people, is part of their strategy to force the world to condemn and abandon Israel.

Am Yisrael Chai! The people of Israel will always live...but we must always back each other up. Like brothers in a family, it is the responsibility of Diaspora Jews to always support Israel. Always and unconditionally.

Remember, every time a Diaspora Jew publicly criticizes Israel, anti-Semites use it to attack Israel under the argument of "see...even Jews know Israel is evil". Do not allow yourself to be manipulated into being a tool for Hamas in their war against Israel.

Always support Israel, and remember that we are one family, and that Israel is the front line in the battle against anti-Semitism for Jews around the world.

Here are some videos to help:

---Al Jazeera's own footage of the rockets misfiring and hitting the hospital:

<https://twitter.com/IDF/status/1714442617201586220?t=Ikr-uIX3uzWvdZ2LoydDA&s=19>

---Other raw footage of Hamas rockets going astray and attacking the hospital:

<https://twitter.com/IDF/status/1714403025136017784?t=RS1kPXrxEHpYmMrsZheAmg&s=19>

---The IDF official video about Hamas' rockets killing Gazans:

<https://twitter.com/IDF/status/1714464412671557774?t=-uPUXZuFlbg2A4eHgQcUdw&s=19>

Remember that the People of Israel will always live, as long as we stay together as a worldwide family

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 17, 2023

3rd of Cheshvan, 5784

October 18, 2023 at 9:54 am PDT

Update: 8 hours of Lies and Attacks

Chevre

You might have gone to sleep last night only to wake up to a world press accusing Israel of bombing a hospital and of my earlier email with links demonstrating that this was caused by Islamic Jihad rockets that misfired.

We now have even more information. Photographs show that the entire event is fabricated. There was a rocket that misfired, but it actually didn't hit a hospital, it hit the parking lot behind the hospital building. Besides the fact that there is video showing that it was a rocket that went awry, as well as intercepted audio of Hamas officers talking about it as it misfires...does anyone really think that Israel would attack a parking lot? There is no crater, which is always caused by Israeli attacks, and the misfired rocket didn't hit a hospital.

But that doesn't stop the public relations of Hamas from going into full speed to blame Israel. Arab media have claimed 500-900 casualties (depending on which Arab outlet you read); politicians like Tlaib and Omar have demanded that the U.S. stop supporting Israel; Trudeau in Canada (who recently honored a Nazi officer from WWII in his Parliament) immediately attacked Israel for war crimes; and there have been fire bomb attacks and riots around the world at U.S. and Israel embassies. The world is consistent in attacking us in every way possible, and blaming "the Jews" for everything possible (a bad deja vu of Hitler's "big lie")

We must be vigilant and stop these false accusations from spreading wherever possible. So here are some images, articles, and videos to help you educate anyone you know who is starting to believe the big lie that any of this is Israel's responsibility.

Even President Biden, after reviewing the many proofs that this is a Hamas false flag, came out in total support of Israel and said that this tragedy was caused by Islamic Jihad rockets, and that Israel has no blame in this.

Here are some links to help you personally in any discussions you have with people. We are Diaspora Jews, and one important way that every one of us can support Israel is to expose the lies that are being pushed by a media that is sympathetic to "Palestine'.

---Biden absolving Israel: <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/biden-lands-in-tel-aviv-to-meet-israeli-leaders-on-hamas-war-c662832>

---A succinct and comprehensive article by David Horowitz at Times of Israel with all accurate information about the hospital/parking lot/misfired rockets:
<https://www.timesofisrael.com/haters-wont-be-swayed-but-hamas-lies-about-gaza-hospital-blast-are-being-exposed/>

---IDF proofs thst it was a misfired Hamas rocket and not Israel's:
<https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-presents-evidence-misfired-gazan-rocket-caused-hospital-blast-slams-hamas-lies/>

Over a week ago, I sent out an email warning us to be prepared for the publicity campaign that would be coming from the Arabs... that the world would quickly attempt to supplant the images of Hamas' victims...of dead babies, murdered young people, kidnapped elderly, etc from the world's consciousness by trying to portray Hamas as the victims. We see them doing that now, and we all have a responsibility to be bearers of the truth: Hamas is a barbaric modern manifeststion of Amalek. They are not "victims", but perpetrators of the worst kind in human history, rivaled only by Hitler's Nazis.

Please stand up for Israel by exposing the lies about last night's tragedy, caused by Hamas; and by always remembering the horrors that came from Gaza only 10 days ago. Remember the hostages that are still in Gaza; the murders and atrocities that are the hallmark of Hamas; and remind everyone you know of the truth.

85 years ago, we learned of the danger of a big lie being constantly repeated, and it almost destroyed our people and the entire world. Let us not let this big lie against Israel go unanswered.

"Never Forget" is not just a slogan...it is a promise.

We must never forget what unanswered lies did in the past, what they can, God forbid, cause in the present...and we must never forget what Hamas did when they came for the weakest and most vulnerable in Israel.

Please be strong, be safe, be courageous, and expose the big lie that is being perpetuated now.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 18, 2023

3rd of Cheshvan, 5784

October 18, 2023 at 6:19 pm PDT

Faith is the Opposite of Fear, And One of Our Greatest Weapons

Chevre

As the war gets even more intense, and public anti-Semitism is increasing exponentially, it is important to remember the teaching of Rebbe Nachman..."All the World is Just a Narrow Bridge, and Above All is Not to be Afraid"

As we see demonstrations not only against Israel and pro-Hamas, but calling for the death of Jews, it can be hard to have faith. When we see our Capitol building taken over by pro-Hamas rioters today, it can be difficult to feel anything other than fear at the anti-Semitism the world is expressing.

But we have a 3700 history of God ultimately standing with us, and protecting the Jewish people! I enjoin us all to have faith that God will again take care of us, that this modern Amalek of Hamas will be destroyed, and that Israel and the Jewish people will survive.

Fear cannot exist in the same place and time, as faith, and we need to remember our faith. I spoke with someone today who expressed hesitancy about publicly demonstrating their Jewishness, but we all must remember the words attributed to Edmund Burke that "All evil needs to triumph in the world is for good people to do nothing." We must act on faith and not fear, and speak out when we interact with anyone who starts to defend Hamas in any way.

So what can we do? We can give charity, boycott companies that support Hamas, write our representatives, etc. But there are two other things we can each do to help destroy this evil that seems to be infiltrating all aspects of our culture.

The first is to take on a new mitzvah. Decide to keep kosher, light Shabbat candles, say the Shema twice a day, put up mezuzot on all our doors in the home (not just the front

door), or just stop eating shellfish or pork. By taking on one new mitzvah, we add to the spiritual strength of the Jewish people, and remind God that as we are keeping our covenant of Torah, He too needs to keep his covenant and protect us.

The other thing we can do is teach! Confront the people you know with the facts of the evils of Hamas. I have sent many emails out with links and resources to use against those who are ignorant and support Hamas against Israel. Teach everyone you can about the realities of history and geo-politics. If you need more information, this Friday night's Shabbat service will be abbreviated in order to spend much of the evening learning about what has and is really going on in the Middle East.

The other point to remember is the teaching of joy. Our Mekabulim have taught for centuries that the Shechinah rests on joy, not sadness. These Sages remind us constantly that when we are joyous together, we create angels that will fight for peace. So let's all go make some angels by expressing faith and joy!

To help in this journey, here are three links I hope you will enjoy, and can use to teach about Israel:

---This is a link to a video of members of the IDF singing Rebbe Nachman's words about not being afraid and that Am Yisrael Chai...the people of Israel live! While we see videos from Tehran and Gaza celebrating death and cheering for Hamas' barbaric actions, these soldiers express the essence of the Jewish soldier..faith, prayer, and joy:<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=Ohw4mBiw1Qg>

---This link to a new song by Ari Lesser is not only an accurate and great teaching tool about Hamas, it has a fun beat, and may be an effective way to help younger "progressives" learn about Hamas:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=Gl23wCQn-z0&pp=ygUQQXJpIGxlc3NlciBoYW1hcw%3D%3D>

---And this song, also by Lesser, is as true today as it was 10 years ago when he wrote it, and might be an effective tool to point out the perpetual double standard Israel is held to:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=se3PaCX7sjl&pp=ygUZQXJpIGxlc3NlciBib3ljb3R0IGlzc mFlbA%3D%3D&rco=1>

In the midst of the pain, remember that God is always with us, and take at least a few personal moments each day to feel the joy of faith and the inner peace that hope brings. Listen to some uplifting music, go out into nature, watch children play, or do whatever you need to in order to rejuvenate your own spirit in these dark times, so that you can continue to do what's right in a world that seems to have gone wrong. On Yom Kippur, you may remember that I asked our Cantors to sing "Bridge Over Troubled Waters". The waters and the world are troubled right now, but we must combine action and faith in order to birth angels and get safely through these difficult and challenging times together.

Above all is to never be afraid, and Am Yisrael Chai...the People of Israel Will Always Live.

B'shalom u'vracha

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 18, 2023

3rd of Cheshvan, 5784

October 19th 2023 at 11:21 am PDT

A Most Important Teaching in This Time of War

Chevre

There is a saying among musicians that music is made in the space between the notes. Without the pause, the music would just be one long sound. Many educators believe that most people need a 5-10 minute break every hour to be able to remain focused. And the importance of pausing is the foundation of the Sabbath: one whole day of pausing from the toils of the week so that we can reconnect, reenergize, and renew ourselves so that we are prepared properly for the upcoming week.

It seems that this powerful lesson of pausing is being lost at a time in the world when it is needed most.

Look at all the damage caused in the last few days through people immediately reacting as opposed to pausing. We now know without doubt that Hamas knew from the first

moment that it was a misfired Hamas rocket that hit a parking lot behind a hospital; but as a publicity campaign, Hamas blamed Israel. The world, led by the media and governments, immediately accepted Hamas' statement and published it as truth without any of the pausing that should come with journalism and critical thinking. From the BBC to Justin Trudeau, the world condemned Israel without even pausing long enough to consider the question as to how Hamas would so quickly be able to calculate numbers of casualties or details? Hamas, as is they won't, lied and produced propaganda, and the world rushed to judgment against Israel without even thinking. What did their refusal to pause cause?

Synagogues around the world were attacked, including an ancient sacred temple in Tunisia being burned to the ground. American and Israeli embassies around the world were the sites of riots. The Abraham Accords, one of the great miracles of the last 50 years, are now in jeopardy. This war is now quickly escalating as the north of Israel is being attacked, and hundreds of millions of dollars were raised to support Hamas and its evil.

And there was a riot in the Capitol as it was taken over by hundreds of protestors led by Rashid Tlaib, including some who claimed to be Jewish, who demonstrated for the U.S. to stop supporting Israel, and for the modern Amalek of Hamas to be protected.

All because people didn't pause prior to reacting.

But that is only one half of the reason that we need to give ourselves pause as this war continues and we strive to destroy (not defeat) Hamas for the sake of Israel, the United States, freedom, and the world.

The Sabbath is a gift to us from God, and a reminder that we must take time off of the work of the world to rejuvenate ourselves. The original Hebrew of the command to rest (found in Exodus 31:17) gives us another understanding about the importance of pausing. Without going into the odd and unique grammar of the Hebrew, it can be translated as "On the seventh day, God rested and got a soul (or "soul-ed"). It is a teaching that like God, we must pause in order to retain our own souls. Conscious rest is not a privilege, it is a requirement.

Never is the command to rest for the sake of our souls more important than in times of war against evil.

This war will continue for at least days or weeks if not longer. It will be easy to let the intensity of this war exhaust us. The rapid news cycle will replace this war against the evil of Hamas with the politics in Washington, any other disasters that occur, and other more “exciting” news. It will be all too easy for us to forget the images of Hamas’ evil on October 7; the kidnapping, rape, and murders; their conscious intention to attack the weak, young, and civilians. Supporting causes in Israel, sending supplies and funds to displaced Israeli families living in shelters, and donating to Israeli hospitals so that they can get medical supplies can easily be forgotten as we get exhausted and focus on other news. We cannot let that happen, or the evil of Hamas and its allies will prevail, God forbid.

On the one hand, we must stay vigilant and active in this war against evil. On the other, we human beings are easily exhausted and quit when we get too tired. What can we do to stay energized?

We must pause. We must disconnect from the issues of the physical world for one to two hours per day so that we can be focused the rest of the time. With the intensity of this war on evil, we must take personal time for a daily “Sabbath” of an hour or two. In order to excel the rest of the time, and as or more importantly, for the sake of our own souls.

Take an hour or two a day and give yourself the permission to disconnect from your phone, computer, television, and news source. Go outside and appreciate the beauty of life. Listen to your favorite music; work out; play a silly video game or board game with a friend; share a cigar or glass of wine with a loved one; or do whatever you need to in order to emotionally and spiritually disconnect from the horrors of this war, and all news. And don’t feel guilty about it, but rather recognize that this pause is important so that you can excel at a peak performance level during the rest of the day.

If we do not take pauses in the day, each day, we will ultimately be unable to maintain the intensity that is needed during this war against evil.

The Rabbinic prescription for the day: pause. This will lead each of us to excellence, to triumphing over the evil of Hamas and in the world, and to creating a lasting peace.

I hope to see you tomorrow, Friday, Oct.18 at 7:30pm at the temple for a special "education" Shabbat. We will have an abbreviated service, and will spend time gaining a deeper understanding of what is actually going on in Israel, what has led to this, and what we can do.

Another way to stay focused is to make a small daily donation to a cause such as the Bnai Zion Hospital (www.healthcareforisrael.org) or Magen David Adom (www.mdais.org). Don't let it be "automatic", but each day we must take the minute to go online and make a small donation in order to keep ourselves aware of the horrors of this war.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 17, 2023

4th of Cheshvan, 5784

October 19th 2023 at 10:01 pm PDT

EVERY parent with a child in or soon to be in College MUST watch this

Chevre

This video was sent to me, and is of a Professor from Columbia. I cannot recommend that every parent watch this and heed his warnings and words.

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/CylsaTkrKkU/>

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 17, 2023

4th of Cheshvan, 5784

October 20th 2023 at 7:30 am PDT

Preparing for the Weekend and Beyond...

Chevre

As we approach Shabbat, we must also be aware of upcoming events. This article from the Times of Israel is succinct and clear...the IDF is preparing for what will be a challenging and important task: the systematic destruction of Hamas with limited civilian casualties.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/top-officials-say-gaza-ground-offensive-soon-warn-it-will-be-long-and-intense/>

We will undoubtedly hear about how the IDF is killing civilians. Please remember the following truths:

---Hamas intended and consciously intends to kill as many Israeli civilians as possible.

---Israel puts her soldiers at risk when they go house to house to root out terrorists. While it would be easier to just carpet bomb Gaza, we put soldiers at risk to protect Gaza civilians...while Hamas puts Gaza civilians at risk to protect Hamas.

---Hamas has demonstrated that they are modern Amalek. The Torah teaches us that the goal of war is not victory, but peace. The ONE exception is if we are clear that Amalek is present. The only way to be sure is if there have been conscious attacks on the weak: civilians, children, et al. This is exactly what Hamas has done, and as sad as it is, they have demonstrated that they are Amalek. The Torah is clear that Amalek is the one exception in war: our goal must not be to defeat Amalek, but to destroy Amalek....

While we must not take joy nor do it in anger or hate...it is incumbent upon us not to defeat Hamas, but destroy it. Completely.

We must never forget the horrors of October 7. If we allow Hamas to sue for peace now so that they can rebuild again...then we desecrate the memories of those that suffered on October 7. Sadly, we must destroy Hamas, and lives will be lost. It will be long and hard, but we must do it.

The coming days and weeks will be hard, but we must pray and act in ways that are consonant with Jewish values: to destroy Hamas... and to weep that we have to do so.

Each terrorist was born with a clean soul as a baby, and it is sad that they surrendered those souls.

The Gazans worship death, Israelis worship life. Israel uses the IDF to protect civilians, Hamas uses civilians to protect Hamas.

As we embark on the journey to destroy Hamas, remember these truths and the events of October 7.

Never forget. And may God protect Israel, her soldiers, her land, and her people...now and always

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 20, 2023

5th of Cheshvan, 2023

October 20th 2023 at 9:57 am PDT

Some Videos for When You Have a Few Moments

Chevre

I think it is important for Rabbis to do a lot of writing and communicating with the community in times like these, but I also know that reading a lot of text can be challenging. So here are some videos for you to watch when you have time. Some, I've sent out before; others are new

---A message that EVERY parent with a child in or about to go to college MUST see.

<https://youtu.be/uo7fdxrjMlc?si=xOYFN9XuXWVx3aOc>

---An official IDF video about Hamas misinformation.

<https://x.com/IDF/status/1715398771964617013?t=RsD1NdL8wQrBcEA3Yup7tA&s=09>

--- A graphic video from Israel's Story that shows what Hamas is doing to Gazans who are trying to leave.

<https://twitter.com/israelsstory/status/1713956991658303607?t=Jw9pxRqE1ThDaFjsHj8bJw&s=19>

---A fun song that teaches about what Hamas is through entertainment. <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=Gl23wCQn-z0&pp=ygUQQXJpIGxlc3N3ciBoYW1hcw%3D%3D>

---A speech by Noa ben Artzi, a survivor of the Hamas attack on the dance party. <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=62wj-lb1SCA&t=215s&pp=ygUNTm9hIGJlbiBhcnR6aQ%3D%3D>

---Our soldiers singing Am Yisrael Chai and Kol.HaOlam (the people of Israel will live and above all is to not be afraid) <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=Ohw4mBiw1Qg>

---A MiSheberach, a prayer for healing for the soldiers of the IDF. Be prepared to cry... <https://youtu.be/OMXHlwUfG-E?si=GEi3eGwvjqdn-8g>

---HaTikvah...for we are Jews and we must always choose hope. This is an official IDF video, and again, be prepared to cry. <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=GQCu9kl68Tg&pp=ygUMSWRmlGhhdGlrdmFo>

I hope these help open our hearts, minds, and souls...and increase the intensity of our prayers.

Shabbat shalom. I hope to see you tonight at services at 730pm at the Temple where we will be studying the history and present geo-politics and theology that comprise this war.

Gut Shabbos. May it be a Shabbos of peace for us, and for all Israel.

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 20, 2023

5th of Cheshvan, 5784

October 21st 2023 at 11:59 pm PDT

Good News to Start the Week

Chevre

As we start off the week, let's try to carry the peace of Shabbat with us. We know it's going to be challenging, and that the world will probably get much more difficult before it gets better, but let's at least try to keep the Sabbath joy alive.

To help with that, I have some good news. Between direct donations from our community and indirect donations through friends of TNS community members, as well as the support that came through Sebastian Gorka and his audience...

I was told that **Temple Ner Simcha** has directly helped raise **\$292,000** so far for the **Bnai Zion Hospital!!!** I will get a list in the next 24 hours or so of exactly what medical equipment has been bought already with the money, and we all are invited in our trips to Israel in the future **B"H**, to visit the facility and meet the C.E.O., Dr. Ohad Hochman. This is saving hundreds of Jewish lives right now, and will save thousands in the years to come.

There is a really important lesson for all of us here. While Hamas, Hezbollah, et al are attacking Israel, and the world is attacking Jews in every country, this triumph shows the power of many people, each doing "small" good deeds.

And that's the real secret..... In the war against evil, there are no "small" good deeds.

Each good deed we do is monumental, even if we don't realize it. When we do something good, especially as part of a community, it changes everything... it changes the Universe for the better. We have just seen small donations add up to saving hundreds of lives.

We all can do "small" good deeds that are really "great"; and can help in this war against the evil of Hamas and its allies. This week, take a few minutes and educate people about the historical realities of the falsehoods about "palestine". Remind everyone you know of what happened on October 7, and how Hamas demonstrated that they have surrendered any sense of humanity; and of how the goal of Israel must not be to only defeat Hamas, but like Amalek, to utterly destroy Hamas. Do the good deed of having a conversation with a friend about the amazing ethics of Israel and the IDF. Remind them that Israel uses the IDF to protect civilians; whereas Hamas uses civilians to protect Hamas.

Every time you educate someone in the truth; every time you clearly reject the Hamas propaganda that is being spewed around the world; every time you force people to

remember the horrors of October 7... you are doing a great good deed for which you will be rewarded in this world and the next.

If you would like to also donate to the Bnai Zion hospital, you can go directly to their website: www.healthcareforisrael.org

But take the time this week to do two things at least. 1: do a good deed of educating someone; giving charity; or sticking up for Israel in some way. 2: Pray. Have your own private conversation with God, and listen (Shema) to what God has to say through any personal insights you may receive (kabbalah). Always... pray **and** act.

And know that you are making a difference in people's lives, the war in Israel, and in the world.

Shavua tov and b'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 22, 2023

7th of Cheshvan, 5784

October 22nd 2023 at 10:29 am PDT

For Your Sunday Morning, and An Important Video at the End

Chevre

As of this morning, there have been over 7400 rockets launched at Israel, 212 confirmed hostages in Gaza, and over 200,000 displaced internally in Israel. The hate of Hamas and its allies spreads around the world as colleges that would utterly reject students groups supporting the kkk, welcome "pro-palestinian" and "anti-zionist" hare groups on their campuses. Anti-Semitic demonstrations around the world are happening every hour, and embassies have become places of risk rather than havens, and this morning, the US has now ordered all non-essential staff to leave the Baghdad embassy.

But we stand strong in our faith, our journey towards a lasting peace, and in our faith in the Israel/US relationship based on the same goals. There is currently a bi-partisan delegation of 10 Senators led by Lindsay Graham and Ben Cardin in Tel Aviv working to get more allies in the region to get involved in actively supporting Israel. Defense Minister Gallant again said the goal today. "This needs to be the last [ground] maneuver

in Gaza, for the simple reason that after it there will be no Hamas. It will take a month, two months, three, but in the end, there will be no Hamas". We must remember that no matter how sad it is, the goal is not to defeat Hamas, it is to utterly destroy it.

We must stay strong and vigilant in our knowing that the goal of this war is a lasting peace, which can only happen with the complete destruction of Hamas, a modern Amalek.

To help each of us stay strong, here are two powerful videos that I suspect will strengthen your resolve, faith, and love for Israel.

Actress Noa Tishby said powerful words at a FIDF event this week:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=7dZRvg13rp8&pp=ygUPTm9hIHRpc2hieSBmaWRm>

And this video of Israeli children singing for us Diaspora Jews is truly beautiful and heart wrenching. If you do nothing else today, watch this video:

https://youtube.com/watch?v=_wYspKp-F68&feature=shared

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 22, 2023

7th of Cheshvan, 5784

October 23, 2023 at 5:30am PST

Comfort From The Torah's Guidance on What to Do in These Tough Times...

Chevre

Most of you know that I believe in the teaching of our Sages that any current political issue can be understood through the weekly Torah portion. This is especially true this week.

This week's portion is Lech L'cha (Gen 12:1-17:27), and it's first sentence tells us how to find personal comfort as we are all spinning emotionally with this war..

God tells Avram to "Lech L'cha". The phrase simultaneously has multiple meanings. "Lech" is a command to "go!". "L'cha" means by yourself, with yourself, for yourself, and into yourself. God uses this phrase and continues, "from your land, from the place of your birth, from your father's house, to a place that I will show you". Listen to the full sentence: "Go by/with/for/into yourself away from everything you've known, to a place that I will show you"

The first sentence God speaks to the first Jew is a command to go meditate!

Rebbe Nachman teaches that meditation is something we can all do, and the deepest form of authentic prayer. And it is what each of us needs to do **every** day during these challenging times.

You don't need to chant or do a formal form of meditation. Just take some time for a dialogue between you and God. Outside or in a quiet space; at dawn, nighttime under the stars, or even in your car. Just be present with the Master of the Universe. Talk with (not to) God...and really listen. Listen to your intuition, to the whisperings of the Holy One who will guide you with exactly what you need in these dark days. Be patient, and receive the loving guidance of the Holy One so that you can renew and rejuvenate yourself.

Quiet meditation is called "hisbodedus" in our tradition. But for some people, it is difficult to be still enough to really listen. Judaism has another meditative pathway as well. Hislahavus is the dynamic, inflamed meditation of dancing, singing, exercise, etc. If this is more your style, then dance! Abandon yourself to the passion inside you, and see how you feel and what Divine insights come to you through that methodology.

But take the personal time to be present in Life and with God. Meditate. Take the advice of this week's portion and step away from what you know, from the pressures of the external world, and renew your personal relationship with God.

In these difficult times, we all need to rely on the Holy One, who is always waiting for us to reach out to Him. Let these dark times help you call out and deepen your personal relationship with God/Life/the Universe. Whether through hisbodedus or hislahavus, give yourself time each day to consciously be with God.

After even only a few days of making this a daily practice, you will find yourself more able to handle the roller coaster of emotions that come with this devastating war.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 23th, 2023

8th of Cheshvan, 5784

October 22nd 2023 at 8:12 pm PDT

Some Videos to Enter Your Dreams With

Chevre

Sometimes all that can be said is better expressed in music. We must be conscious of the pain of these days, and we must always retain our hope and faith

---This is an old video of Holocaust survivors singing Hatikvah as they wait in a ship to deliver them to the holy land.

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=171nZBA3eTc&pp=ygUYQ2hpbGRyZW5zIGNob2lyIGhhdGlrdmFo>

---An impromptu "flash" choir singing a prayer for healing for the IDF soldiers.

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=98uI064DeFs&pp=ygUUSWRmIHNvbGRpZXJzIG9yYXlpbmc%3D>

---A beautiful reminder of Ani Ma'ameen... " I believe in perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah, and even though he may delay, I choose to still

believe". <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=NwHO7Gpf0ml&pp=ygUSRWxpIGxldmluIGhhdGlrdmFo>

---and this may be the most important video as it shows our IDF soldiers in battle, singing. The words translate to "Because of my brothers and sisters and friends, Peace be upon you. This is the House of the Lord, I give my best to you". THIS is the essence of the IDF...they do what they do in total faith and dedication to the people of Israel

<https://m.youtube.com/shorts/EXzDNCiEjpU>

May these songs of faith and hope bring you strength and healing in your dreams.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 22, 2023

8th of Cheshvan, 5784

October 23rd 2023 at 1:15 pm PDT

Released Last Night by the IDF

Chevre

Before going into the email about what the IDF released last night, please make sure that you are developing a practice to keep yourself centered. We are at war, with all of the horrors that come with war.

The IDF invited 200 foreign journalists to view 43 minutes of raw footage from October 7, much from the body cams of Palestinian terrorists. The journalists were not allowed to record anything out of respect for the families of victims who have not seen it yet, but the reports are staggering in their description of barbarism.

Here is the report from the Times of Israel.

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.timesofisrael.com/idf-shows-foreign-press-raw-hamas-bodycam-videos-of-murder-torture-decapitation/amp/>

Joel Pollak is an observant Jew and journalist from Santa Monica who went back to Israel last week to cover events there. His description of what he saw is chilling:

<https://www.breitbart.com/middle-east/2023/10/23/warning-graphic-content-horror-idf-screens-raw-footage-of-hamas-terror-attack-for-media/>

We need to bear witness and never forget what Hamas has done. This is not "good people doing bad things"...this is the personification of evil, and we must NEVER let the world forget what is being done. And we must never let any Jew turn away from this evil or worse, God forbid, try to justify it... or negotiate with it.

When you learn about these horrors, remember that this is Amalek, and we cannot only defeat this evil, it must be destroyed entirely. Completely and utterly.

And we must make sure that there is never joy about doing this task, lest our own souls become damaged. We all must learn of the horrors of Hamas, but we must be extremely careful not to let their hatred infect us and cause us to hate. We must destroy them, and be vigilant not to become like them

I enjoin you to read what Joel wrote, and to feel the pain in every part of your soul...for the Jewish people, for humanity, and for yourself. And then go take a bath or shower and wash off any hate that it causes in your heart. Hold on to the pain and let that pain cause personal sadness and dedication to the complete destruction of Hamas.

And then go hug your children and remember....

We are Jews who keep true to our values. No matter what. Am Yisrael Chai...the people of Israel will always live

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 23, 2023

8th of Cheshvan, 5784

October 24th 2023 at 7:37 am PDT

How We Beat Amalek 3700 Years Ago is How to Beat Hamas Today

Chevre

Earlier this evening in the Judaism 101 class, we were studying the story of how the ancient Hebrews defeated Amalek (it was just one of the teachings we learned in the Book of Exodus this week). The lessons from our ancestors thousands of years ago are applicable to the war in Israel, and for the sake of Israel and the Jewish people, we need to remember it.

In Exodus 17:8-16 we read about the battle against Amalek. Moses stood on a hill with his arms raised holding God's staff, and when his arms were raised, the Hebrews would prevail in the battle. But when he was tired and lowered his hands, Amalek would prevail. Aaron and Hur then stood on either side of Moses and supported his hands so that Moses' hands would stay raised...and Joshua and the people defeated Amalek with the sword.

There are two important teachings in this text that will lead us to defeat Hamas as our ancestors defeated Amalek. The first is that when Moses' hands were raised, the people looked up to the heavens and remembered that all things, including victory against evil, come from God. As we face the coming weeks, we must remember that God is our partner, and we must seek...and rely on Divine aid.

The second teaching is more "pragmatic", and important for every American Jew. Even Moses would get tired and let his hands drop. But we triumphed because Aaron and Hur stepped up to fully support Moses, and ultimately support the victory that came.

In this war, Moses is like the people of Israel. Over the last weeks, Israel has been attacked in the most barbaric of ways. Everyone there has either lost loved ones or knows someone who has. The people of Israel, like Moses, are tired...and we are nowhere near completion of the mission yet. And there is a great pressure from the world to make a cease fire and ignore the true evil of Hamas. Like Moses, Israel gets tired at times, especially given all the vitriolic hate that is being spewed at her from around the world.

But we Jews in the Diaspora are like Aaron and Hur. It is our job, and our blessing, to unconditionally support Israel against all her attacks and enemies. We must support her hands, so that Hamas, like ancient Amalek, is vanquished.

Many American Jews are already weary of this war. I have spoken with many who don't want to see or hear any more about the horrors of Hamas. They just want the war to go away. But we need to stop being weary and constantly see the Hamas barbarism so that we always remember what has been done, and strengthen our resolve to support Israel fully.

Our job, like Aaron and Hur is necessary. Like Moses, Israel cannot triumph without the support of every Jew in the Diaspora. Israel needs each of us to support her. We can do this by donating money; by volunteering our time; praying daily for her safety; and by standing up at all times for Israel, and for Judaism.

Everything we do for Israel makes a difference....whether it is fully praying for Israel in our hearts; being an active part of a Jewish community; giving money; or just singing Hatikvah every day: every one of us can be like Aaron and Hur and support Israel so that she, with God's help, will succeed in this endeavor.

Each of us can make a difference in this war, and each of us must make a difference by unconditionally supporting Israel.

Let us be like Aaron and Hur, and gather all our strength to unconditionally support Israel and the IDF. When we are tired, let us each remember how tired our soldiers are, and re-commit to supporting Israel even more strongly.

Moses needed Aaron and Hur in the ancient battle against Amalek. Israel needs our help in the battle against this modern evil of Hamas. And we all need to rely on God's help, which has always been there for our people for thousands of year.

For decades, the Jewish people said "Never Forget" regarding the horrors of the Holocaust. Perhaps this current war is the result of us collectively forgetting (the Holocaust is not even taught about in many schools throughout the country). Now, we must never forget October 7, nor ever forget the despicable evils that Hamas committed.

May we all merit the distinction of being a Hur or Aaron for this war...a supporter of Israel...now and forever.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 24, 2023

9th of Cheshvan, 5784

October 24th 2023 at 11:24 am PDT

The War has Spread to Here - And You Can Help Defeat the Evil

Chevre

While playing the role of a "victim" to the world press, Hamas simultaneously attempted to repeat parts of the October 7 attack last night. While launching a barrage of rockets at Tel Aviv, Hamas divers attempted to sneak on to Israeli shores by the residential community of Kibbutz Zikim. Thank God, they were thwarted in their attempt, (<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog-october-24-2023/amp/>)

But the war has come to America, and to our local communities in Southern California as well. This weekend there were numerous "free palestine" marches around the Southland, including at least two in Westlake and Thousand Oaks. Please be aware and careful as these "demonstrators" are looking to perpetuate violence, and are threatening anyone who speaks against them. We see this all over our country, and here are two videos of examples (these are violent and include profanity);

---a Solidarity with Israel rally in Skokie, IL this weekend was broken up by violent pro-palestinian demonstrators:

https://x.com/MrAndyNgo/status/1716579866139562464?t=esgFBhi8M8r1ZvD1_KNqag&s=09

---violent pro-palestinian demonstrators blocked streets in Minnesota, and then attacked an elderly man when he tried to get through their illegal blockade of the city: <https://x.com/MrAndyNgo/status/1716292976933019672?t=RGPUWW2VviFosamQYbj7hA&s=09>

But there ARE things you can do right now to make it safer at home for yourself and especially for Jewish children.

College campuses have become unsafe for young Jews as universities promote pro-palestinian student groups and demonstrations. Let us be clear: These are hate groups dedicated to the destruction of Israel and the death of all Jews. In the same way that universities ban the KKK, the American Nazis, and the Aryan Brotherhood from campuses (thank God), these pro-palestinian groups must be banned as well. Email or call your alumni association and demand that they ban any student group that is pro-palestinian. You can also help stop this hate at USC (not my alma mater) by signing this petition:

<https://www.petition-to-ban-student-rallies-in-support-of-hamas-and-attacks-on-jews-and-israel>

Most importantly, please be situationally aware, and know how to handle yourself in an emergency. Temple Ner Simcha is making arrangements for firearms classes, and emails will go out about them when they are scheduled. If you would like to learn personal self defense, please email events@nersimcha.org; and if there are enough people, we will be offering self defense classes with a top professional as well (there will be a nominal fee for that training).

The world is at a precipice. I enjoin you to watch this video of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l, the former Chief Rabbi of England, whose words are true, powerful, and important in these challenging times.

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=FJASk6e96Kc>

May we all stay safe; may Israel soon completely destroy the evil of Hamas, and may the tree of anti-Semitism be uprooted and destroyed in our time

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 24, 2023

9th of Cheshvan, 5784

October 24th 2023 at 8:51 pm PDT

An Update on Israel & Prayers for Our Dreams

Chevre

Please say prayers tonight and every night for Israel. Open your heart and speak with God, and make it honest and real...the way all prayers should always be, but too rarely are for most people.

A few hours ago, rockets were launched from Syria as other rockets were being launched by Hamas from Gaza to Tel Aviv, and thankfully, the **IDF** successfully took out the military installations in Syria that launched them as a result.

As the world bemoans the fate of the "innocents" in Gaza and protests against Israel and all Jews increase worldwide, let us remember that they are still continuing to shoot rockets rather than evacuate civilians. Sometimes, a picture can be clearer than words.



As we go to sleep tonight, please pray that from our dreams, our souls send blessings to Israel. I hope this video of hundreds of our soldiers singing Psalm 121 helps with that, and that our prayers for safety and success are answered favorably.



Psalm 121

*I lift my eyes to the mountains, from where shall my help come?
My help comes from God, who is creating the heavens and the earth
He will not let your foot give way, your Guardian will never slumber.
See, the Guardian of Israel never slumbers nor sleeps
The Lord is your protection at your right hand
By day the sun will not strike you, nor the moon at night
The Lord will guard you from all harm, He will guard your soul
God will guard your going and your coming
Now and forever.*

Let these words of King David and the sounds of these brave soldiers of peace bring us dreams of healing and peace; and may our dreams bring them strength and safety.

For those who would like a prayer as a starting point for your personal prayers:

*Ribbono Shel Olam, Master of the Universe, please keep safe the people of Israel, the hostages in Gaza, Jews around the world, and especially the warriors who defend our land and the soul of our people. Remember the covenants that you have made with our ancestors, and protect the people and the land of Israel as You have promised. Help our soldiers to bring safety and a lasting peace to Israel; to go and return safely; and to keep pure the holy lights of their souls. For the sake of the unification of the Holy Name of Yod Hey with Vav Hey, the Holy One and His Presence, we ask that you please bless them with your compassion and love. Please God, please strengthen and bless them now, please.
And together we say, Amen*

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 24, 2023

10th of Cheshvan, 5784

October 25th 2023 at 11:16 am PDT

More Rockets and the Upside Down Craziess in the Jewish World

Chevre

This article from the Times of Israel is a concise piece detailing some of the attacks last night on both Haifa and Eilat. The IDF is also making Iran's involvement in Hamas more clear. Read about it at: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-kills-top-hamas-general-as-gaza-strikes-continue-says-iran-aiding-terror-group/>

At the same time, we need to all wonder what the "normative" institutional Jewish world is thinking of and doing during a time when we are fighting for the very survival of Judaism. While George Washington University is posting slide shows of Palestinian slogans on their buildings, the group Jewish Voice for Peace is demonstrating **for** Palestine on campuses? While UC Berkeley faculty are thumbing their noses and consciously breaking the law of Title VI by giving credit to students for walking out of classes and demonstrating for a free Palestine and destruction of Israel, the UC Berkeley Hillel is offering programs like "Queer Affinity Group" rather than forcing the University to prohibit a pro-Hamas hate group in the same way that there can be no KKK or Nazi student groups. We are being attacked worldwide in all sorts of ways including the press, and JPS, one of the premiere Jewish publishers, is focusing their attention on releasing their new "gender sensitive" bible? At a time when Judaism and Jews are under attack, they are devoting their energy to pushing a version of our sacred texts edited to make self-identified non-binary individuals more comfortable with the translation? Locally, some crazy self-hating Jew named Lisa published a letter in the 9000 member Moms of Conejo Group that Israel deserves this, and it is the Jews' fault?

What can we do in this upside down world where even Jews are fighting against Israel and devoting their energy to her destruction?

As always, we must pray AND act. Pray to deepen our own personal relationship with God. Pray for the wellbeing, success, and safety of Israel, her soldiers, and her citizens. Pray that the world recognizes and totally rejects the evil hate of Hamas.

And we must act by writing and speaking to everyone we know about the fallacies and hate of Hamas; and totally reject the self-loathing guilt of those people who promote propaganda that is actually historically inaccurate and

theologically antithetical to Judaism.

...and we must always keep, and deepen, our faith in God.

Here is a one minute long video of an Israeli boy and our IDF soldiers that will help inspire you to get through this craziness:



B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 25, 2023

10th of Cheshvan, 5784

October 25th 2023 at 4:12 pm PDT

A Video to Prevent "War Fatigue"

Chevre

Many in Israel are concerned about Americans getting fatigued with the war, and that they will stop giving the support to Israel that is so desperately needed.

We need to remain strong in our unflinching support of Israel and our commitment to destroy the evil of Hamas completely. But as the images of the horrors of October 7 fade from our minds, it is all too easy to become exhausted and adopt the attitude of "enough is enough, let's just have a cease fire"

This video is not only exquisitely beautiful, but devastatingly painful. I enjoin everyone to watch it all the way through, and to never forget what Hamas is and what they have done/are doing. Pass the video to everyone you know, and let us never forget. Let the tears of watching it remind us that we cannot get fatigued...not with the fate of Israel and Judaism at stake.



Tears are not bad if they cleanse us of fatigue and remind us to be strong and steadfast

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 25th, 2023

10th of Cheshvan, 5784

October 26th 2023 at 2:14 pm PDT

Yom Kippur, History, and Today

Chevre

Each year at Yom Kippur, there are some people who complain that the day is SO long and hard. But for those of us old enough to remember, the hardest Yom Kippur was on October 6, 1973, when Israel was attacked on that holiest of days.

I remember being in the children's service when Rabbi Larry Goldmark walked in and told us that Israel had just been attacked by an Arab coalition led by Egypt and Syria. It was beyond devastating, especially during the following days as it seemed we had been unprepared and the Arabs were winning the war.

For 18 long days, until October 26, we waited on pins and needles. After a few days, we started hearing better news about Israel, and ultimately the war was won; a cease fire was declared; and peace began. The resounding defeat of Egypt led to the Egyptian "land for peace" deal in 1979 with the Camp David Accords. Facilitated by Jimmy Carter, Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat, both former soldiers who knew the horrors of war personally, a real peace deal was struck. Sadat was assassinated a few years later by Islamic jihadists for having made this deal, but it has held with Egypt for over 40 years.

This war has, as of today, lasted longer than even the Yom Kippur War of 1973. Again, we were attacked on a holy day. Again, it seems as if we were unprepared. And again, we have started to make headway in this war, although slower than in 1973. But there are differences between the wars, and we need to be aware of those differences so that we can succeed now as well, with B"H (B"H is an abbreviation for "B'ezrat HaShem", "with the help of God").

In 1973, the world still supported Israel, and treated it as the righteous nation

that it is. Today, Israel is wrongly villified domestically and around the world. In 1973, **every** American Jew, and nearly every American, supported Israel. Today there are daily protests against Israel around the world; college campuses have become dangerous places for Jewish students; and there is a large percentage of Jews under the age of 24 who are actually anti-Israel. In 1973, the Arabs were our enemies, but had boundaries even in the war that they would not cross. Today, our enemy of Hamas is the personification of Amalek and is truly evil, with no boundaries holding them back from doing unspeakable acts of barbarism on October 7 and beyond...and yet we must continually speak of them so that we do not forget their evil.

But one thing remains the same: God will keep His covenant with our people the way He has for over 3500 years. The way He did in 1973. We must choose to have faith in that.

In 1973, a peace was created out of the war. Today, the enemy is evil and must be entirely destroyed before any real peace can even be discussed if we seek a longlasting peace. It is profoundly sad, but it is true.

And Israel will destroy Hamas. They are currently preparing for ground troops by having the Israeli Air Force make it as safe as possible. But no matter how much success the Air Force has, IDF ground troops will be in grave jeopardy. And they anticipate that there will be more attacks from the north and Hezbollah when we go into Gaza with ground forces. Israeli soldiers will die in this battle against evil, as will innocent Arabs. The Air Force is daily dropping hundreds of thousands of flyers telling Gazans to flee to the south of Gaza for safety, but Hamas practices evil even against its own people and tries to prohibit Gazans from fleeing to safety. It is going to get worse before it gets better.

Now is the time to renew our unflinching commitment to Israel in every way possible. Encourage every Jew you know, and every American you come into contact with, to recognize the evil of Hamas, the necessity to destroy it completely, and to support Israel. Donate to Israeli causes, and do not let anyone forget the horrors of Hamas. Do not succumb to the pro-Hamas media, which is repeatedly making comments about how well the hostages are being treated. This is not an exaggeration. CNN hosts have been talking about how the hostages "have shampoo" and are in "tunnels with air conditioning" as if being a hostage is like staying in a spa.

Hamas kidnapped hundreds of Israeli civilians; killed hundreds of children and weak; parachuted into a dance party to rape, kill, and kidnap young people; and now want the world to think of them as kind because they have released a few hostages and gave some of them shampoo!

Never forget, and never let the world forget the evils of Hamas! Never let them be portrayed as "freedom fighters", but make sure that you, and everyone you know, constantly remember that their actions dictate that this is not a war between enemies, but a war against evil.

Please constantly be an advocate for Israel in every moment of your day in any and every way you can.

As it was in 1973 it will be again. B"H we will triumph and destroy this evil, and once that mission is fully completed, we will have a lasting peace.

Judaism teaches that everything is in the hands of God, except being in awe of God. May our faith in this Divine help be complete, and may God bring us all a lasting peace and a safe Israel.

To help remind us of this faith, here is a special video of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach and Eli Levin. The words mean "I believe in perfect faith" May we all attain that perfect faith, and May God redeem us now as he has throughout our history.



May we all pray for the safety of the people of Israel, and especially for the safety and health of her soldiers who are fighting the evil of our time.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 26, 2023

11th of Cheshvan, 5784

October 26th 2023 at 4:00 pm PDT

Be Proud of What This Temple Has Done for Israel

Chevre

I received the email below thanking our community for what we have accomplished for Israel. We have much to be proud of, and please read it and know that you are directly saving Israeli lives. You have made a difference!

I am overwhelmed with gratitude to each of you, and humbled to lead such a righteous community. If you wish to donate more to the Bnai Zion Hospital, you can do so at www.healthcareforisrael.org and click the donate now button at the bottom of the page.

Dear Rabbi Barclay,

In response to the emergency situation in Israel, I wanted to personally thank you and your congregants for stepping up to help **Bnai Zion Medical Center** rehabilitate wounded soldiers and **prepare for an attack from the North**.

Over the past two weeks, your generous congregation at **Temple Ner Simcha** has helped raise almost **\$300,000** for **Healthcare for Israel** to purchase the following essential medical devices:

Fully Equipped Soldier Rehabilitation Department - \$170,600 

Anesthesia Machine for War-Fortified Hospitalization Complex - \$71,000 

16 Electric Beds for War-Fortified Hospitalization Complex - \$48,000 

Hospital CEO and former **Chief Medical Officer of the Israeli Navy**, **Dr. Ohad Hochman**, would like to personally thank you and your congregants at **Temple Ner Simcha** for your incredibly kind and generous efforts.

For more information about the **War-Fortified Hospitalization Complex** or to learn more about how you've strengthened Israel's health infrastructure during this critical time, please click [here](#).

Thank you so kindly for your support,

Amanda Maddahi, MD

(310) 905-6756

amanda@healthcareforisrael.org

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 26, 2023

11th of Cheshvan, 5784

October 26th 2023 at 6:00 pm PDT

Classes in Israel/Palestine/Hamas and War & Peace, Conflict & Resolution

Chevre

Many of you have expressed that you would like to see (or review if you attended) the talks from last Friday on Palestine/Israel/Hamas and last night's class on War and Peace, so here they are. The sound quality from Friday is not the usual quality (Orlando was out of town, but Joel Slabo kindly recorded it on his phone), but the information is there.

Friday night on Israel/Palestine/Hamas/the war:



Last night's class on War and Peace:

I hope this helps you understand our faith's beliefs and history.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 26, 2023

11th of Cheshvan, 5784

October 27th 2023 at 10:05 am PDT

Realize the Truth; Pray and Act

Chevre

Please say prayers and act...

The IDF has shown proof that Hamas has made it's headquarters under the Shfra Hospital in Gaza City. They are consciously using 1500 beds and 4000 staff as their shield. Israel will have little choice but to eventually destroy this Hamas main base, and in doing so, will undoubtedly be vilified by the world. You can see a clear reporting here: <https://m.jpost.com/middle-east/article-770484>

Last night, IDF tanks briefly entered Gaza for the second time in preparation for the ground operation. More details can be found at:

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-tanks-troops-briefly-enter-gaza-in-2nd-limited-overnight-raid-ahead-of-ground-op/>

Again, as we do what must be done, Israel will be vilified by the world.

Qatar, where the leaders of Hamas live as multi-millionaires, has announced that they may be open to removing the presence of Hamas from the Gulf. This may lead to the killing of some of these Hamas leaders, for which again, Israel will be vilified.

And so I ask you to act and to pray

Act. Push back against the Hamas narrative that has taken over our media,

college campuses, and neighborhoods. Show the proof of Hamas' evil using of their own civilians as human shields. Show everyone you can the evils of this modern day Amalek and what they did on October 7. Even the Nazis tried to hide their evil actions because they knew how bad they were...but Hamas shows their atrocities with pride. Use that pride against them, and work with all your might to change the current narrative to one that exposes Hamas for exactly what they are: evil.

And please pray. Pray for the safety of Israel, her people, and her soldiers. Pray with all your soul that the world recognizes the truth of the evil of Hamas; the truth of what is really going on; and the truth of the enemies of Israel not only wanting Israel destroyed, God forbid, but wanting all Jews in the world dead.

Remember and remind others that Hamas rejected the Oslo Accords, and their 1988 Charter, which remains unchanged, says "There is no solution to the Palestinian problem except by Jihad."

Pray with all your soul for their speedy and complete destruction so that the world has peace, and not the Jihad holy war to exterminate all non-Muslims.

We are Jews, and Am Yisrael Chai. We choose to have faith, and to always both pray and act.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 27, 2023

12th of Cheshvan, 5784

October 27th 2023 at 6:08 pm PDT

Shabbat Shalom and The Ground Assault Intensifies

Chevre

Shabbat Shalom.

Over the last few hours, Israel has intensified its ground attacks and tanks are

moving in on Gaza in what seems like final preparations for the coming assault to destroy Hamas. For right now, there is little we can do as the ground attacks start other than pray with all our hearts.

As we enter this Sabbath, make sure to give yourself the time and space of Shabbat to heal from the challenges of the week; and the challenges that are in the near future.

Ahad Ha'am famously said, "More than the Jews have kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath has kept the Jews".

Light candles tonight, or at least pause and say a prayer. If you are lighting candles, please light an extra candle for the IDF soldier on the eve of battle who cannot light their own candle. On Shabbat, we get an "extra piece of soul" Use this added piece of your soul to pray for safety for Israel, her people, and her soldiers.

As the war intensifies, remember the words of David Ben Gurion "Courage is a special kind of knowledge...how to fear what ought to be feared and how not to fear what ought not be feared"

May we, our soldiers, and the Jewish people remember these words, and always know that our greatest ally is God. As Rebbe Nachman taught, "Above all is to not be afraid".

To help put you in the mood for Shabbat, here are some videos of Shabbat with our soldiers from Israel

<https://m.youtube.com/shorts/nTILhdFD6t0>

<https://m.youtube.com/shorts/w1XBdqHyfJ0>

And a Shabbat video I received today from Israel...a reminder of "Am Echad"...we are one people!

Shabbat Shalom and Gut Shabbos

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 27,2023

13th of Cheshvan, 5784

October 29th 2023 at 1:24 am PDT

As The Day Starts in Israel

Chevre

As the day rises in Israel, we need to remember that God will always make that sun rise...even when it seems that the night is very long.

The IDF is now moving more troops into Gaza in their quest to destroy the modern evil of Amalek. As people and organizations, including the United Nations, castigate Israel and call for a cease fire, we must NEVER FORGET their truly evil actions on October 7 and beyond.

But there are a few bright lights in the last few hours. It is sad but not unexpected that the United Nations voted 120-14 in favor of a resolution calling for a truce. As Abba Eban observed, "If Algeria introduced a resolution declaring the earth was flat and Israel had flattened it, it would pass by 164 to 13 with 26 abstentions."

With the passing of this latest UN resolution against Israel, Czech Defense Minister Jana Cernichova has called for her country to withdraw from the U.N. The Czechs know from personal history what happens when evil, be it Nazis or Hamas, go unchecked and capitulated to. Her courage is a light, that with God's help, others will follow.

Another light is a true miracle that you can view below. As a bombed out building is sifted through, the only thing that remains/is discovered are two copies of King David's Psalms...a true miracle:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/Cy9i4zxJhIO/?igshid=MTc4MmM1Yml2Ng==>

On Saturday, the Israeli flag was raised in Gaza for the first time since 2005. B"H, when Hamas has been completely destroyed, we will have a healed and whole Israel, with both Jewish and Muslim neighbors living in peace. You can read more

and see images of this at: <https://m.jpost.com/israel-news/article-770650>

As the IDF goes deeper into Gaza, it will be ugly. It has been proven, and even admitted by Hamas, that one of the main headquarters of Hamas is under a hospital. The attack on that hospital, which will be necessary if we want to win this war, will undoubtedly draw universal hatred for the Jews (even more vocally than it already is). And so....as always...we must act and pray.

Let everyone you know be made aware that Hamas has been using the hospital as their headquarters. Here is some information on this travesty: <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.timesofisrael.com/hamass-main-operations-base-is-under-shifa-hospital-in-gaza-city-says-idf/amp/> Do not hesitate in confronting those who perpetuate lies, but point out the truth, and with God's help, the fools who are supporting Hamas and palestine will realize the truth.

And pray...for the safety of the people in Israel and for Jews around the world. To help inspire your prayers, here is a video of our soldiers celebrating life, Israel, and God: https://youtube.com/shorts/XSO8KkulpNk?si=Lu0a8ud_PxyBe-uu

May the Master of the Universe bless the people of Israel with success and safety

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 29, 2024

14th of Cheshvan, 5784

October 29th 2023 at 11:42 am PDT

Be Aware, Be Clear, Be Active, and Be Prepared

Chevre

As you have seen, worldwide pressure has been building over the last two weeks

for Israel to cease fire, let Hamas have aid, etc. The outrage at the evil of Hamas a mere three weeks ago is gone, even among many secular Jews...some of these Jews are now marching with signs saying "Jews for Palestine", and accusing Israel of colonialism and genocide. White House national security advisor Jake Sullivan just did interviews on CNN and CBS, where he is calling for Israel to "rein in" their actions. President Biden, who has been demonstrating support for Israel, is receiving tremendous pressure from the far left of his party (Tlaib, Omar, Bush, Presley etc) to stop supporting Israel, and a Gallup poll from Thursday found that his favorability rating among Democrats fell to a record low because of his support for Israel. At the same time, 13 members of his party introduced a House resolution calling for an "immediate cease fire in occupied Palestine". There are active Twitter/X campaigns involving thousands of users to "ratio" anyone who posts videos of Hamas horrors in an attempt to create an uncontested narrative of Palestine as victims.

We must all be conscious of the reality that the world is again showing its true colors by hating and attacking Israel and Jews worldwide in any way possible. Jews around our country are being threatened and attacked, and I and other clergy have been personally approached by two different police officials recommending that all Rabbis should get CCW licenses. (Yes, given the amount of hate mail and threats I've gotten, I have sadly started that process.)

Overt hate against Jews is now not only accepted, it is encouraged in places like college campuses and throughout the cities. There have now been multiple pro-Palestinian demonstrations in Ventura County, including right here in Westlake Village, where Nazi swastikas are flown next to Palestinian flags.

As we have discussed at length in classes, Israel cannot and should not stop until this modern Amalek of Hamas is completely destroyed. It is our spiritual obligation to destroy this Amalek, just as it is our Jewish obligation to try to preserve innocent lives whenever possible, and to mourn all who die. And as Israel continues this second phase of the war, the pressure on our leaders and the dangers to each individual Jew increase.

So what should we do? The answer always remains the same: act and pray.

Please be pro-active in a few ways. First, know and share the truth, and do not let up on that education. Know the real history of the Middle East. Know and be

able to share the falsities and myths surrounding this nation of "palestine" that actually does not and has never existed throughout history. Remember the details of the horrors of October 7th and have those kind of videos at your immediate disposal to show and remind others of the evil of Hamas that must be destroyed.

Second: Actively reach out to your political leaders such as Congressman Brownley or Brad Sherman and let them know of your undying support for Israel, and how you **expect** them to always, always support Israel in every way!

Third: Given the intensity of the situation, be especially aware and conscious on Monday and Tuesday. Halloween has become a time of violence in too many cities in this country such as Detroit, where Monday is actually recalled "Devils Night", and for years fire and riots happen. **Do not let this Halloween become another Krystallnacht, God forbid.** It is more important for everyone to stay safe this week than it is to pass out or get candy.

Fourth, and it pains me to write this, be prepared. Every Jew should be carrying mace or pepper spray with them at all times, as well as in your car and home. The temple is arranging classes in self defense and firearms, which will be offered shortly for those who wish to learn more. But please be situationally aware and personally cautious in this tense environment.

And pray. Feel the pain, loss, and fear...and pray. Allow yourself to cry for the hostages, and for those lost Jewish souls who are marching with Hamas, tearing down flyers with the photos of the hostages, and standing with Hamas demonstrators in Westlake Blvd next to and in alignment with people holding swastikas (yes, there were Jews protesting there too). Let yourself feel all the mixed up emotions going on; anger, sadness, compassion, rage, fear, hope... and pray with God in an emotional state...your prayers will be more meaningful for you and more impactful in the world.

Act..in ways of wisdom, courage, and awareness.

Pray...for the safety and health of our brothers and sisters in Israel; and for the Jewish people everywhere in the world.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 29, 2024

14th of Cheshvan, 5784

October 29th 2023 at 9:17 pm PDT

We DO Love Life, Israel, and our Children More Than Anything...

Chevre

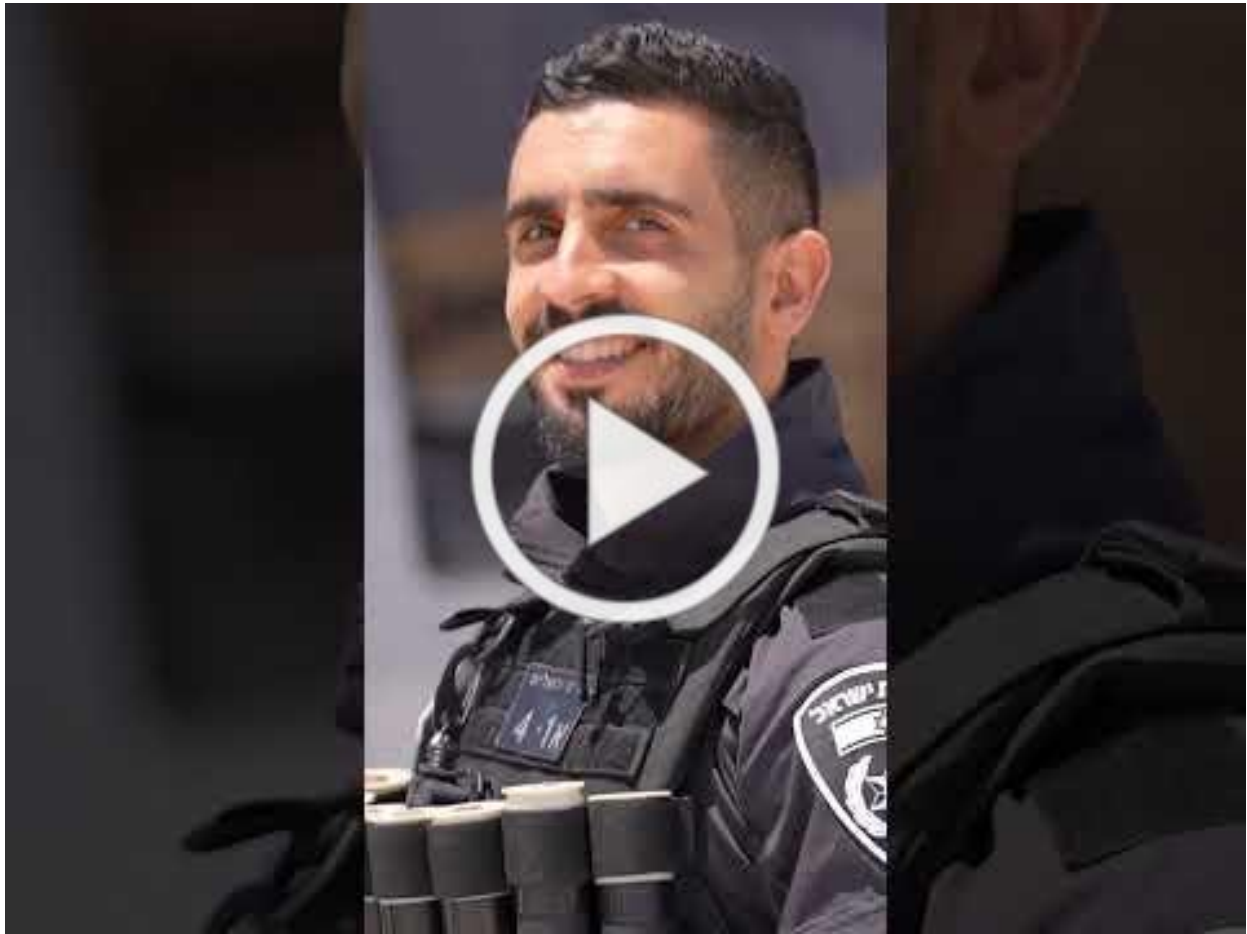
Sometimes the best thing we can do in a time that is challenging like now, is to remember what is important..what we love... We must never forget these things, or we could become, God forbid, no different than the evil we are fighting.

As we enter this week, let's all take a moment to remember what is really important....

Life:



Israel (the words mean "Jerusalem of gold, of copper, and of light...you are the song, I am the harp... If I forget thee, may my right hand lose its cunning") :



And our children, all children, and especially those children who are hostages...scared...alone...We **MUST** pray for them:



And in the words of these soldiers...wherever we go, we go to the land of Israel: <https://twitter.com/LivingLchaim/status/1715409883753754944?t=Wg4ntLxHZN1znavhBRxv1g&s=19>

Act. Pray. Let us do both with all our souls...for life, for the children, and for Israel

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 29, 2023

15th of Cheshvan, 5784

October 30th 2023 at 7:40 am PDT

Shema...Listen to this IDF Commander and Don't Let Yourself Get Weary

Good Morning Chevre

I know that staying vigilant and not getting fatigued with this war can be exhausting, but each one of us is making a difference. This community has been instrumental in raising over \$300,000 that has gone directly to Bnai Zion Hospital and purchased much needed medical equipment. We are one people...and this video by an IDF commander is a powerful reminder of this truth. Watch it, be inspired, and remember that what is done here is appreciated everywhere.



Every moment...act and pray...

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 30, 2023

15th of Cheshvan, 5784

October 31st 2023 at 12:02 am PDT

Miraculous News & Halloween

Chevre

Nes Gadol Haya Sham!

A great miracle happened there!

The IDF and Shin Bet security jointly announced that Private Ori Megidish, a soldier who has been held hostage by Hamas, has been rescued and freed by Israeli troops! She is in good condition and reunited with her family; and the IDF said that it is not releasing details so that it does not affect other missions they are planning. But you can see a reunion with her family here:

https://twitter.com/Zira_politit/status/1719051822885650680?t=F231ATWXVCsYTi_P4oelmw&s=19

On a different and more somber note...I am asking that everyone please refrain from going trick or treating; and from opening your doors to trick or treaters. Apparently, there is a well passed along threat of anti-Semitic hatred being perpetuated against Jews who open their doors to someone in a mask. These evil intentions have been passed all along social media; and they may be real or just another form of psy-ops against American Jews.

Normally, I believe that we should not alter our behavior based on threats, but.... Halloween isn't a Jewish holiday anyway! Lol. So hold on to your costumes and celebrate Purim instead...its safer, more fun, and Jewish.

And I'll personally offer candy (not the temple, Allison and I personally) to any family that lets us know they rejected observng Halloween. Just let me know that you neither "tricked" nor "treated", and I'll bring over candy for you next week...and if you ask nicely, I'll even do it in costume.

I'm trying to make light of this, but there have been a lot of social media posts about making Halloween a night to attack Jews. Please err on the side of caution, and avoid this holiday in any way possible...you can get better candy and keep your family safe.

Upon this type of miracle as we have seen with this soldier, we are to say a specific prayer called "Birkat HaGomel; of which this is an adaptation below. I ask

that you please say it out loud, and yell "Amen" at the end. "Amen" is an important word, and an acronym that stands for "El Melech Neaman", "God is the King of Faithfulness". As God has redeemed this soldier, we need to loudly remind God to redeem all the hostages.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, ruler of the world, who rewards the undeserving with goodness, and who has rewarded this soldier of Israel with goodness. May He who rewarded Ori Megidish with all goodness reward all of the hostages of Israel, and the entire Jewish people with all goodness for ever. And together, we say Amen!

Please be grateful, situationally aware, and safe.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 31, 2023

16th of Cheshvan, 5784

October 31st 2023 at 8:52 am PDT

Eilat, Hate & Candy

Chevre

As the IDF gains ground and is reported to be 5km into Gaza, there are progressively more attacks on Israel: Hezbollah in the north, and now last night the Iran-sponsored Houthi rebels in Yemen are claiming responsibility for missile and drone attacks on Eilat in the south.

And here in the United States we are being threatened by anti-Semites who are simply using Gaza as an excuse to express their hatred for us. Jonathan Tobin came out this morning with a terrific article on this hate in the Jewish News Syndicate that really explores and explains how anyone shouting 'free palestine' is really just calling for the death of all Jews. I strongly suggest reading it if your personal compassion is in any way leading you to be supportive of "free

palestine":

<https://www.jns.org/they-back-palestine-because-they-hate-jews/>

If you are confused by the self-hating Jews we are finding in college campuses, you might also enjoy this article by Jeremy

Kay. https://www.americanthinker.com/blog/2023/10/lessons_from_1920s_germany_and_today.html

Again, I want to reiterate that everyone be situationally aware and careful today and tonight. I also feel that I need to adjust my offer of personal candy delivery: candy will only be delivered to you within a 10 mile radius...one of our community members now living in Canada wanted to know when I would be up there if he refrained from going or receiving trick or treating. :)

Please be safe, and please act and pray for **Israel**.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 31, 2023

16th of Cheshvan, 5784

October 31st 2023 at 6:51 pm PDT

Updates & Reject Halloween and Get Rabbi Delivered Candy Instead!

Chevre

The last 11 hours have continued to be intense in Israel, and getting more so. Here are a few updates:

---The Iran backed Houtis of Yemen have declared war on Israel.

---Israel Foreign Minister Eli Cohen hosted approximately 70 foreign ambassadors for a film that showed a compilation of the atrocities of October 7. We shall see if it changes any world opinion that has rapidly been shifting to support Hamas.

---2 IDF soldiers; Sgt. Roei Wolf and Sgt Lavi Lipshitz, were killed overrunning

another Hamas post. May their memory be a blessing, and may their families be comforted among the mourners of Zion.

---Chile has recalled their foreign ambassador to Israel, accusing Israel of "unacceptable rights violations in Gaza"

---At 3pm PST (1am in Israel), the IDF intercepted an air attack on the Red Sea and city of Eilat.

---Despite the obvious dangers to all Americans, and especially Jewish Americans; DHS Secretary Mayorkas has expressly refused to deport foreign college students on F1 visas who are participating in pro-Hamas demonstrations that call for the extermination of Israel

---and in some ways most disturbingly, the IDF has released that they have been finding instructions on how to build chemical weapons in Hamas bases that they have overrun.

Here in the United States, President Biden has vowed to veto an aid bill to Israel without tying it to financial aid for Ukraine.

I am constantly repeating the same mantra: to be aware; to act; and to pray. Please act by reaching out and letting every elected official that you know that the aid to Israel cannot be tied to aid to Ukraine or anywhere else. And as always, pray for Israel's safety and wellbeing.

...and especially this evening, be aware

Wouldn't you rather have candy delivered to your home by your Rabbi than to observe Halloween anyway?

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 31, 2023

17th of Cheshvan, 5784

November 1st 2023 at 12:20 am PDT

Baruch Dayan Emet, Good News from Univ of California, & A Jew Who Doesn't Care...

Chevre

The IDF has released the names of 9 more IDF soldiers who died fighting Hamas terrorists in Gaza. May their memories be a blessing, their families be comforted among the mourners of Zion, and may each of us realize the cost of waging a war where we try to protect Gazan civilians more than Hamas does. The soldiers are named as Lt. Ariel Reich, 24, from Jerusalem; Cpl. Asif Luger, 21, from Yagur; Sgt. Adi Danan, from Yavne; Staff Sgt. Harel Solomon, 20, from Dimona; Staff Sgt. Erez Mishlovsky, 20, from Oranit; Staff Sgt. Adi Leon, 20, from Nili; Cpl. Ido Ovadia, 19, from Tel Aviv; Cpl. Lior Siminovich, 19, from Herzliya; and Staff Sgt. Roei Dawi, 20, from Jerusalem.

Good news from Univ. of California as Regent Jay Sures wrote a formal letter castigating the UC Ethnic Studies Faculty Council for their unabashed anti-Semitism and disgusting support of Hamas. While it is doubtful that his letter will affect the arrogant tenured faculty, it is at least a step in the right direction and may serve as a foundation for future University official policies.

Rather than a video, I'd like to share a writing of Times of Israel writer Avi Lewis. A number of you sent this to me, and I enjoin us all to remember that the Jewish people are meant to lead...and leaders need to be honest and indifferent to the words said around them. We must care about the world's ultimate well being, but Mr. Lewis is right that we cannot care about how they feel or what they say about us. We are to be a "light to the nations" in a time when much of the world would prefer to remain in the dark. You can read his words as a Jew who is done caring about how he is perceived by the world; but who will do what must be done. You can read his words here:

<https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/dear-world-i-dont-care>

May this new day in Israel bring us more good news, and may we never forget the sacrifice of these 9 holy soldiers.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 1, 2023

18th of Cheshvan, 5784

November 1st 2023 at 7:00 am PDT

The U.A.E. and Being Grateful

Chevre

With the war raging and Israel's enemies growing both regionally and internationally; it is comforting that the Chairman of Defense, Interior, and Foreign Affairs Committee of the United Arab Emirates went out of his way to say that the Abraham Accords are not in jeopardy. "The Accords are our future... We want everyone to acknowledge and accept that Israel is there to exist"

As we enter this month of November, the month of "thanksgiving", let us be thankful for the UAE's commitment to the accords and to Israel. I also want to suggest the following exercise in harmony with the gratitude of Thanksgiving.

Starting today and going through Thanksgiving, write 2 things in a journal...one in the morning, the other in the evening. 2 things that you are grateful for. They can be as big or small as you would like, but every day write down two things in your "gratitude journal".

This will keep you more balanced and happy throughout the month, and will make your Thanksgiving holiday much more meaningful...as well as increase your faith and awareness of God's hand in our lives.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 1, 2023

18th of Cheshvan, 5784

November 1st 2023 at 11:57 pm PDT

We mourn, as one people...Am Echad

Chevre

The IDF is reportedly at the "gates of Gaza City" according to Brig. Gen. Itzik Cohen, through a combination of precision air strikes and courageous work by the IDF soldiers, 16 of whom have been lost in this terrible war, May their memories be a blessing and their families comforted among the mourners of Zion.

Why do we say those phrases? "May their memories be a blessing" and "comforted among the mourners of Zion"? These two phrases are key to understanding how important it is to embrace Judaism, support Israel, and be better than we are.

The word for "blessing" in Hebrew (baruch) is related to the word for "knee" (berech). One understanding is that in order to fully receive a blessing, we must humble ourselves (take a knee/kneel). Why ask that their memories be a blessing? Because if we really feel...really experience the gift of having them in our lives...all that we benefited from them...it is humbling and can inspire each of us to do and to be better.

16 soldiers have sacrificed their lives in order to protect Israel, and Israel is the protector of all Jews worldwide. Be clear: they sacrificed their young lives...lives with so much potential for joy and love and their own children. And they sacrificed them for you and I. So that Israel survives and so that we can be Jews. That is overwhelmingly humbling if you really feel that sacrifice...and so hopefully, their memories bless us to be better. Better Jews. Better people. Better versions of ourselves.

And why do we answer death with a prayer that their families be "comforted among the mourners of Zion"? For 2000 years we have daily mourned the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. We have mourned the persecutions of our people through the tragedies of the Inquisition, Spanish expulsion, pogroms, Holocaust, and more. And now we mourn those who have died in this war and on October 7, brought on by the clearest and most depraved manifestation of evil since the worst of the Holocaust. For 2000 years, Jewish family members have mourned our losses...and we pray that the families of these 16 soldiers are comforted by the souls of all the Jewish families in history who have also

mourned their own losses.

These soldiers gave their lives. For you and for me. However tired or frustrated we may get; however weary or sad we may be; whatever we are going through is nothing compared to what they and their families have gone through.

And this is why we cannot allow ourselves to get weary or tired, sad or depressed. Somewhere in Israel right now there are soldiers who are risking their lives for you and for me... and they don't have the luxury of being tired or sad. They are committed to the mission at hand; and we Diaspora Jews must also be fully committed to our mission. A mission to support Israel in every way through action and prayer. A mission to educate the world on the real 3700 year history of Israel, and the Madison Avenue fabricated myth of "palestine". A mission to raise funds for Israeli needs and for Jewish communities worldwide (the oldest synagogue in Tunisia was destroyed after the false media reports of the Gaza hospital). A mission to stop the anti-Semitism in schools and universities, and to protect young Jews here in the U.S.

Our soldiers risk their lives, and some die. Can we do anything less than commit ourselves totally and fully to the preservation of Israel, Jewish communities, and Judaism itself?

May their memories be a blessing, and may their families be comforted among the mourners of Zion

And may we all be worthy of living in such a way that it brings meaning to their sacrifices.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 1, 2023

18th of Cheshvan, 5784

November 2nd 2023 at 7:41 am PDT

To Be A Jew Is To Be A Zionist

Chevre

The anti-Semites are in our midst: in schools, on college campuses, on social media, in the streets and our own neighborhoods. Now, they try to disguise themselves not as "anti-Semites" but as "anti-Zionist". Do not fall for this rebranding...it is the same old hate with a new name. To be a Jew is, by definition, to be a Zionist.

Monsignor Royale Vadikan of blessed memory once said, "Jews will never understand how a bunch of Cardinals lock themselves in a room, white smoke emerges, and one of them comes out infallible. And Christians will never fully understand the connection of Jews to the land of Israel".

Eretz Yisrael was given to us by God in the covenant over 3700 years ago. We have fought and died for it; prayed for it; and Jews have lived in Israel non-stop for all those 3700 years. At different times in history we were conquered by outside forces, but Jews have always and always will live in Israel. Under Kings Saul, David, Solomon, and their descendants, we built the first kingdom in the region over 3000 years ago. With the destruction of the Second Temple, Jews around the world prayed every day for our return to Zion. The oldest cemetery in Israel is over 2000 years older than the oldest Arab or Muslim cemetery. Psalm 137 famously said, "If I forget thee O Jerusalem, may my right hand lose it's skill; my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you"; and Jews for thousands of years have always included praying for Israel in their daily prayers. Our history is tied to the land; and the land of Israel is and has always been tied to our souls.

So instead of calling us derogatory names, now these Jew haters attack Israel with their words...but it is still the same hate that our ancestors experienced in Russia, Poland, Lithuania, and Iran. Now they call "Zionists" baby killers, apartheid, colonialists, and more. But these are just 21st century ways of expressing hate for Jews. When they attack Israel, they attack every Jew. When they say that they are just "anti-Zionist", this is their "polite" way of saying that they hate us.

Let us never fall into their trap of semantics. To be anti-Zionist it be anti-Jewish. The Hamas charter calls not only for the destruction of the State of Israel, but for the death of every Jew.

So when you hear "anti-Zionist" demonstrators, remember that they are calling for our deaths. When you hear "palestine from the river to the sea", remember that this means the complete eradication of anything Jewish, and the destruction of Israel as a Jewish state.

When you hear someone saying that they don't hate Jews, they only hate Zionists; expose them as the Jew hating anti-Semites that they really are. Take back the language and the narrative, and through our actions, words, and prayers, may we all expose the hate of anti-Semites, and may Israel always survive as the one home that every Jew can return to.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 2, 2023

18th of Cheshvan, 5784

November 2nd 2023 at 10:57 am PDT

They Hate More & We Respond With Kindness

Chevre

The pattern of Israel is consistent in its righteousness and consonant with the deepest of Jewish values. The difference between Israel and the supporters of Hamas is displayed clearly again today.

On the one hand, Amazon is now selling anti-Semitic shirts. Remember, "palestine from the river to the sea" is by definition a statement supporting the entire destruction of Israel, and yet Amazon is making a fortune on this message

Brand: Generic

1.7 ★★★★★ 8

from The River to The Sea Palestine Will Be Free T-Shirt, Stand with Palestine Map Flag Support Unisex Gift Tee Top



Color: Navy



\$28.99



\$28.99



\$28.99



\$28.99

And at the same time, today at 7:30am PST, IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi announced that if or when and Gaza hospital runs out of fuel, the IDF will make sure that hospital is resupplied. He said that while Hamas has been saying that hospitals are almost out of fuel for two weeks, none have actually run out...even though Hamas is using their fuel for military attacks. He was clear that if a hospital does run out, the IDF will make sure that fuel goes to the hospital...not to Hamas.

Again, it is a demonstration of Jewish ethics in practice. The world wants us dead, and we work for the wellbeing of the world.

We should all be proud of Israel for staying true to Jewish values, even at our own risk, cost, and pain. Next time you wonder why we are called "the chosen people", remember that we are chosen to be models of the ethics and values of Torah... values that, if the whole world embraced them, would lead to a world of caring, respect, and peace.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 2, 2023

18th of Cheshvan, 5784

November 2nd 2023 at 11:22 pm PDT

Past, Present, Future, and a Special Event Nov 9

Chevre

As the U.S. is sending drones over Gaza to look for hostages, it appears as if a second front is starting with Hezbollah in the north. We are moving through Gaza a house and tunnel at a time, and here at home the college campuses are accepting progressively more anti-Semitic demonstrations and violence (there is a great article in today's Jewish Journal which also mentions the good work at UC Berkeley by Daniel Conway, one of our congregants).

We must always look to the future...a future of sustainable peace. We must be aware of the challenges of the present in Israel. And we must remember the past so that the horrors of the last century are not ever repeated, God forbid.

A week from tonight, Thursday, Nov. 9, we will be having a memorial service in honor of the 85th anniversary of Krystallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass. This is considered the start of the Holocaust, when over 300 synagogues were destroyed, over 7000 Jewish businesses were burned, over 30,000 Jews were imprisoned, and 91 Jews were murdered.

We will be having an inter-faith memorial service with prayers and special music on that night. I implore you to come, remember, cry, and pray together. Now is the time.

The evening will begin at 7pm on Nov 9 at the Westlake Mormon Church at 32165 Watergate Rd in Westlake Village. There will be a LOT of armed security, so we can all feel safe, as well as a police presence.

Please join us in this event, remembering the horrors of Krystallnacht so that they never happen again.

Never again is now.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 2, 2023

19th of Cheshvan, 5784

November 3rd 2023 at 7:56 am PDT

Light a Candle

Chevre

King Solomon says in the Book of Proverbs that "the soul of the human being is the candle flame of God". Candles play an important part in our rituals, and I ask that each of us light some special candles this weekend.

President Isaac Herzog in Israel has asked that everyone light a candle at 6pm on Sunday to mark 30 days since the October 7 massacre. That's 8am in the morning if you want to light your candle at the same time, but at least light one during the day at some point to mark these 30 days.

I hope you will come light candles at the temple for Shabbat services tonight,

which begin at 7:30pm. In times such as these, we need to gather together as Jews and stay true to who we are.

For at least during this horrific war, I invite everyone to light a third Shabbat candle in your own home in memory and honor of the Israeli soldiers who have died in battle, and who will never be able to light a Shabbat candle again in this world. The total is now at 23 soldiers as the names of 5 more were released a few hours ago, and include

Cpt. Beni Wais, 22, from Haifa;
Maj. (res.) Uriah Mash, 41, from Talmon;
Maj. (res.) Yehonatan Yosef Brand, 28, from Jerusalem;
Sgt.-Maj. Gil Pishitz, 39, from Harish;
Staff-Sgt. Itay Saadon, 21, from Har Halutz

May their memories be a blessing and their families comforted among the mourners of Zion

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 3, 2024

19th of Cheshvan, 5784

November 4th 2023 at 6:00 pm PDT

EXTREMELY Important Information for Every California Jew

Chevre

Please share this email with everyone you know, for the safety of all Jews in California and the country.

As we all recognize, one of the greatest enemies of Israel and Jews is House member Rashida Tlaib, who has made her life and career about blaming Jews and Israel for all the problems in the world; supports Hamas' goal of "obliterating" all Jews; continues to blame Israel for the destruction in Gaza that

is actually caused by Hamas; and who even raises the Palestinian flag above the American flag outside her office. Make no mistake, she and her supporters want us dead. I have said and written that it would be safer for me to walk alone into a KKK meeting than to be alone around her and her supporters.

Yesterday, Barbara Lee, who is running for Senator here in California, vocally came out in support of Tlaib and recommended an immediate ceasefire in order to "stop this killing of civilians and children".

I have always committed (and kept that commitment) to not speak politics from the pulpit, with the two exceptions that I will always support Israel and always call out anti-Semites. Barbara Lee has crossed both those boundaries. She ignores the civilians and children that were massacred on October 7. She wants the evil of Hamas to have time to regroup so that they can realize their stated goal, God forbid, of repeating the horrors of that terrible day. And she supports one of the most anti-Semitic politicians in history.

Every Jew in California must do what they can to make sure that this anti-Semite never is elected to Senator, or any other public office. For the safety of Jews in California and the nation, Barbara Lee cannot be allowed to be in a position of political power.

Please pass this to everyone you know. This is not an endorsement of any other candidate, but a warning that if, God forbid, Barbara Lee becomes a Senator, it is like putting a nail in the coffin of all Jews and Israel. **She must be stopped.** Donate your time or money to other candidates, and make sure that every Jew votes for one of her opponents.

I also want to remind you of the importance of joining in an inter-faith prayer service commemorating Krystallnacht, the start of the Holocaust, and praying that this anti-Semitic craziness stops on ***Thursday, Nov. 9 at 7:00pm at the Mormon Church at 32165 Watergate Rd in Westlake Village.*** We all need to pray and act...and this is a powerful opportunity. There will be a lot of armed security, so you can be guaranteed a safe environment.

The war in Israel has morphed into an attack on Judaism worldwide. And whether we want to be or not, we are all in this war. This is not hyperbolic: while the IDF is fighting the war against Hamas and Hezbollah, we are also being

attacked as Jews and are at war here at home.

Please share the information in this email with everyone you know, and May the Holy One, blessed be He, protect and keep safe Israel and all the Jewish people.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 4, 2023

21st of Cheshvan, 5784

November 4th 2023 at 8:15 pm PDT

Do NOT Fall Into the Trap

Chevre

I have been notified that, like in many places in the country, there will be a Pro-Palestinian demonstration tomorrow, Nov 5, at the intersection of Westlake and 1000 Oaks Blvds.

Please do not go to counter-protest. These demonstrations are being funded and produced with one specific intention: to cause a violent event that can be a spark for attacking Jews nationwide. Their intention is to emulate the George Floyd event (which itself was a direct copy of the Nazis using Horst Vessel to start the brown shirt riots in pre-Nazi Germany). They are **looking** for fights and violence, so that it can be used as an excuse to create national violence against Jews.

Do not fall into this trap, no matter how tempting. Those of you who know me well know how much I would like to go educate these people, but we cannot fall into their trap...for our own safety and to prevent their goal of a national movement of anti-Jewish rioting. Last week at their "demonstration", there was a report of a fight and firearm. The police quickly dispersed everyone. Do not let yourself get manipulated into a violent situation that could, God forbid, get yourself hurt and cause even more violent acts.

Please be safe, smart, and situationally aware. And May God protect all of the Jewish people and keep us safe.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 4, 2023

21st of Cheshvan, 5784

November 4th 2023 at 11:00 pm PDT

Mezuzot

Chevre

I have received a number of emails asking me about removing your mezuzah from your door. For your own safety...

DON'T!

To place God's word on the doorposts is a biblical commandment, and is making sure that each of us are aware that God is our partner and ally. It is now more important than ever before that we place our trust in Him.

There is another important reason to keep the mezuzah. To remove it is to succumb to the fear that these terrorists are trying to impose on us...and we must stay in faith rather than succumb to fear. Otherwise, they have won no matter what else happens.

If you are finding that you are unable to triumph over any fear you may have, I recommend 3 things. **1:** call or email me. We can have a coffee and talk about it, and work through it together. **2:** Get trained in firearm safety, and have mace or pepper spray with you in case it is; God forbid, needed. **3:** Realize that most people probably know you are Jewish, and removing the mezuzah isn't going to make a difference. If you are really scared of having a mezuzah on the front of your door, then remove it and reaffix it (with the proper prayer) on the inside of the door. The commandment is that it "shall be upon the doorposts of your

house"; and if you do the appropriate affixing prayers you can move it to the inside.

Most importantly, do not let anti-Semitic bullies dictate your practices as a Jew.

I'd like to end this email with a story from the Talmud (Berachot 61b) that I have relayed many times, but is especially important if you are scared of practicing Judaism in these challenging times:

Once, the wicked government [of Rome] decreed that the Jewish people were forbidden to study Torah. Pappus ben Judah saw Rabbi Akiva convening gatherings in public and studying Torah.

Said Pappus to him: "Akiva, are you not afraid of the government?"

Said Rabbi Akiva to him: "I'll give you a parable."

A fox was walking along a river and saw fish rushing to and from. Said he to them: "What are you fleeing?"

Said they (the fish) to him: "The nets that the humans spread for us."

Said he (the fox) to them: "Why don't you come out onto the dry land? We'll live together, as my ancestors lived with your ancestors."

Said they to him: "Are you the one of whom it is said that you are the wisest of animals? You're not wise, but foolish! If, in our environment of life we have cause for fear, how much more so in the environment of our death!"

The same applies to us. If now, when we sit and study the Torah, of which it is said (Deuteronomy 30:20), "For it is your life and the lengthening of your days," such is our situation, how much more so if we neglect it..."

Especially when we gather together in prayer, study, or any community event; or even when we practice our Jewish rites on our own, we are staying in "our river". This is where we are safest: and we have over 3000 years of history to show that when we are true to our Judaism, God ultimately stays true to His covenant of protecting us.

Faith Over Fear. Now and always, this has been the practice of Jews that has

allowed us to survive and thrive against the greatest of odds.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 4, 2024

21st of Cheshvan, 5784

November 5th 2023 at 9:29 am PST

Tensions are High Worldwide

Chevre

Last night there was a group of a few hundred Palestinian supporters who stormed the White House. Although they painted part of the fence red and some even confronted Secret Service agents, apparently none were arrested.

That last sentence is the part to be concerned about. History has taught us that it is dangerous for Jews when anti-Jewish groups are able to break the law without any ramifications. Over this weekend, we have seen multiple pro-Palestinian gatherings where laws were broken, but no one arrested...culminating in what happened at the White House.

This was the essence of Krystallnacht, 85 years ago; and why we are having a prayer service and concert to remember that fateful evening, and commit to never letting it happen again. The event will be this Thursday evening, Nov 9th.

Please be aware and conscious at all times. There have been multiple pro-Palestine demonstrations last night and scheduled for today around the country, including here in Westlake. Please avoid them, not out of fear, God forbid, but out of the realization that these people are looking for a fight so that they can start national riots. Please be safe and stay away from any of these demonstrations.

May we all be blessed with safety and faith; both here and in Eretz Israel.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 5, 2023

21st of Cheshvan, 5784

November 5th 2023 at 12:00 pm PST

Your Help is Needed NOW For 15 Minutes

Chevre

I have been told that the **Deputy Commander of the Givati Brigade** (one of the main units in Gaza) has begged for our help, and it's easy to do.

He said that the heaviest fighting is 11pm - 5am (1pm-7pm PST), the most intense being between 2am and 5am (4pm and 7pm PST). He has asked that Jews throughout the world recite **Tehillim (Psalms)** during this time to help protect and strengthen the soldiers.

This is something everyone reading this can do!

Temple Ner Simcha is going to create a schedule (ok...as usual, it will actually be Orlando who does the heavy lifting...he is a true tzadik).

I am asking that you email **Events@NerSimcha.org** committing to reciting/reading from the **Book of Psalms** for a 15 minute period every day as long as this war continues and our soldiers are in jeopardy. It is my hope that we get at least 3 or 4 people committed to doing this in every 15 minute block at least between 4pm and 7pm every day.

Please make this commitment...to yourself, to God, and to the soldiers who are defending Israel and Judaism. Pick a 15 minute block of time between 4 and 7pm (or more than one block), and email **Events@NerSimcha.org** with your commitment. After we get emails over the next few days, an email will be sent out if there are any blocks of time that need more coverage.

Please do this mitzvah to protect our soldiers and Israel. It is a direct way each of

us can make a real difference per the request of an IDF commander.

I hope to see you on **Wednesday night at 7:30pm** at the **Stonehaus** for a special **Talmud & Tobacco session on Anti-Semitism: a Hate that Mutates.**

And I pray that you will join the **TNS community** on this **Thursday, Nov 9th**, at the **Westlake Mormon Church at 7:00pm** for an inter-faith prayer service and concert in **commemoration of the 85th anniversary of Krystallnacht, the beginning of the Holocaust.**

Please join us in remembrance and prayer this **Thursday, Nov 9 at 7:00pm at the Westlake Church of Latter Day Saints, 32165 Watergate Rd in Westlake Village.**

And please, please email **Events@NerSimcha.org** and commit to 15 minutes every day of reciting Psalms.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 5, 2023

21st of Cheshvan, 5784

November 5th 2023 at 7:45 pm PST

Escalation and Education

Chevre

Not surprisingly, the war is escalating both in the Middle East and here, even in the Conejo Valley.

It was reported and confirmed at 6:00pm PST that the United States has deployed an Ohio class submarine to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility, which includes the Middle East. This is the nuclear powered type of vessel that typically carries advanced ballistic or Tomahawk missiles.

Locally, while flyers with pictures of hostages are routinely being taken down by

"activists"; other flyers are being put up...these with the pictures of Gazan children stating that they have been murdered by Israel. 3 have already been seen by the intersection of Forest Cove and Thousand Oaks in Agoura. Thanks to the actions of a smart Jewish family (members of our community), they now have "Blame Hamas!" boldly marked across the flyers.

One answer to escalation is education. Please join the TNS community at 7:30pm on this Wednesday night, Nov. 8 at Stonehaus for a special Talmud & Tobacco session about anti-Semitism, it's history, and what to do about it.

I also hope you will join our temple and other faith leaders on ***this Thursday night, Nov. 9 at 7:00pm at the Westlake Mormon Church at 32165 Watergate Rd.*** for an inter-faith prayer service and concert in remembrance of the 85th anniversary of Krystallnacht, the beginning of the Holocaust.

Education is part of the action that is needed to counter anti-Semitism, and in conjunction with prayer, is something we can all do to help Israel in her time of need.

I hope to see you Wednesday and Thursday nights for these special events.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 5, 2023

22nd of Cheshvan, 5784

November 5th 2023 at 9:05 pm PST

A Blessing in These Challenging Times to Enter Your Dreams

Chevre

It is especially important in this time of war to point out blessings to be grateful for. Today, we welcomed Asher Benyamin ben Motel into our community and into the Jewish nation as he received his bris and naming.

This is the primary covenant between God and the Jewish people. We are taught that this commandment is so important, that it was one of three reasons our ancestors were freed from slavery in Egypt: even there they performed the brit milah and named their children.

To perform this ancient rite is a blessing not only for the Friedman family and for our community... it blesses and helps protect Israel. Every time we do a mitzvah; be it a bris, reciting Psalms, or studying, we add to the merit of the Jewish people.

As you go to sleep tonight, be grateful to this baby for blessing us all; and be grateful to God that we can celebrate simchas like this. And with God's help, we will continue to celebrate many more joyous events together; we will study and pray together; and we will emerge triumphant in this war and create a lasting peace in Israel, America, and the world.

May we all be blessed to gain merit in our dreams during the night, and our journeys in the day.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 5, 2023

22nd of Cheshvan, 5784

November 6th 2023 at 9:13 am PST

Be of Good Courage - Am Echad

Chevre

Each day of this war in Israel is harder than the one before. But the difficulty on Israel is amplified with what happens in the world outside the Holy Land.

The riots for Hamas get huge publicity in the media. This exposure, in conjunction with the rhetoric of anti-Semite hate mongers like Tlaib and Omar,

leads to the Biden administration feeling pressured to abandon Israel. Blinken is then sent over to Israel to try to pressure Israeli officials to be gentler or "more precise" with attacking Hamas.

This has again just happened, as Blinken is again trying to tell Israelis what to do: this time by telling them that they should emulate the American "precision" attacks in Iraq (the most deadly part of the Iraq war). Blinken apparently is pushing for Israel to let in aid to Gaza, as well as for more Israeli soldiers to be put at risk by only using smaller bombs and being even more vulnerable as they clear the terror tunnels.

Judaism values the saving of one life above all else, and Israel has for over a month been risking her soldiers by her measured attacks in Gaza. But Hamas uses civilians as shields, and seeks to let innocent Gazan civilians die so that they can enrage the world opinion against Israel even more.

But we must be honest. Is there anything that will change world opinion to be in favor of Jews and Israel? If the world is against us even after the most depraved acts of horror on October 7, will it really matter what we do? Can anything change that opinion?

The honest answer is probably not. As we will be discussing on Wednesday night at Stonehaus; anti-Semitism is deeply ingrained in the world's consciousness. If, God forbid, Israel surrendered and every Jew was killed, the world would probably not mourn for more than a day.

That is a dark spot in the soul of humanity.

But we are to be a light unto the nations. We need to stand up for our Jewish values, and expose the darkness of anti-Semites who look backwards towards hate rather than forwards to peace.

Israel will survive and triumph. Israeli military leaders are, as of now thank God, ignoring the advice of Blinken and Biden, and have called it "suicidal". They are committed to destroying the evil of Hamas...recognizing that peace is only a possibility after that evil is destroyed, not just defeated.

And for our own self-survival as Jews, we must support Israel as well as speak

out for Judaism. We all need to be courageous enough to speak against the lies of the anti-Semites; to gather together in prayer and study; and to change the narrative in the media that only shows the pro-Hamas events.

In our own personal lives we must be strong, aware, faithful, and courageous enough to, like Moses thousands of years ago, say

Ivri Anochi! I am a Jew!

Faith over fear does not mean to be foolish. Be aware, and conscious of your environment and how you express yourself. But always be strong and of good courage, and always stand proudly as a Jew.

Never again is now, and we must stand together in study and prayer, and in unification with Israel...for it is true;

Am Echad. We are One People

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 6, 2023

22nd of Cheshvan, 5784

November 6th 2023 at 1:45 pm PST

Do Not Rush to Light a Powder Keg & Baruch Dayan Emet

Chevre

Yesterday at the pro-hamas demonstration at Westlake and Thousand Oaks Blvds a man fell backwards and subsequently died. Baruch dayan emet, May his family be comforted among the mourners of Zion, and if anyone knows him or his family, please give them my contact information in case they need any support at this time.

Stories are conflicting. There have been reports that he just fell down; tripped;

was pushed; was hit, or that he was attacked by a demonstrator who hit him with a megaphone.

I have been speaking regularly and extensively with the Chief of Police. They are currently investigating the incident, and are hoping to find video that shows what precipitated the fall. If you have or know someone who has video like that, please contact me and I'll make sure it gets to the major crimes unit.

Most importantly, do not use this tragedy to justify causing violence at a pro-amas demonstration. Do not rush to a conclusion, and then act violently yourself. Wait until it's clear what really happened, and then Jews locally and around the country can make a clear and direct response if that is what is needed...but do not assume the worst. Let us see what comes to light, and then respond.

Our country is a powder keg right now, please do not light it on fire over something that may not even be true.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 6, 2023

22nd of Cheshvan, 5784

November 6th 2023 at 10:05 pm PST

Baruch Dayan Emet - Paul Kessler

Chevre

For those of you who are not yet aware, Paul Kessler died today as a result of head trauma due to an altercation at the pro-Gazan demonstration this past weekend.

The war in Israel has borne fruit in Westlake Village.

We need to have faith in Chief of Police Jeremy Paris and Sheriff Jim Fryhoff. As

of tonight, it has been labeled a homicide, but there are many nuances in that definition and the police are investigating what happened as they have multiple different witness reports and no video of the altercation. They will be holding a press conference at 10am tomorrow at the Thousand Oaks Police Station.

Please allow the police to do their job.

And as I have been saying for the last few weeks, please be situationally aware. And please avoid putting yourself in harm's way by staying away from counter-protesting the ugly demonstrations supporting Gaza.

May Paul's memory be a blessing, and may Cheryl and his family be comforted among the mourners of Zion.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 6, 2023

23rd of Cheshvan, 5784

November 7th 2023 at 7:36 am PST

We Must Choose to Act, Not React

Chevre

Emotions are high with the horrible tragedy of Paul Kessler's death. Please take a lesson from the IDF and pause before reacting so that everything we say and do is 100% accurate and serves the larger purpose of helping the war in Israel and Jews here.

The police are doing their investigation and having a press conference today at 10am. As of tonight, they had multiple conflicting incident reports, but they still have no video of the altercation that prefaced his death.

Allow the police to do their job, and have faith in the justice system here in Thousand Oaks. While I might not be so confident in other places, Sheriff Fryhoff

and Chief Paris are both good men committed to justice.

Please be situationally aware at all times, and emulate the IDF, which does not make statements until they can 100% back them up, and calculates every move rather than reacting.

Most of you know me well enough to know that I do not back down from conflict... but wisdom comes through patience, not through emotional reaction

The one reaction that we all must have is to feel sorrow for Paul's death, and to be there for his family and friends in any way they need. For now, replace any anger with sadness.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 7, 2023

23rd of Cheshvan, 5784

November 7th 2023 at 7:00 pm PST

Always Have Faith in Miracles

Chevre

While here in our own community we have experienced a terrible tragedy with the death of Paul Kessler, Israel is moving "deeper into Gaza than Hamas ever imagined". Netanyahu has stated that there is a commitment for no cease fire until all hostages are returned. Additionally, Israel is purchasing 300 million dollars of precision bombs from the US to help make the Gaza mission more precise.

And here is the surprise piece of news for the day: Senator John Fetterman, Democrat from Pennsylvania, has covered the walls of his office with pictures of the hostages, and has said he will not take them down until every one is home.

Judaism teaches that everything is in the hands of God exception of being in awe

of God. Miracles happen and WILL happen both here and in Israel.

We are Jews...we ain't just believe in miracles, we rely on them!

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 7, 2023

24th of Cheshvan, 5784

November 8th 2023 at 7:54 am PST

Hostages Being Used as a Defensive Weapon

Chevre

We are now seeing the evil brilliance of Hamas' taking of hostages, and it is despicable.

As Israel pummels Hamas non-stop, the world's anti-Semitism is being fanned as we see in our own community. Hamas desires to regroup, and so a deal is supposedly being brokered by Qatar and the U.S. for a 1-2 day cease fire in exchange for 10-15 hostages.

Think how their taking of civilians could, God forbid, lengthen this war significantly. Rather than be forced into defeat, this model of hostage release for temporary cease fires could be used over and over again; each time giving respite to Hamas and the ability for them to regroup...dragging in the war indefinitely. And if Israel says that they will not cease fire for only a few of the hostages, then Hamas and the world can say that Israel doesn't actually care about the hostages and just wants to kill Palestinians. A conundrum that leads to a longer war and even more hate in the world court of opinion.

...and as this war goes on, each day increases the overt anti-Semitism and anti-Israel hatred in the world.

Now we see how the intentional kidnapping of children is not only despicable,

but insidiously well planned. Because we will do almost anything to rescue even one life, it is a Catch-22. If we trade ceasing fire for a few lives, then the war goes on longer, more IDF soldiers will die, and the world's fire of anti-Semitism increases. If we do not make this trade, then the world's hate increases as it claims that not ceasing fire is proof that Israel wants to commit genocide and really doesn't care about her civilian hostages.

Either way, Israel becomes even more hated around the world; anti-Semitism is increased; and the world edges closer, God forbid, to Hamas' long term goal (as said in their charter, "The Covenant of 1988") of obliterating every Jew in the world.

Now we start to see the truly evil long term brilliance of Hamas kidnapping over 200 hostages.

These are challenging times for every Jew, and we need to gather in prayer, study, and action. I hope you will join myself and the TNS community tonight, Nov. 8 at The Stonehaus 7:30pm for our study session on "Anti-Semitism: the Hate that Mutates" as part of our Talmud & Tobacco program. As always, premium cigars will be provided, everyone can get their own food and drinks, and there will also be a large non-smoking area.

Please join us tomorrow night, Thursday, Nov 9 at 7:00pm at the LDS Church in Westlake for an interfaith prayer service and concert in remembrance of Krystallnacht, and where we will also be remembering Paul Kessler, whose death is too reminiscent of that horrible night 85 years ago. It will be a meaningful night of prayer and music, and a reminder always do everything to prevent any more events like that dark night almost a century ago. Again, I hope you will join us in this important concert and prayer service tomorrow, Thursday Nov. 9 at 7:00pm at 32165 Watergate Rd in Westlake Village.

We gather strength and courage in community, and I hope to see everyone both tomorrow and especially on Thursday night to learn, pray, and act together.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 8, 2023

24th of Cheshvan, 5784

November 8th 2023 at 9:11 am PST

A Small Strike Against Anti-Semites

Chevre

Rashida Tlaib, the anti-Semitic provocateur and hate-monger was censured by the House of Representatives for her constant and consistent anti-Israel hate in Congress by a vote of 234-188.

While censure traditionally was a heavy punishment of embarrassment (she is only the 26th censure in history, but the second this year to Omar, another virulent anti-Semite), it actually is pretty meaningless and has no teeth...although it is a necessary step towards expulsion from Congress.

Before you celebrate about this, please pause and realize the longer game plan of Tlaib, Omar, and the other anti-Semites in Congress.

She will undoubtedly continue her anti-Semitic hate filled rhetoric, knowing that the only punishment would be expulsion. And on a certain level, that is exactly what Tlaib wants as she knows it would cause national riots that would dwarf the BLM riots.

The answer is not her expulsion, not her censure, but to get someone else who is not an anti-Semite to replace her in office

But it is a positive statement of how at least some non-Jews are realizing the extent of anti-Semitic words

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 8, 2023

24th of Cheshvan, 5784

November 9th 2023 at 7:28 am PST

Important Event TONIGHT

Chevre

Jews remember the horrors of the past so that it doesn't become the future.

Tonight marks the 85th anniversary of Krystallnacht, the start of the Holocaust. The anti-Semitism that had been bubbling in demonstrations for a few years in Germany culminated in this one night when there was a mass pogrom that resulted in over 7000 Jewish businesses being destroyed in that one terrible night.

We will be remembering this horrible night in history with an inter-faith prayer service and concert **TONIGHT at 7:00pm at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints at 32165 Watergate Rd.** It is a larger and safer building than our own sanctuary, and armed security will be present to keep everyone safe.

German Jews had repeatedly said that anti-Semitism would subside. Until this night 85 years ago, they never believed this type of horror could happen to them.

The parallels to the days that we are experiencing now are eerily similar.

In addition to prayers from different clergy and musicians such as Yuval Ron and Mat Gurman, we will attempt to start to heal from the recent event in our community of this past weekend. It is an ongoing investigation, but we can come together as a community with others to remember that in Westlake Village/Thousand Oaks we choose to reject the divisive hate that led to the tragedy.

It is important on so many levels that each of us come to remember this terrible night of 85 years ago; to pray and act; and to commit to this type of anti-Semitic hate never happens here in our community...or anywhere in the world...again

I hope to see you tonight at 7:00pm

Never Again is Now

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 9, 2023

25th of Cheshvan, 5784

November 10th 2023 at 10:01 am PST

An Amazing Night; "Pauses" in Israel, and Local Police Update

Chevre

Thank you for participating in last night's interfaith service. The room holds 300 people and was filled with people of all faiths being moved with prayers and music. Additionally, thanks to the donation of a piece of art created by Aaron Levitan, we raised over \$3000, getting another electrical bed for Bnai Zion Medical Center.

In Israel, the IDF has surrounded the hospitals at the center of Gaza City. There are many mixed stories about a "4 hour pause per day". I just spoke with a friend who is well placed in Israel infrastructure. Apparently Biden was pressuring Bibi for a 2 day cease fire, and was very upset that he could only get a 4 hour "pause". Israel has consciously been giving pauses in certain areas for a few days to let civilians who do want to get out of certain areas. It is not an entire cease fire. They are doing it so that civilians can get to the south, and so they can see if any hostages are trying to be smuggled with civilians.

Please have faith in the IDF, and more importantly, in God.

Locally, we were blessed to have Chief of Police, Jeremy Paris join us last night. This is the update on the death of Paul Kessler. The police have a lot of witnesses who are saying there was no physical altercation, and other witnesses who say there was. This is why they are desperately seeking video to confirm one side or the other. They know that there were Teslas in the area, and are asking that any Tesla owner in the area reach out to them as your car might have conclusive video. They need video to confirm what actually happened, as there are too many eyewitness stories that conflict.

The police are also concerned about demonstrations this weekend. Please stay away from any protests and counter protests. These demonstrators are looking for violence. Please do not let yourself get baited into their trap. There is nothing positive that can come at this time from your attending a demonstration on Westlake and T.O. Blvds other than more tragedies, God forbid.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 10, 2023

26th of Cheshvan, 5784

November 10th 2023 at 6:10 pm PST

A Sabbath Prayer From Broadway

Chevre

Some things don't need commentary. Here is a Sabbath Prayer that needs to be answered.



Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 10, 2023

26th of Cheshvan, 5784

November 11th 2023 at 6:40 pm PST

Be Aware and Awake, it's Getting Uglier Here in California.. But ALWAYS Choose Faith

Chevre

Shavuah tov. Please read this, and be situationally aware, as the anti-Semitic hate is increasing exponentially.

There was a demonstration at UCLA where students took turns hitting a pinata of Prime Minister Netanyahu while chanting "Free Palestine" and "Beat that f---ing Jew". And UCLA has done nothing so far to make it a safe campus for

students.

It is a very, very small step from chanting that hate while pummeling a pinata to physically attacking Jews.

Never again is now. Be aware, and be prepared. Please carry mace or pepper spray with you at all times in case of emergency over the next days and weeks. The temple will be providing defense classes soon, and each of us need to be aware.

Remember to never be afraid! Rebbe Nachman teaches. "All the world is just a narrow bridge, and above all, is to never be afraid." The moment that we succumb to fear is the moment that these hateful terrorists win...and we cannot let that happen. Have faith...in God, your Jewish community, and in America to ultimately side with us in this war on hate.

Judaism teaches faith + action. Have faith, and be aware and prepared. Both are needed in these challenging times.

Faith does not mean be foolish! ***Do Not go to "counter protests"***. There is no purpose other than to get into conflict; and these hate filled demonstrators are looking for violence as an excuse for more violence. Be wise and do not look for trouble, and be prepared in case, God forbid, trouble looks for you.

If you personally experience any anti-Semitic hate in the coming days and weeks, please call me on my cell at **310 980-5189** at any time 24/7 so that it can get dealt with.

Have faith, attend services and classes, recite Psalms for protection of the IDF, donate to www.healthcareforisrael.org, and be personally aware and prepared.

Above all, remember that for over 3000 years we have survived much worse than what is going on...and have faith in the truth of...

Am Yisrael Chai
The People of Israel Live

To help you remember that truth, here is a video that I hope inspires you and

helps you remember that no matter how dark it may seem, we always choose hope; and Israel is and always will stay strong

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=dycDj8OrdGs&pp=ygUfQWJyYWhhbXMgbGVnc2N5IGFtIHlzaXJhZWwgY2hhaQ%3D%3D>

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 11, 2023

28th of Cheshvan, 5784

November 11th 2023 at 10:49 pm PST

A Sad But Necessary Change

Chevre

First and most importantly, please do not go to any counter-protests. The police are expecting violence around the country, and attending one will not make the world better. Instead, educate everyone you know about the truth of Hamas, "palestine", and Israel.

With the newest information of tonight, you may want to protest, but if you feel compelled, do it in a safe way, not as a counter protest. The suspect in the stabbing of the Jewish leader in Detroit has been released, and there are no other details as of this moment. Please do not react emotionally, but with clarity and deliberation.

For many years, I have always used the postscript of "b'shalom", "with peace" at the end of my emails. Given the circumstances of the world, I believe sadly that I need to change that (if I can remember to break the habit) to a different "blessing"...

Hazak u'baruch

Be strong and be blessed

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 11, 2023

28th of Cheshvan, 5784

November 12th 2023 at 9:54 am PST

To Be Compassionate and Still Strong and Clear

Chevre

At around 6:30am PST, it was announced and shown that the IDF found a children's copy of Mein Kampf in a child's bedroom in a civilian home that was being used as a Hamas terror base.

A child is born with a soul of light. But when indoctrinated from birth with the hate of Hamas, it is a foregone conclusion that these children will grow into the terrorists and harbingers of evil that we have seen in the last 5 weeks. We must have compassion upon their souls and anger at their parents. As the Midrash teaches: when Pharaoh's soldiers were drowning and the angels rejoiced; God stopped the angels with the sadness that the work of His hands was being destroyed and they should not be celebrating.

This midrash needs to be our guiding light during this war. We must destroy, not defeat Hamas. They are consciously breeding hate. And we must never rejoice in what we must do, but instead be willing to cry over the loss of souls that at one time, no matter how long ago, were not evil. God's creations were disfigured into vessels of hate, and for that, we can never forgive Hamas nor its supporters.

One of those supporters, Ilhan Omar, has been one of the leaders of the anti-Semitic hate permeating our nation. Good news though: a prominent Minnesota Democrat just announced that he is challenging her. Former Minneapolis City Council Member Don Samuels is going to try to unseat her, and while I know nothing about him, on the surface this would seem hopeful.

May we all retain our compassionate souls as we do the job that must be done of destroying Hamas...not for their sake, but for ours.

Hazak u'baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 12, 2023

28th of Cheshvan, 5784

November 12th 2023 at 7:23 pm PST

Updates in Israel

Chevre

A lot has happened in Israel over the weekend, and with the local concerns, some of us may have missed what is going on in the Holy Land. So a few updates:

---Netanyahu is being very discreet about discussing whether a hostage deal is being arranged, and at the same time he is asking their cabinet ministers to be more discreet in their language so that world media does not use their words against all of us

---Hamis is saying there is no negotiating for release of any hostages until Israel ceases fire and withdraws from Al Shifa hospital. This is especially noteworthy as we know that the hospital has been a major Hamis base; a gateway to tunnels; and Israel has repeatedly tried to get fuel, food, and water to the hospital...which Hamis has stopped. They are only interested if everything is given to them and they will then distribute it to the hospital

---Israel has made great strides into Hamis bases, and is also evacuating babies from Al Shifa hospital. They are keeping an evacuation route open and safe for any Gazans who want to evacuate.

---There are more attacks coming from Lebanon and Syria, and Israel is responding accordingly, and making it clear that it would be bad for Lebanon if Hezbollah drags them into war

---The IDF has confirmed tonight that Israeli forces have captured Gaza port.

---And outside of Israel, 180,000 people demonstrated in France against anti-Semitism

While this is all good news from a war perspective, please temper any joy by remembering that all of this comes with a loss of life. Every drop of blood is a pain to God, and we must all pray and act to destroy Hamas, get hostages released, and create a lasting peace.

Hazak u'baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 12, 2023

29th of Cheshvan, 5784

November 13th 2023 at 8:42 am PST

To Inspire and Recharge

Chevre

Sometimes we just need to take a moment and recharge. So I offer this video by my friend Eyal in Israel. It is of Israelis practicing the yoga exercise of the Sun Salutation, and I hope it helps to recharge you <https://youtube.com/shorts/5xdA3cTASjE?feature=share>

The Sun Salutation (Surya Namaskar) is 12 linked asanas (postures) with accompanying prayers for protection, strength, and spiritual connection.

May the hostages, and all of Israel and the Jewish people be protected, strong, and always know that we are one...Am Echad

Hazak u'baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 13, 2023

29th of Cheshvan, 5784

November 14th 2023 at 6:46 am PST

Baruch Dayan Emet - May Their Memory be a Blessing

Chevre

2 more IDF troops have been killed in Gaza warfare, bringing the total to 46 deaths in the Gaza ground operation. This includes over the weekend Maj Moshe Leiter, the commander of the unit that has Eyal Tiberger's son-in-Law in it, who died going in first into a mined dangerous tunnel area

This says everything about the difference between Israel and Hamas. Hamas leaders live as billionaires in Qatar. Israeli leaders go into dangerous situation leading their troops. Hamas leaders hide behind human shields. Israeli leaders go into danger first in order to protect their troops.

Hamas worships death. Israel treasures life

May the Holy One bring peace upon these souls, and may their families be comforted among the mourners of Zion.

Hazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 14, 2023

1st of Kislev, 5784

November 14th 2023 at 9:54 am PST

Is the D.C. Rally Today Useful, or A Virtue Signal?

Chevre

The news over the next 24 hours is going to be filled with reports of the "March Against Anti-Semitism" that is taking place in Washington DC today between 10am and 3pm. Almost 40 speakers are scheduled, but is it meaningful or just a publicity opportunity?

As is usually the Jewish response to an either/or question, the answer is "yes".

It certainly is more productive than a counter protest that is an invitation for violence. It is well prepared and produced, and should be safe for participants.

On the other hand, the lineup of speakers looks like a who's who of politicians and fundraisers. Men and women who typically are most concerned with their public personas and increasing their coffers as well as potential Jewish votes.

So yes, it is a nice image that will capture the media for a little bit of time, people will feel good about seeing Jews gather, and it will create sound bytes that will be used for campaigns. But does it actually make a lasting difference or add anything to the world or our lives as American Jews?

The answer is maybe, lol. It depends on what is specifically said by a few speakers.

While most of the speakers are looking to create sound bytes. There are a few that may end up doing much more than that. Since few people will spend the hours listening to all the speeches and self-promoting, here are the few to watch and listen to carefully (times are PST)

10:20 am: Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt, Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism. She will probably talk about Paul Kessler even though the investigation is ongoing. See if she talks about the suspect being released in the murder of the Detroit Jewish leader, especially since that was a federal investigation. Also see if she mentions compassion, aid, Gaza, etc to see if she is actually pushing for a cease fire behind the scenes

10:25am: Israel President Isaac Herzog. Listen carefully to what he says about hostage exchange and potential cease fire; and/or if he talks about Hamas attacks since Oct 7, new Hamas drone weapons that we have seen in the last few days, and how and when he refers to "Gaza" as opposed to "Palestine"

11:00am: Michael Herzog, Israeli Ambassador to the US. Watch to see how he talks about cease fire requirements; his language about defeating or destroying Hamas (these are different terms); and what he says about the hostage deal that is being discussed. What he says, and what he doesn't say, will be very telling

11:05am: House Speaker Mike Johnson. He is new to the scene, so listen to his tone and commitments carefully as it will give an idea of how hard he will fight for continuing unconditional funding for Israel

The rest of the speakers will probably be the typical political campaign speech, or attempt to enhance their own personal reputations. But those four are the ones to really look and listen to closely

Hazak u'baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 14, 2023

1st of Kislev, 5784

November 14th 2023 at 10:56 pm PST

Pray for All Our Family in Israel

Chevre

Please say extra prayers tonight for the safety of Israel, her people, and especially her soldiers as the fighting in Gaza is getting more intense. Fighting is taking place in the Al Shifa hospital; and although the IDF has made every effort to get patients out prior to the fighting, it is a safe assumption that the world press will attack Israel for taking a battle into a hospital. Please remember that Hamas has put many of their bases inside hospitals, and it is suspected by both Israel and US officials that at least some hostages have been kept at Al Shifa. The IDF is working on clearing the dangerous area of a hospital that was built for healing, not war.

Our holy brothers and sisters in Israel are also being attacked on other fronts, as Yemen has been launching missiles at Eilat over the Red Sea.

Please keep your hearts open and your spirits focused on God protecting Israel, her people, and her military.

Someone asked a friend if he had family in Israel. We must all echo his reply of "Everyone in Israel is my family"

This song translates to "From the Mouth of God, Israel will be blessed. There is none as powerful as God" Even exhausted and weary, in danger and cautious; our holy brothers and sisters sing praises to God as their greatest ally...

<https://m.youtube.com/shorts/uNtQ4GWTxYU>

May Israel and her people and soldiers stay strong, safe, blessed, and protected.

Hazak u'baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 14, 2023

2nd of Kislev, 5784

November 15th 2023 at 10:39 am PST

This War Shows Why Judaism Prohibits Gossip

Chevre

A few hours ago, it was reported that Hamas is going to release 50 hostages in exchange for 3 days of ceasefire. At the same time it was reported that Israel will not have a ceasefire until all hostages are released. Yesterday, it was reported that an Israeli Minister said we have only 2-3 weeks until we make peace; and today, Minister Gantz was clear that Israel will keep going until all Hamas leaders are killed anywhere in the world. And we are all aware of conflicting statements about the military situation in Gaza being made every day.

Whom do we believe? The ones that we agree with or like? The ones that come from what we consider credible sources? Do we pass along the information, in joy or in pain, to others?

Gossip, called "lashon hara" ("the evil tongue") is strictly forbidden in Jewish law,

and it's easy to see why it is problematic when we act on those rumors, causing even more challenges. And if spreading gossip is dangerous with large events, think how dangerous it can be in our own personal relationships. Too many couples end up having problems because one of them has listened to a rumor, and too many friendships are broken for the same reason.

Lashon hara can destroy any personal relationship. It can create wars and prevent peace. It's why facts need to be checked and rechecked. It's why we can't base our actions on rumors. Gossip is highly infectious and dangerous, and in Judaism, is compared to leprosy. Like leprosy is easily contracted; cannot be healed; and you can clearly see its effects.

As the pressure mounts from some for a ceasefire in Gaza, rumors will be swirling. As Israel proceeds to do what it needs to, the truth and fallacies will become interwoven in rumors throughout the media. We must wait until we see actions before believing what is said in the press about ceasefires, hostage releases, or war efforts.

We must take that practice of rejecting rumors into our own community and personal lives as well. Although there are many conflicting "eyewitness reports" about the death of Paul Kessler; most Jews have assumed one "truth" and many other people have accepted another. Within hours of his death, I was on the phone with the Chief of Police while at the exact same time Jewish organizations around the country who don't even know where Westlake Village is on the map were saying that he was murdered, that a suspect would be prosecuted for a hate crime, and that people should donate to their organizations to fight anti-Semitism. The police have been clear that there are a lot of conflicting reports, that they are looking for video of the incident; and that the investigation is ongoing. But people and organizations are listening to rumors; manipulating his tragic death for their own purposes (usually fundraising) and acting in ways based on these rumors that could be dangerous to themselves and others.

Whether it is on a global scale about the war; a local scale about Paul's death; or a personal scale about relationships, it is wise to listen to our ancient Sages (also called "Chazal", an acronym for "wise ones, may their memory be blessed") and ignore all rumors and gossip. Doing so will bring out the real truth faster and easier, be it with regard to any hostages or ceasefire, the death of a community member, or the relationship we have with a friend or loved one.

May we all choose to live with integrity in these challenging times, and may Israel, her people, her soldiers, and her land be kept safe under the protection of the Holy One as she does what needs to be done.

Hazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 15, 2023

2nd of Kislev, 5784

November 16th 2023 at 7:21 am PST

Hope in History

Chevre

As we continue to wade through the darkness in the world, and the IDF is making its way through Gaza, we can look to the calendar for a bit of light in the darkness.

On today's date over 2600 years ago, we are taught that the prophet Zecharia gave the last legitimate "prophecy" (according to Rashi, Yoma 21b). This is the foretelling that the day will come when the fast days of 17th of Tammuz and Tisha b'Av will turn unto days of joy.

These two holidays commemorate the worst happenings in Jewish history, and are the saddest days in the calendar. But we are taught that the time will come when they are joyous, and that is a teaching to remember in our own dark times. We are Jews, and we choose to have faith.

...And we must choose to have faith that Israel, her people, and all Diaspora Jews will be safe. As dark as it may seem with the war in Israel and increased anti-Semitism around the world, we must choose to embrace the last prophecy of Zecharia: light will come and joy will come out of the darkness.

To help you choose that faith, here is a short video to remind you that we are

never alone, and that support will always come to our people from sources we may not expect.

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/CzjL4GtVyU/?igshid=MTc4MmM1YmI2Ng%3D%3D>

Chazak u'Baruch
Be Strong and Be Blessed

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 16, 2023

3rd of Kislev, 5784

November 16th 2023 at 7:58 am PST

An Arrest Has Been Made

Chevre

I just got off the phone with the Chief of Police of Thousand Oaks. An arrest has been made in the death of Paul Kessler. Loay Alnaji has been arrested on the charge of manslaughter.

There is no charge of it being a hate crime right now, but they are still gathering potential evidence regarding that charge, so it may or may not happen in the future. The District Attorney, Sheriff, and Chief will be meeting with local clergy prior to the press conference tomorrow to discuss more details.

I know many people will want to celebrate....but there is nothing to celebrate. Paul Kessler lost his life, and anti-Semitism is rampant. Although a good case has been built according to the Chief, there is still a trial to be had. There simply is no joy in this entire scenario...and whatever may happen to Mr. Alnaji will not bring back Paul.

We are Jews, and we seek justice, not vengeance. Hamas must be destroyed, but there is no joy in it. Mr. Alnaji is arrested, but this isn't a football game, and it would be better to never have to deal with this type of crime.

We have amazing law enforcement officials, and their actions show it has been worth trusting them.

Blessed are you, Lord our God, who judges in truth.

Chazak u"baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 16, 2023

3rd of Kislev, 5784

November 16th 2023 at 9:20 am PST

The Arrest Has Been Made..Now What?

Chevre

As you know, an arrest has been made in the death of Paul Kessler. The charge of manslaughter has been leveled against Loay Alnaji, and there is still an ongoing investigation into the possibility of a hate crime. There will be a press conference tomorrow morning, and officials will be privately meeting with local clergy before. As I wrote earlier this morning, the prophecy that Zecharia made on this very day is true, and light will come out of the darkness.

From the first moment of this tragedy, it has been important to trust local law enforcement. I've repeatedly said that they should be trusted to seek justice, and they have demonstrated that again now. When they say that there is still an investigation into the possibility of a hate crime, we can all be assured that they are actually investigating. But there is another important factor that we must keep in mind as this case proceeds.

There is nothing to rejoice about. A man is dead. Another man's hatred will bring him pain and probably incarceration. Anti-semitism is on the rise, and we are at war in Israel for the preservation of Western culture. College campuses are unsafe on multiple levels, and ignoramuses are demonstrating for Hamas, a truly evil organization. To quote the old poem, there is no joy in Mudville.

We need to be grateful that our local law enforcement is so good and filled with integrity. And we need to continue to fight for justice domestically and in Israel. But we must always remember the losses, and never rejoice in the pain of others, even evil. The battle between good and evil is not a football game, and for the sake of our own humanity, we must be careful not to become like our enemy.

The bible teaches "tzedek tzedk tirdof", "Justice, justice shall you pursue. We are to seek justice and pursue it, but remember not to rejoice in the pain of others.

I am so grateful to our local police for pursuing justice and arresting Alnaji, and pray that he will receive all of what he deserves as the case progresses.

May Paul Kessler's memory be a blessing, and Blessed is God, who judges in truth.

Chazak u"baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 16, 2023

3rd of Kislev, 5784

November 17th 2023 at 6:00 am PST

Shabbat, An Update, and a Request

Chevre

Sabbath: It seems that so much is going on in the world so quickly that it's hard to keep up...another reason to take some time for Shabbos. It is true what Ehad Ha'am said, "More than the Jews have kept the Sabbath, Sabbath has kept the Jews". I hope to see you tonight at 7:30pm for a respite from the physical world as we light the Sabbath candles.

An Update: The body of a hostage was found at Shifa hospital, Yehudit Weiss

z"l. One of the reasons the IDF was so methodical at the hospital is that they wanted to identify if hostages were kept there. There is now no doubt that they were, and we must pray that they are rescued.

Local law enforcement and the D.A. will be holding a press conference this morning at 10:30am to discuss the Kessler case updates. A man has been arrested, and they are still investigating other issues such as if there are other potential suspects who were involved in some way and if it was a hate crime. I have been repeatedly recommending to trust the police, and you can see that recommendation is valid. They will continue to be methodical and careful as they keep investigating. They are gathering with myself and a few other Rabbis before the press event, so hopefully we will know more later in the day.

A Request: As all of you know, we are the first non-Orthodox temple in the nation with no membership dues, cost for High Holidays, religious school, etc. We are only able to continue to do what we do through voluntary donations and the few fundraisers we do each year. This is where my request is aimed...we need your help.

Between all that is going on locally and in the world, we are far behind on our paperwork, and no invoices for your holiday pledges have been sent out since before Sukkot... and with all the craziness in the world, we are not sure when they will. If you made a pledge during the holidays, please go to www.nersimcha.org/give and fulfill your pledge without getting a bill.. and maybe even give a little more than you had originally pledged.

But this is a two-part request! In the next few days you will start getting emails about our Annual Latke Launch. For those of you unaware, this is an annual event where people buy squares for \$20/square (like bingo) on a field; frozen latkes are launched with a three person huge slingshot; and you win a prize if the latke lands in your square! You don't have to be present to win, but it's a lot of fun if you can join us on December 10th for the launch... and there are some great prizes: trips to 5 star resorts; fine art and Judaica pieces that are worth hundreds and in some cases thousands of dollars; gift certificates; and other fun prizes. You will be getting a lot of emails from the temple about this in the next two weeks, and I am asking you to please buy some tickets...and encourage your friends to buy some too. If you want to pre-buy tickets, you can go to www.nersimcha.org/latke-launch ... and you will be seeing a lot of emails

from the temple (not me, other than this one) about it in the coming days.

Please support your community so that we can continue to be a leader in the Jewish world. We raised over \$460,000 for Bnai Zion Hospital...if we can do one quarter of that amount for this Latke Launch, we will have our budget for the rest of the year until next Rosh HaShana. So the second part of my request is to support your own community, and when you see the emails coming...don't delete them, but choose to give. Plus, you may win some really great prizes!

Gut Shabbos, and I hope to see you tonight at services at 7:30pm to welcome in the Sabbath Queen together.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 17, 2023

4th of Kislev, 5784

November 17th 2023 at 5:03 pm PST

Paul Kessler's Death and What it Can Mean

Chevre

After reviewing over 600 pieces of evidence, interviewing over 60 witnesses, and spending over 2000 man hours in the last week and a half investigating the death of Paul Kessler, the Ventura County Sheriff arrested Loay Alnaji yesterday morning. Today he was arraigned and charged with involuntary manslaughter and felony battery, along with special allegations that would enhance both charges if convicted to be strikes in the California 3 strikes law.

They are still investigating the possibility of Paul's death being a "hate crime", but at this time, no such charge is being made. To charge him with a hate crime, they would need video (which they are still seeking) that demonstrates his hate in that moment and ties it to the violent act. The 1st Amendment guarantees the right of political speech, and it is difficult to determine that it crossed over into

hate speech without either a video or a group of witnesses that are in agreement. One of the challenges with this case is that the “eyewitnesses” convey very different stories. So while they are still investigating, no hate crimes are being added to the other two enhanced charges at this time.

It will be months before we see this case in court, during which time the police will keep investigating. We are very blessed here in Ventura County to have our District Attorney and law enforcement work well together hand in hand. But what are some of the lessons we can take right now from the tragedy of Paul Kessler’s death?

The most obvious lesson is to stop counter-protesting. No one’s mind is going to be changed by yelling at an opposing group across the street. In a private meeting with local clergy before the press conference today, Sheriff Fryhooff phrased it well. “Don’t go. Just stay away from these things.”

The Sheriff is right: these events are attempts to create chaos, and showing up to counter-protest just plays into their hands of inciting violence. They want violence, as can so clearly be seen in this article by Jennifer Van Laar on RedState. (<https://redstate.com/jenvanlaar/2023/11/16/video-shows-timeline-of-paul-kessler-attack-potential-accomplices-and-where-did-that-bullhorn-go-n2166439>)

If you desire to gather together and demonstrate publicly, then do it as a separate event with your own agenda in your own location, not as a counter-protest. You will accomplish more, and be safer. If Paul Kessler had remembered that advice, he might be alive today to debate about its merit.

Another lesson that we must take away from this journey we all have gone through since Paul’s death is that most issues are, and should be, local. Local communities know better than national organizations. While the last 11 days have been a national whirlwind of demands upon our police to charge Alnaji, those of us who live in this community have known that we can trust our neighbors and local officials. While Jewish organizations around the country and world were screaming for “justice”, those of us who know Sheriff Fryhoff and Police Chief Paris knew that they would be methodical and do the right thing. Jewish individuals and organizations raised hundreds of thousands of dollars or more on the death of Paul Kessler by claiming that they would fight for justice in Westlake

Village... and most of them probably couldn't even find this suburb on the map. This all demonstrates that it is usually better to trust localities over media; personal relationships over federal government mandates.

Granted there are times when there is corruption or prejudice locally, and it is appropriate for national pressure and authorities to get involved. But America is built on the concept of our individual states being unique and connected: not being the tool of a centralized federal government. The founders of this nation were aware of the dangers of too centralized a federal government leading to authoritarianism.

What we just experienced and will continue to see in the coming months is the importance of local relationships and politics. It is said that all politics are local, and Paul's death reminds us that we must be involved locally in our communities, houses of worship, and friendships. We in Westlake know what is needed here; and our community is different than Manhattan or Boise. Unless they are contradictory to the Constitution or against accepted laws of decency, we all need to respect each other's community values and practices.

This tragedy is a reminder of the strength of localities, and the importance to be involved. In many ways, more can be accomplished to further your values by being on the local school board, running for Sheriff, District Attorney, or another local office than can be accomplished in Washington. George Souros has devastated this country by funding campaigns for local D.A.s in large cities: allowing crime to run rampant and making many big cities unsafe. If we can control the local environments, we can effect real change in recovering this nation.

And we can begin to once again trust the "government", as we personally know the officials and they live among us.

I have said the same thing since the event: we need to trust the local authorities. Today, we all saw that trust was well placed. We now need to trust District Attorney Erik Nasarenko; another good man who seeks justice, actively pursues it, and is committed to defending our Constitution. I have faith he will see justice served, and I ask that the nation has faith in him as well.

Paul Kessler didn't need to die, and his story is a tragic one. But if we get

involved locally, his death will not be wasted, but lead to something better. A few years ago, Paul wrote an email to me after the tragedy in Texas in November of 2017. He wrote words that we all need to remember; both in his honor and to make our world better.

After each one of these tragedies, we ask for "prayers and thoughts" to go to the victims and their families. And yet, they continue. Even if we subscribe to Rabbi Kushner's position that there is a randomness in the universe, action, especially in this regard, would be more effective in preventing the need for more thoughts and prayers.

He was right, we need action in combination with our words and prayers. We need to act by being involved in local government, and trusting in the values of our communities.

May we soon see the day when we again have faith in our government: first locally, and then with God's guidance, nationally.

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 17, 2023

5th of Kislev, 5784

November 17th 2023 at 6:07 pm PST

To Bring Joy To Your Shabbat

Chevre

In the midst of hell, we need to cherish the moments of joy and remember what we are fighting for.



May God keep all of these soldiers, and all of Israel, safe and protected.

Gut Shabbos

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 17, 2023

5th of Kislev, 5784

November 18th 2023 at 9:42 pm PST

What is Happening in Israel

Chevre

Shavuah tov, may this new week bring us all good blessings, and keep Israel and her people safe. It's now 7am in Israel, and day 44 of this war (to put it in

perspective, the Yom Kippur War lasted 19 days)

For those of you who aren't Israel news junkies:

---The death toll from the Gaza operation is up to 58 holy brothers and sisters in the IDF

---There are a lot of rumors that the US is pushing hard for a deal of hostages for a 3-5 day pause in fighting. Bibi has denied that any deal has been struck, but a lot of pressure is being applied through "leaks" to media. One of the many concerns for Israel with this is that Hamas might release a mother and keep her child as a hostage...splitting apart families. There is the other obvious concern that it would just be an opportunity for Hamas to regroup, as well as keep working on worldwide public opinion to stop Israel with a cease fire

---The United States is battling with Israel about how Gaza is to be run after the war ends

---Minister Gantz had made it clear that the war will not end until every hostage is home

---Thanks to the IDF, the Shifa Hospital now has fuel, incubators, baby food, medicine, food and water

Please remember to avoid counter protests, and may we and all the Jews in the world be blessed with safety and protection, strength and compassion

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 18, 2023

6th of Kislev, 5784

November 19th 2023 at 10:44 am PST

We Need a Different Type of Army...And it Includes Each of Us

Chevre

As the IDF continues to make headway slowly and steadily into Gaza as well as defend other fronts, there is another war going on: the war against Hamas propaganda. Propaganda that is easily embraced by the world because of an inherent anti-Semitic filter. The world's opinion and pressure on Israel is a tough battle for us, as it results in even more attacks and threats on Israel.

Iran backed Houthis have pirated a ship partially owned by an Israeli, and threatened any ship with Israelis, owned by Israeli companies, or with Israeli crew. Turkey's President Erdogan told his Parliament that Israel will soon be destroyed and dared Israel to use nuclear weapons....and countries around the world remain silent in the face of acts like these. Around the world, and especially here in the U.S., pro-Palestinian demonstrators are applying pressure on their governments to stop backing Israel, God forbid; have a cease fire; allow the Palestinian Authority to take over Gaza, etc.

This second war of propaganda is being fought by two "armies". There is a group of proud anti-Semites who want to destroy the Jewish people and are proud of saying so. But the larger "army" spewing this propaganda is composed of "useful idiots" who have bought into the myths of Palestine and Israel, and are participating in rallies supporting things they actually know nothing about. It is in the war with this latter group, who is loud and ignorant, that we each need to be more individually active.

This group is composed mostly of people who side with other "progressive" causes (i.e. gender issues, DEI, etc), and because the politicians that support those "progressive" causes (like "the Squad") are also anti-Israel, these demonstrators unconditionally believe the anti-Israel rhetoric. Their internal decision-making process often goes something like this:

"Sen. Blackburn is pro-life and pro-Israel. AOC is pro-choice and pro-Palestine. I (the potential demonstrator) am pro-choice and agree with AOC on that issue, therefore I will agree with her about the horrible things happening in Gaza because of Israel. Since she is right about one issue in my mind, she must be right in this other Israel issue, and I will demonstrate for pro-Palestine the way I do for pro-choice rallies. I demonstrated after the Dobbs decision, and now I need to demonstrate against Israel in the same way".

But what is going in Israel has nothing to do with abortion, gender, or any other politically social issue. We can be pro-choice and still see the evils of Hamas. A person can be an activist for gender issues and also see the horrors of October 7 and the dangers of Hamas. You can support any of the "progressive" social positions, and at the same time support Israel. In fact, the irony is that while Israel is very liberal on these types of social issues; Gaza, the West Bank, and any country that supports Sharia law are the exact opposite, and kill people for being gay, etc.

So what can we do?

We need to each become highly educated ourselves and spend time one on one educating every "pro-palestinian" person we know. We must make them realize that they can disagree with Sen. Graham on a social issue, but agree with him about Israel. We must help everyone we know recognize that the social issues and what is going on in Israel are unrelated, and that to support Gaza is antithetical to their other core beliefs.

So here are two tools I hope everyone will use to convert these ignorant people away from demonstrating for a palestine from the river to the sea, and to applying their energy to support Israel.

The first is the Covenant of 1988, the Hamas Charter. It is all hate filled, and especially articles 7, 11, and 13 demonstrate some their core beliefs about Jews. Keep a link to the Covenant on your phone, and show these words to your friends who support palestine. Point out that this charter, which totally rejects any peace with the infidels and permits any lies or subterfuge against them in this jihad, is the declared purpose of Hamas; their justification for Oct. 7; and the basis of their promise to continue more horrific act like the have done.

Here is a link to the Hamas Charter. Keep it open on your phone, share it with others, and educate everyone you know about how evil their intentions really are. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp

Here is another short video of someone pointing out the inconsistencies of having modern values and yet still supporting Hamas and palestine (and you can refer back to emails throughout the last six weeks about the historical truths and

myths of "palestine"). It's humorous, ironic, and a good model to emulate when dealing with people we know who are just ignorant of Hamas' self defuned goals: <https://m.youtube.com/watchnow>

There are many ways to fight the battle for Israel and the Jewish world's survival. In the same way that the battle in Gaza is one person at a time; we too can fight the war against propaganda one person at a time

Each of us has a responsibility to speak up and actively fight this war of information. Above are resources. Now, let us all take those resources and help people see the real evil that Israel is fighting

...a fight we must win. For Israel, for the Jewish people, and for the world.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 19, 2023

6th of Kislev, 5784

November 19th 2023 at 9:33 pm PST

Rumors and Truth

Chevre

With the advent of social media, Mark Twain's quote that "a lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is still putting on its shoes" is more true than ever. While there continue to be repeated rumors that a hostage trade for a pausing in hostilities was going to start today, those runors keep being invalidated by both Israel and Hamas. These rumors are being pushed into the media by the U.S. and Qatar, but this article in the Jerusalem Post tells where Israel is right now.

<https://m.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-774094>

What is true is that there is now clear video evidence of Hamas killing a hostage at the Shifa hospital (<https://www.timesofisrael.com/>); as well as video confiming most of what Israel has been saying for weeks.

A number of people have asked me why the IDF isn't releasing more information that demonstrates the evil of Hamas. The answer is that they are, it is only that most of the American media don't pick it up. The IDF has a twitter feed, @IDF that is constantly releasing actual footage as it happens of terror tunnels and weapons inside hospitals; of grenades and bombs inside schools, etc. Please look at these if you wonder at all about what is actually going on, and show them to others.

The word for "truth" in Hebrew is "emet". Spelled aleph, mem, tav; it is composed of the first, middle, and last letters of the alphabet...a reminder that real truth is complete and not a partial rumor. The sound of the word starts with the aleph inside the body, travels through the "mmm" sound of the lips, and completes with the "t" sound made at the tip of the tongue. Again, this is a teaching that real truth comes from the deepest part inside ourselves, and travels through our being until it is fully expressed.

May we all ignore rumors, and hear and speak full truths in every moment.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 19th, 2023

7th of Kislev, 5784

November 20th 2023 at 8:41 am PST

A Tough Day in Israel

Chevre

Always remember a truth:

It is difficult for Israel to fight one front, more difficult to fight it with its "hands tied behind its back" by the U.S. and the world; and even more difficult if there are, God Forbid, more than one front.

An IDF base in Northern Israel was severely damaged by Hezbollah rocket fire from Lebanon just a little bit ago, around 3am PST. The rockets ignited a fire, and there was extensive damage to the base. Thank God no one was injured.

At the same time, the Israel Health Ministry has warned residents of Haifa that there are "irregular results of microbial tests of the city's water supply". All water must be boiled prior to drinking, cooking, medication, etc.

Likkud MK Vitouri has doubled down on his call to burn down the Gaza strip, saying in an interview, "We allowed entry of fuel to the strip, they murdered children. Why should we be ashamed?"

Israel is fighting for her life, and the lives of all the Jewish people... and it is a difficult fight. It is important that we Diaspora Jews do not get "war weary" and lose our attention and focus; but rather increase our support of Israel in our words and actions.

Think of the news cycles, as well as your own conversations with friends. 6 weeks ago, 100% of every conversation probably dealt with the horrors of October 7 and the need to support Israel. How often are those the conversations now? 70%? 50%? 30%? Less? As hard as it is, we must keep the focus of the world on the horrors of October 7; on who and what Hamas really are; and on how restrained Israel had been. Any other nation in the world would have just carpet bombed Gaza and made it a parking lot, saving the IDF soldiers' lives who have been risking themselves in the Gaza operation.

We all have an obligation: to constantly remind others (and ourselves) of what Hamas did on October 7; of the sick depravity they enacted, entirely surrendering any semblance of humanity as they raped, beheaded, baked babies, killed in all sorts of horrible ways, and kidnapped Israeli civilians. As painful as it is, we must keep those images in the forefront of our minds while the media, worldwide governments, and uneducated protestors try to control the narrative and talk about how victimized Hamas and the Gazans are.

Remember why we are fighting in Israel; the depraved horrors that are the practices of this modern Amalek; the multiple simultaneous fronts that Israel is fighting, from Hezbollah to the Houthis; and make it a point each and every day

to discuss these things with others...forcing them to realize the truth in Israel as well.

It's easier to just stop thinking about the war and return at this point to our daily lives as they were prior to October 7. But Israel doesn't have that option until Hamas is destroyed, not just defeated.

Let our prayers and actions be united in supporting Israel unconditionally, and May Israel, her soldiers, her people, and all Jewish people be blessed with safety and protection.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 20th, 2023

7th of Kislev, 5784

November 20th 2023 at 10:14 am PST

Tel Aviv Attacked

Chevre

Please keep the people of Tel Aviv in your prayers right now

Hezbollah launched a massive rocket attack on Tel Aviv. Thank God, as of the latest report there are no injuries. This is the first attack since Friday, and Tel Aviv schools were supposed to open back up today.

Here is how we pray in a powerful way: If you have ever been to Tel Aviv, first focus on your memories and especially your emotional connection to the city, people, and country. When you are in touch with those feelings, then pray with all your passion. Honest emotions create a clearer flow (shefa) for prayers. If you have not been to Israel yet, attach yourself to all the emotions you have for our people and country.

We can expect that Israel will retaliate strongly, and we may have a more intense front in the north of the country. Thank God the Bnai Zion Medical Center has bought so much new medical equipment in the last few weeks... largely because of our community's efforts which have now resulted in over 500K of new equipment.

May the Holy One bless everyone in Israel with safety and protection

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 20, 2023

7th of Kislev, 5784

November 20th 2023 at 5:00 pm PST

Let's Do Something Positive!

Chevre

Black Friday and Cyber Monday sales have already started, and at the suggestion of Michael Weintraub, I'd like to make the following recommendation.

This is the biggest shopping time of the year, and with Hannukah coming in less than three weeks, many of us will be shopping for gifts.

This year, make a gift that will save lives.

Take 10% of your gift buying budget and give it to Bnai Zion Hospital (www.healthcareforisrael.org) or any of the causes in Israel that need it: Friends of the IDF, Zaka, Magen David Adom.

You will literally be giving the gift of life to our brothers and sisters in Israel. And you will be observing the biblical commandment of tithing.

That's two mitzvot for the price of one!

Please take just ten percent off your gift giving to friends and family, and save some lives in Israel.

May we all deserve the merit of supporting Israel and seeing her always safe, protected, and blessed.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 20, 2023

7th of Kislev, 5784

November 21st 2023 at 7:01 am PST

Look at Signs...

Chevre

As another day begins in Israel and we are all concerned about what each day brings, it helps to look at subtle changes to understand how the war is really going. Some examples:

---Israel has announced that it has successfully shot down a Gaza rocket with its Iron Beam defense system. It's official name is "Magen Ohr", meaning "shield of light", and it is a directed energy weapons defense system. In other words, a laser defense system to add to the Iron Dome, David's Sling, et al in the defense of Israel. If as successful, it could be B"H a system that revolutionizes defensive warfare.

---You may have noticed how Turkey has repeatedly inserting itself into the war, not as an ally only to Gaza, but in attempts to act like a "superpower". Remember that the Turkish government wants to recreate the power of the Ottoman Empire and be recognized as an important world leader. They announced today that they are sending a flotilla of over 1000 boats on Wednesday to Gaza to disrupt the blockade. If they can succeed in their stated

quest, it would go a long way to achieving their goal of changing their "brand" towards being more important.

---Be aware of Hezbollah's attacks in the north and the Houthis attacks in the waters. As these keep increasing, it pushes Israel into the corner of having Israel need to finish the war in Gaza quicker....which means more civilian casualties and more hatred in the world press against Israel. These attacks are meant to push Israel into doing more acts of survival that the world will judge as "disproportional"

There is nothing that could ever be disproportional given what happened on Oct. 7. Always keep present in your mind the depraved horrors that Hamas committed; that their actions demonstrated that they are the modern incarnation of Amalek; and there is a spiritual responsibility to not defeat Hamas, but destroy them.

It is far too easy to lose track of what was done in Oct. 7. Don't. Don't buy into the protests and propaganda. Remember what was done. Remember that Hamas has committed to repeat it as often as possible until Israel is destroyed, God Forbid, even committing to "another million times" (their word). Read the Hamas Covenant of 1988, and remember what their self-stated goals are.

Do not ever forget for a moment what is going on in Israel. We are all part of this war, and our personal prayers and actions make a difference. We must not fall asleep and let Oct. 7 be forgotten even for a moment

Remember...

Never Again is Always Now, and we cannot forget even one moment or it will, God forbid, repeat itself.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 21, 2023

8th of Kislev, 5784

November 21st 2023 at 8:08 am PST

Cabinet Mtg Today at 10am PST

Chevre

The Cabinet is meeting at 10am PST (8pm Israel) to discuss a possible hostage exchange deal with Hamas. Here is what we know about the proposed deal so far:

---1:3 ratio. We would give them 3 hostages for every one of ours, who are current prisoners of Israel

---It would be for about 50 hostages

---It would include children with a parent

---It would take 4-5 days to complete, during which there would be a pause in fighting

This is not such an easy decision for the Cabinet to make. The positive is that we would get some hostages back, but there are also a lot of negatives. It would give Hamas time to regroup, making the IDF's operation that is starting in Southern Gaza exponentially more difficult. Defense Minister Gallant has pointed out that this entire operation in Gaza is geared around getting the hostages back, and Hamas fighters are more and more surrendering as opposed to fighting to death, which is good for the potential saving of hostages. By pausing right now for only some of the hostages, it is an almost guarantee that Hamas will use this strategy of trading hostages for regrouping time again in the future... and demonstrates to Israel's enemies that taking hostages is a viable plan.

So it will be a very difficult discussion when the Cabinet meets in a few hours, especially with all the pressure that Israel is getting from the U.S.

We need to all trust that the Cabinet will make the best decision for the long term success of Israel. They know more information than we do, and are more aware of the truth and strategies. Remember, if you are ever upset by any Israeli politics, it is not our place in the Diaspora to comment, especially to non Jewish friends. Diaspora Jews should never denigrate Israel in any way...but should always fully support her. If her politics upset you, as Jews, any of us can always make aliyah and get involved in Israeli politics at whatever level. Any negative comments about Israel made by any Diaspora Jew end up getting used by anti-Semites as justification for hurting Israel. The recent "rabbi" (extremely

questionable in this case for a number of reasons) that was in CNN declaring that this war is Israel's fault is not only an attention seeking fool, but has done more damage to worldwide Jewry and Israel than can be calculated.; and although I never thought I would think this of anyone, should be put in cherem (cut off from the Jewish people for what he has done).

We are Jews, and Israel is our home. The people there are family to all of us, and vice versa. Whatever decision the Cabinet comes to in a few hours will be upsetting to some people...but please do not share your disagreement publicly. In the same way that you would keep arguments between spouses or parents and children private from your neighbors, it is important that we are unified as Diaspora Jews in our support of Israeli leadership's decisions.

May the leaders of Israel have wisdom and courage; may all Diaspora Jews support them, and may Israel's people be safe and protected at all times.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 21, 2023

8th of Kislev, 5784

November 21st 2023 at 3:47 pm PST

Hostage Exchange

Chevre

After much deliberation, and with the recommendation of all Israeli security agencies (Mossad, Shin Bet et al), the Cabinet has decided to make a hostage deal that will include a temporary cease fire. Prime Minister Netanyahu has said that the war will continue after the cease fire

May Israel and its people be blessed with safety and protection

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 21, 2023
8th of Kislev, 5784

November 21st 2023 at 7:23 pm PST

Hostage Update

Chevre

Israel has declared that they will extend the four day ceasefire one day for every 10 extra hostages that get released beyond the 50 agreed to

May we see in the soon future all Israeli hostages safe, and this modern incarnation of Amalek destroyed...and a lasting peace established and sustained

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay
November 21, 2023
9th of Kislev, 5784

November 22nd 2023 at 7:02 am PST

Cease Fire?

Chevre

Already there are challenges with the four day pause for hostage exchanges. Hamas is boldly saying that it will begin tomorrow at 10am (midnight tonight), while Israel has not committed to a time yet.

Remember that yesterday, the IDF breached the main tunnel blast door under Shifa hospital, and is making progress in its goal to destroy Hamas, having destroyed more than 400 intricate tunnels in Gaza so far.

But while world leaders are hailing this "truce", we need to be cognizant that it is not a truce. It is a temporary respite, that could get extended if more than the 50 hostages are released. Netanyahu has been clear that the war will continue immediately following the last of the hostage exchange; and Minister Gallant has expressly said that the war will continue until all of Hamas is destroyed.

By calling this a "truce", it shapes the narrative so that when Israel returns to the active war effort, Hamas and the world can point out that "Israel is the aggressor that broke the truce!" Please be active in supporting Israel by pointing out to anyone you know or meet who says differently that there is no "truce", just a pause in the war for our hostages to be returned (in exchange for 150 terrorists currently in prison in Israel.)

Language is important. May we each do our part in correcting the language that is already being used by worldwide media to describe this temporary respite: may we see the hostages all returned; Hamas fully destroyed; and a lasting and real peace between Israel and her neighbors.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 22, 2023

9th of Kislev, 5784

November 22nd 2023 at 8:09 pm PST

Preparing for Tomorrow

Chevre

As we prepare for the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday and weekend, a couple of pieces of information and an idea that was forwarded to me...

According to an aide of Netanyahu, it seems that there will be no cessation of fighting until at least Friday at the earliest. We must continue to consistently pray and act for the hostages' safe return and Israel's safety and protection

The UN envoy for Palestine is calling for the war to end after the upcoming lull. Israel has expressed that this war will not be over until all of Hamas is destroyed, and this evening, a White House spokesperson also said the war will continue after the 4 day cease fire

As we approach the Jewish holiday of Thanksgiving, a suggestion was made that I'd like to pass on. In the same way that I suggested weeks ago that we add another third candle every Shabbat eve for the hostages that cannot light Shabbos candles, let us each put an empty place setting at our Thanksgiving tables for the hostages that cannot celebrate with us as a guest.

We must keep what is happening in Israel consistently in our consciousness, and little acts like an extra plate make a large difference.

May we all be blessed to be grateful for a safe return of hostages and for protection of Eretz Yisrael.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 22, 2023

10th of Kislev, 5784

November 23rd 2023 at 7:00 am PST

The Jewish Holiday of Thanksgiving

Chevre

Happy Thanksgiving! In these challenging times, it can be hard to remember that there is so much to be thankful for. But if you have been speaking with friends or family in Israel, you have probably heard, as I have, of Israelis being able to be focused on winning this war, getting hostages back; the pain of the war and the horrors of October 7; and simultaneously being grateful for relationships; love, and the special blessing of being in the Holy Land.

Gratitude doesn't take away pain, but it does prevent suffering because of it. One of the deepest secrets of Judaism is found in the simple expression that we say as an answer when someone asks how we are: "Baruch HaShem"... "Blessed is God". In that statement is the understanding that whether things are good or bad, we bless God. Our faith in the Divine helps us to be grateful to Him no matter how difficult or easy life is.

I spoke with a dear friend in Israel yesterday that exemplifies the power of living with a consciousness of "Baruch HaShem". He and his family live in Tel Aviv, and are regularly forced to go to their bomb shelter. His son-in-law was home for a few days, and is now back in Gaza. But despite all this, he and his wife started singing joyous Hebrew songs yesterday, making a choice to have faith... to be grateful for seeing their son-in-law. To be grateful for life. To be thankful for their family and loved ones.

This is the essence and deeper meaning of Thanksgiving, to be grateful to God in each moment.

Although now considered a secular holiday, Thanksgiving was originally a religious celebration, and the concept of "thanks-giving" is an integral part of both Judeo-Christian teachings and this entire nation's history. It is a holiday that is simultaneously spiritual and historical in its roots for both our religion and our country. It is a time to truly be grateful for so much, to remember the importance of gratitude (and the honest humility that comes as a result), and to pledge ourselves to the service of others and God.

Although a national holiday, it has always been amazing to me that especially so many political leaders on both sides of the aisle often forget this gratitude, especially given the architecture of the chamber of the House of Representatives that they all see on a regular basis. Lining the walls of the chamber are 23 marble relief portraits of "lawgivers." Twenty-two of them are side portraits showing the profile of each lawgiver's face. But directly opposite the seat of the Speaker is a relief of Moses, the one lawgiver with his entire face showing. Moses: the most humble and grateful man who ever lived. A reminder to all who dream to politically represent the people of this nation that they must remember to be grateful for that opportunity of service. And it is a reminder to us as Jews that we need to emulate this "most humble man who ever lived" who was always in a

state of gratitude.

We see the biblical importance of being grateful in a powerful and subtle way in the attitudes and actions of our Patriarch Jacob, in this week's Torah portion of Vayetzei (Gen. 28:10-32:3). The portion deals with Jacob's challenges while serving Laban in order to be able to wed Laban's daughter, Rachel. Despite the many challenges that Laban puts in front of his future son-in-law, Jacob is always grateful to God for the opportunities he has. His constant sense of real humility and gratitude are what allow him to become a leader of not only a family, but ultimately of a nation. We all need to have that same deep sense of gratitude in our own lives, but how can we personally learn to create a deeper sense of appreciation for each moment of life and service?

There are three types of prayers that Jews traditionally say: prayers of praise; prayers of petition; and prayers of thanks and gratitude. (This does not include any of our forms of hisbodedus/meditation, which often involve a different form of dialogue than these three main divisions.) Of these, prayers of gratitude are in many ways the most important as they are the keys that open up the locks of the other prayers. Once we truly feel gratitude for any of the gifts that God has provided us, it allows us to awaken our psycho-emotional state so that we can truly praise God, and know how and what to petition God for.

There is an exercise that I learned over 25 years ago from a student of Rav Weinberg, the founder of Aish HaTorah. I share it here in hopes that it can help all our Thanksgiving holiday joy to continue all year and throughout our lives.

The exercise is called a "gratitude journal." Get a notebook, and spend an hour writing in it everything you can think of that you are grateful for. Often this is easy for the first 15-30 minutes, but spend the full hour and write down everything you can think of.

Then, every morning and every evening add something new to the journal. Maybe something you experienced that day, or something subtle or monumental...but every morning and evening make it a point to write down something new that you are grateful for.

Over time, you will see a subtle but extremely deep change in your life. This practice doesn't take away pain, but it takes away the suffering that sometimes

accompanies the pain of growth. Try it out for a few months and see if you start finding yourself happier, living and understanding life more fully.

This type of thanks is one of the foundation stones of Judaism, and as evidenced by the history of the Thanksgiving holiday in the United States as well as the architecture of the House chamber, a foundation stone for our nation. It is why Rabbi Larry Goldmark, one of the leaders of the Reform Movement for over 40 years is fond of teaching the importance of the morning prayer "Modeh Ani," the traditional first prayer a Jew says in the morning upon waking. "I give thanks before you, O God who is the living and eternal King, for returning within me my soul with compassion and eternal kindness" When we begin our day with this prayer... with real gratitude for the simple gift of waking up in the morning, it affects every moment of that day with the fullness of Life.

May we all carry the gratitude for each moment in every moment, and may we remember who we need to be and how we truly need to act: with hearts rooted in a real Thanks-giving.

Have a Happy Thanksgiving, and may we all be blessed to feel gratitude in each moment for God's eternal compassion and kindness...and to have a sweet and meaningful Yom Hodu (Day of Thanks). And may Israel and her people be blessed to be grateful for successful endeavors and ultimately, a lasting peace in Israel: the land of Jacob and Moses.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 23, 2023

10th of Kislev, 5784

November 24th 2023 at 8:32 am PST

Hostages and the Bigger Plan of Hamas

Chevre

The first group of hostages to be returned is now in the hands of the Red Cross

But that is not the only story...

At the urging of Hamas, thousands of Gazan "civilians" are heading back to the north of Gaza. Although they know the danger, at the urging of Hamas leadership, they are putting themselves in danger. This is an attempt to prevent Israel from returning to the war and is a blatant attempt to prevent Israel from finding and destroying more Hamas bases, tunnels, etc. In the North...which would allow Hamas to survive, God forbid.

This is profoundly sad to say, but the actions of these thousands of people which include women and children are not the actions of "innocent civilians". It is the demonstration that although without weapons, they are active supporters and allies of Hamas.

In a few days when Israel returns to fighting Hamas, and the world starts to clamor about "innocent civilians" being hurt or killed, remember this. These are not civilians that Hamas is using as shields. These are not just "civilians" being caught in crossfire.

These are soldiers of Hamas, albeit without weapons. They could stay safely in the south, but are fighting to get into the north to protect the Hamas terrorists who raped, kidnapped, and killed women, children, and babies on Oct. 7. They are supporters of Hamas, not forced human civilian shields. They are going back north specifically to protect their brethren soldiers.

Do not forget this. And do not let anyone you know forget this.

Israel values every human life, and we are grateful to God for every hostage returned.

But do not let Hamas, and that includes these non-armed members of Hamas, try to play the "victim" when the war continues. At the urging of Hamas, they are consciously putting themselves in harm's way in order to increase the world's pressure on Israel to only temporarily defeat Hamas, not destroy it. And Hamas must be destroyed if we don't want to see a repeat of Oct. 7 in the future, God forbid.

Be aware of how these non-armed Hamas soldiers are acting, and remind everyone you know of the horrors they wish to continue perpetuating.

May the world see the insidious plan of using these non-armed soldiers, and recognize that they are a cog in the Hamas war machine; may this modern incarnation of Amalek be destroyed, and may Israel, her people, and her land always be kept safe and protected.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 24, 2023

11th of Kislev, 5784

November 24th 2023 at 9:28 am PST

Israel TV confirms Hostages Under Israeli Supervision

Chevre

Israeli television has confirmed that 13 Israeli hostages are now under Israeli supervision.

May the Holy One, Blessed be He and His Presence bless these, and all the hostages, with health and a safe return to their families. And may He provide Israel with strength and fortitude needed in the coming days and months to create a safe environment for their children and grandchildren to grow up in an Israel blessed with protection, safety, and peace.

Chazak u"Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 24, 2023

11th of Kislev, 5784

November 24th 2023 at 11:53 am PST

Names and a Prayer

Chevre

These are the 13 Israelis released from Hamas captivity:

Channa Peri, 79, from Nirim

Margalit Moses, 78, from Nir Oz

Yaffa Adar, 85, from Nir Oz

Hanna Katzir, 77, from Nir Oz

Danielle Aloni, 44, and her daughter **Emilia**, 5, from Yavneh

Ruth Mundar, 78, from Nir Oz

Keren Mundar, 54, and her son **Ohad**, 9, from Nir Oz

Adina Moshe, 72, from Nir Oz

Doron Katz, 34, and her daughters, **Raz**, 4.5, and **Aviv**, 2, from Nir Oz

Please say a prayer for their healing.

Also, it is our practice to say a prayer called Birkat HaGomel upon returning from a long journey; healing from a surgery or sickness; or redeeming hostages. Please say this prayer on their behalf when you light your Shabbos candles this evening, or at any time throughout today

May He who has bestowed kindness upon these hostages, always bestow every kindness upon them, upon the remaining hostages, upon all of Israel, and upon us.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 24, 2023

11th of Kislev, 5784

November 24th 2023 at 4:30 pm PST

Shabbat Shalom from the IDF

Chevre

As we are about to welcome the Sabbath, please remember to light an additional candle on your table for the IDF soldiers and hostages who are unable to light a candle welcoming the Sabbath

And here is a short video of IDF soldiers welcoming the Sabbath queen. If they can have such passion, let us also greet the Sabbath with faith, passion, and joy

[YouTube.com/watch-Now](https://www.youtube.com/watch-Now)

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 24, 2023

11th of Kislev, 5784

November 24th 2023 at 3:26 pm PST

Hate Grows in Westlake Village

Chevre

This video was taken this morning right here in Village Homes neighborhood of Westlake Village. Listen as they chant "free palestine" and "how many kids have you killed today" about Israel

<https://youtu.be/Pro-Palestinian/Hate/Continues/Westlake>

When you see this kind of hate and ignorance, remember that A: this is your backyard, and B: educate everyone you know about the truths of there being no historical Palestine; the Hamas Charter of 1988, etc.

Again, this is this morning here in Westlake.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 24, 2023

11th of Kislev, 5784

November 25th 2023 at 7:46 pm PST

Gratitude & Don't Let the Bar Get Moved

Chevre

Although it was touch and go for a few hours as Hamas wasn't going to release any hostages, after pressure from Qatar, 17 hostages were released: 13 Israelis and 4 Thai nationals that were negotiated through Egypt.

The first thing to do is say a prayer of thanks to God for the safe return of the 13, 8 of whom were children.

The next thing to do is realize how powerful media and psy-ops can be...and to not fall into the trap.

The world is grateful for the return of hostages, as we all should be. But at the same time, the world is acting like Hamas is full of compassion with the release. But we need to remember, and remind everyone...

What was Hamas doing kidnapping, raping, and killing civilians in the first place!

In an "MTV generation" (now twitter and instagram) world that quickly loses attention, it is important to not move the standard of what is right and wrong. Hamas demonstrated its evil nature and beliefs on October 7. Let us never forget what was done on that tragic day. We must remember the horrors that were perpetrated, and commit ourselves in every moment to destroy that evil so another day like that can never happen again.

A mere 7 weeks ago, everyone I know was justifiably horrified. Now, all too many people have moved on, believing that a return of hostages is the goal of this war. It is not, and the Israel government constantly is trying to remind the Diaspora that the war will and must continue until Hamas is destroyed.

Remember the passion and emotions you experienced seven weeks ago? Do not let go of those feelings. They will keep you focused on the necessary truth of the Israeli mission: to destroy Hamas so that October 7 never happens again.

Also remember what it says in the Hamas charter, the Covenant of 1988; and the fact that the Hamas leaders have specifically said they will do those horrors a second, third, and millionth time until Israel is, God forbid, destroyed. After the Holocaust, we vowed that it would never happen again. We renewed that vow on October 7, and we must constantly re-commit to it, and remember

Never again is now.

Please continue to support Israel with your energy, prayers, and donations; and may we and all Israel all stay safe and protected in these challenging times.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 25, 2023

13th of Kislev, 5784

November 27th 2023 at 1:22 am PST

39 Hostages, but is it the Right Thing to Do?

Chevre

With thanks to God, 39 Israelis have been released, and 11 more B"H will be shortly. Hamas is already posturing for additional days of truce in exchange for 10 more Israelis per day.

I have received numerous angry emails: some complaining about this deal; and others complaining that it isn't enough. Like most Jewish ideas, there can be a machlochet, a verbal debate against the opposing position. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 37b) teaches that since we all come from one human (Adam), anyone who saves one soul is considered as if he had saved the entire world. At the same time, we are commanded to destroy Amalek and remove his remembrance from the face of the earth (Deuteronomy 25:17)

This temporary truce is Israel's attempt to balance both of these conflicting imperatives. She is committed to doing anything possible to redeem each hostage...to do so is to save a world each time. And Israel has said that she is committed to returning to the war after this truce and to totally destroy Hamas...obeying the command to utterly destroy Amalek.

Whether each of us Diaspora Jews agree or disagree with Israel's decisions day by day, please remember that it is much easier to decide which side of this dialogue you're on while in the comfort of America, where this is only a hypothetical dialogue. This is opposed to Israel, where everyone knows someone who has a family or friend being held hostage; and where everyone knows many people putting their lives on the line by being in the IDF.

Before you rush to judge Israel's actions, please place yourself emotionally in Israel right now. Contemplate how any decision you make may hurt people that you love. Consider the short and long term implications of your decision.

Now...how do you feel about what Israel is doing? More in agreement? Less in agreement? What decision would you be lobbying for if you were in the Israel War Cabinet?

But we are here in the Diaspora, and we have two obligations: pray and act. Pray for her people and land; and act in ways that unconditionally support Israel...whether we agree or disagree with her decisions. As Diaspora Jews, it is our obligation, blessing, and joy to support Israel...even and especially if we disagree with any decisions.

Please pray and act for Israel. Do not forget, and do not let the world forget the depravities of Hamas and Oct. 7. Think of the hostages, and of the long term

effect of drawing out this war through even a day of truce. Balance these two opposites, and see how you feel about Israel's current policy.

Agree or disagree. But either way, may all of our prayers and actions become stronger and more passionate as we support Israel, her people, and all Jews for next week.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 27, 2023

14th of Kislev, 5784

November 27th 2023 at 6:21 pm PST

What is Not Remembered is Repeated & How Will We Leave the World?

Chevre

It is so important in Judaism to look at patterns and cycles in order to both better understand the Universe and how to make it better.

We see it today in our calendar. On the 14th of Kislev, Reuven (the eldest son of Jacob) was both born and died. Like his father Jacob (who was both born and died on Erev Sukkot), there is a parallel of when he came into this world and when he left it.

The real question, for Reuven, Jacob, and all of us; is what do we do between those two points? How do we use our days between birth and death? From the moment we are born, we are all heading towards death...but Chazal (Sages of old) ask us to always be evaluating what we do with each moment.

This question is more important than ever now, for what we do as individuals has a direct affect on this world that is so connected through technology. It has always been said that an incident in South America can cause hurricanes around the world; but that has always taken time. With the advance of technology, our

actions affect things immediately. It is also true that each of our actions have even more meaning during a time of crisis...and we are surely in that time right now.

If we support an unhealthy pattern in the world, or if we act to create healing...either way it is immediately felt. The good news is that this brings even more power to each individual's actions. The difficult news is that this means that our memories become all too short, and we lose the emotionality that comes with intensity.

This is one of my great concerns right now, as I know that it is for many in Israel. We Diaspora Jews are so used to a fast moving news cycle that all too many people have already forgotten the shock and passion of the days immediately after October 7. Too many of us have let other news events; interpretations; media influence and imagery; and our daily lives distract us from this war...a war in which Hamas went beyond any semblance of humanity. As we, thank God, see some hostages returned, we are too easily forgetting that they should never have been kidnapped in the first place. We forget that it was the worst day for Jews in history, with the possible exception of the Holocaust.

And it is true that if we forget history, we are bound to repeat it.

So here are a few suggestions to keep in your consciousness that this war with Hamas is not like any other in our lifetimes; and is truly a war against evil.

---Make a commitment to say a Psalm or Psalms every day at the same time no matter what to help protect the IDF.

---Read the Covenant of 1988, the Hamas charter, especially Articles 7, 11, and 13 every day to remind yourself what it is that Israel is fighting. Keep it on your phone to remind you of what they really are and to show to others.

---Make a daily donation manually to a Jewish organization. Judaism teaches that it is better to give a daily donation of \$10 than a monthly donation of \$300. Do not make it automatic...do it by hand to increase your consciousness and to know every day that you are making a difference. We have been responsible so far for raising over \$500,000 for Bnai Zion Medical Center; and there are many Jewish causes you can donate to...but do it daily!

---If you really want to do a daily mitzvah, and have the ability and desire to, there are Israeli children who are looking to be adopted as a result of October 7 and this war. If this sings to your heart, reach out to the Israel Consulate in Los Angeles.

The point is, do something every day that reminds you of the battle that Israel, and the entire Jewish world, are facing.

When we die, will the world be the same as when we were born? Or will we have made it better...day by day, moment by moment? Will we have empowered darkness or brought more light into the world? Will we have made a true difference, or will our days of birth and death be the same?

Remember the tragedies of October 7 every day. Be conscious of the evil of Hamas every day, and fight that evil in any of the ways described above. If you need more reminders, then just go in youtube and watch any of the videos I have sent out over the last 7 weeks, or search for "Hamas October 7 attack", or go to <https://m.youtube.com/watch?Israel-Attack>

Whatever we do, we must not forget what happened. We must not forget what was done. We must not forget that even this past week, a poll of Palestinians showed that only 13% of them oppose Hamas' attack on October 7.

(<https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/palestinians/2023-three-quarters-of-palestinians-support-hamas-attack>)

We must always remember and never forget any of these sad and horrific things. To do so would guarantee a repetition of the horrors, God forbid. Horrors that Hamas leadership repeatedly continues to promise as long as they exist.

Use these tools above to remember. Then do the work you need to make the days between your birth and death meaningful.

We are taught that we are to "seek peace and pursue it" (Prov. 34:14). We must clear the obstacles to a lasting peace, and in so doing, make the days of our lives meaningful and the world a better place.

And we must remember that for the sake of a real peace,

Never Again is Now.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 27, 2023

14th of Kislev, 5784

November 28th 2023 at 1:45 am PST

Random Update Facts if You Can't Sleep

Chevre

Here are some interesting things going on via the war. None are monumental yet...but you might find some interesting developments

---A multi national financial task force has been formed to crack down on the funding of Hamas specifically and other terrorist groups generally. They are focusing a lot in digital currency and how it is being used to finance Hamas

---Elon Musk was in Israel, and after being shown the 45 minute film composed of Hamas' own go-pro footage, agreed with Netanyahu that Hamas must not be defeated, but utterly destroyed. He also is apparently re-thinking some of his standards on x/twitter regarding virulent anti-Semitism

---A cyberattack has apparently disabled some of the essential phone services in Israel, including fire, police, and Magen David Adom

---More commercial vessels that are affiliated in some way with Israel are being attacked by pirates claiming to be Iranian backed Houthi rebels

---10 more hostages are to be released today, B"H. We pray that they, and all the hostages, are returned safely

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 28, 2023

15th of Kislev, 5784

November 28th 2023 at 7:00 am PST

President Herzog is Right - Language Choices are Essential if We Want Peace

Chevre

Language is powerful. The words we choose shape the narrative, and can subconsciously affect our perceptions of the world.

Yesterday, President Isaac Herzog made a radical statement...not in terms of content, but in terms of language. He has stopped using "anti-Semitism" as a term for what is happening around the world. Instead, he is saying what it really is: "Jew hate".

This is what we all need to be doing in our conversations: calling out this evil for what it is. Jew hate. It is much more distasteful to say, but also much more accurate.

Similarly, he and others (including myself) have committed to not calling the people in Gaza, "Palestinians". There is no historical nation of Palestine; it first comes into the language as a "nation" in 1964; the great grandparents of those living in Gaza called themselves "Egyptians"; and it is incredibly important to call them Gazans as it differentiates them from the Jordanians living in the West Bank. By saying "Palestinians", we tie the Gazans and Jordanians together... a tying together that eliminates Israel from the map.

If we are ever to have any two-state solution in Gaza, we must make it clear and separate from the West Bank. Referring to its citizens as "Gazans" holds open the potential that if Hamas is ever entirely destroyed, there could be a lasting peace between the people of Israel and the people living in Gaza.

Herzog and Netanyahu have also now spoken publicly about their intents of what to do with Gaza after the war and Hamas' destruction. They are likening the process to World War II. "You first have to get rid of the poisonous regime of Hamas, as was done in Germany and Japan." After that, it is their intention to treat Gaza similarly to the way Europe treated Germany and the United States treated Japan. Ultimately, they have expressed their goal of Israel helping develop a successful and peaceful nation in Gaza over a period of time.

May that wish come to fruition in our time. A Gaza that is filled with peace and prosperity; and that exports fruits instead of weapons; hope instead of hate; and is a tourist destination rather than a factory of death.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 28, 2023

15th of Kislev, 5784

November 29th 2023 at 7:34 am PST

Day 54

Chevre

With huge pressure from the White House for a permanent truce, Israel is open to Hamas' request for another 4 days of cease fire in exchange for hostages. This is in spite of the fact that Hamas has broken the cease fire multiple times in attacking IDF soldiers in Gaza in the last few days, including today.

We need to remember that one of the challenges with this is that for every hostage that is returned, 3 things happen: Hamas is regrouping; Hamas' "unarmed soldiers" are traveling from the south back to the north; and Israel releases imprisoned terrorists at a ratio of 3:1...terrorists who have killed Jews and committed to keep doing that.

The White House made numerous statements yesterday and this morning detailing that they want Israel to conduct a different war campaign if/when fighting resumes... a campaign that doesn't "displace" anyone, and doesn't disrupt any fuel, water, power, etc.

A friend asked a rhetorical question yesterday that we all should consider...

What would the United States do if San Diego was being bombed repeatedly by Tijuana? And then if 1400 San Diegans were killed and 200 kidnapped back to Mexico? Including people you personally know or are related to. And if the world was cheering for the U.S. to stop after seeing pictures of Tijuana children crying in shantytowns...would the U.S. stop?

...and yet, the world and U.S. pressure Israel to fight a war with its arms tied behind its back?

...something to think about

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 29, 2023

16th of Kislev, 5784

November 30th 2023 at 12:22 am PST

The Death of an Icon and the Truce is Extended...barely

Chevre

Henry Kissinger died yesterday at the age of 100. For those of you unaware or too young to remember him, Kissinger was a hero for young American Jews, who may not have even understood his politics, but were proud of the first Jewish U.S. Sec. Of State. In the time of continued challenges that were part of the early 1970s, Kissinger navigated the Yom Kippur War, the Cold War with Russia; the end of Viet Nam; and opening relations with China as a man whom many considered the second most powerful man in the world at the time. May his

family be comforted among the mourners of Zion, and may his memory be a blessing.

In Israel, it looked as if Hamas wasn't going to release any more hostages and that the fighting would commence again, but they released some right before the deadline at 7am Israel time.

While there is supposed to be a truce, yesterday there was an attack in Jerusalem that killed 3 and wounded 6. The two gunmen were stopped and killed, and were self proclaimed Hamas terrorists who were imprisoned from 2010-2020.

Additionally, Israel was told that an Israeli mother and her two small children who were kidnapped on October 7, were given to a different group of Gaza terrorists, and are now dead.

So much death...

But as Jews, we always choose hope and faith, and choose God as our partner, protector, and shield.

May the Divine covenant between God and Israel always be strong and supportive; and may we all be blessed with a combination of strength and compassion in every moment.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Micharl Barclay

November 30, 2023

17th of Kislev, 5784

December 1st 2023 at 1:23 am PST

The Battles Begin Again and a Way to Win the Real Battle in December

Chevre

Despite CNN and BBC's reports that the truce was being extended, Israel announced that Hamas had again broken the truce, and air strikes began in Gaza a few hours ago (around 9pm PST). Besides the many attacks Gaza had been making, they failed to provide the lists of hostages to be released, as well as did not hold up to their bargain of releasing women and children with their families. Additionally, the doctors in Israel who have been treating the released hostages are starting to share their stories of the brutality and suffering perpetrated by Hamas.

We often talk about how all real battles are between the good and evil of the yetzer ha'tov (good inclination) and the yetzer ha'ra (evil inclination); and the war between Israel and Hamas is truly a war between good and evil. But in the same way that each person's inclination for good is unique; each person's yetzer ha'ra can manifest in unique ways. For some like the Hamas terrorists, their evil inclination is obvious, as it is for the "demonstrators" who chant for the destruction of Israel. But it is also our yetzer ha'ra that keeps us from performing a mitzvah, when we have the opportunity. This too is the yetzer ha'ra.

So do a mitzvah to combat your yetzer ha'ra for the month of December. Each day do a mitzvah, and do it consciously for an IDF soldier who is unable to. Give some charity in honor and with prayers of safety for the IDF; spend some time with a child or elder, sharing love with them in honor of the IDF; study more Torah in honor of an Israeli on the field who can't study right now. Each day in December, do a mitzvah for someone else in honor of the IDF.

It will benefit your own soul, protect another's, and bring more beauty to the world in this time of such.

I hope to see you tonight at 7:30pm at our Sanctuary to share the Shabbat service together

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 1st, 2023

18th of Kislev, 5784

December 2nd 2023 at 7:00 pm PST

Assorted Information From the Last 30 Hours

Chevre

We always hope for a Shabbat of peace, but again, the war in Israel and Jew-hatred worldwide fights against that Divine goal. Here are pieces of information from the last 36 hours that you can explore deeply if you choose.

---Muslim leaders in 8 big swing states (Ma., Minn, Az, Wis, Fla, Ga, Nev, and Penn) threatened Biden that if he doesn't start pushing for an immediate cease fire, they will not support him...putting immense pressure on Biden and the Democratic party. Given that they would never back a Republican candidate instead, it really shouldn't worry Biden, but it does put a lot of pressure on him. Jewish leaders and lay people need to make it clear that they would pull support (especially financial) from any candidate in favor of a cease fire right now to counteract this pressure from Muslims..although honestly, that probably will not happen.

÷÷÷ Hamas has refused to let the Red Cross visit the remaining hostages, which was part of the temporary truce deal from day 1. The assumption of that hostages still being held have been tortured and raped, based upon statements that are now being related by hostages who have been released.

---Netanyahu responded to rumors posted in the NY Times that Israel conspired to let Oct. 7 happen and knew about it for a year. "There are questions that will have to answered — what happened, how did it happen — and that will be discussed at the end of the war. Not now. There was certainly no conspiracy"

---Fighting is increasing in the north by Lebanon as Hezbollah is sending more rockets at Israel, and Israel is now striking back

---Stories from the hostages are coming out which include torture, not seeing daylight for 50 days, lack of food, rape, etc.

Shavuah tov, may this week bring safety and protection to Israel and all the Jewish people.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 2, 2023

20th of Kislev, 5784

December 3rd 2023 at 5:20 am PST

Waking to the Power of Music

Chevre

We are now in day 58 of this horrible war, and as the IDF continues to both make progress in Gaza and protect the north of Israel, we need to pause and be grateful to God for His grace.

The word for grace in hebrew is "chein", and the gematria (numerical value) of the word is 58. So to appreciate the kindness and grace that God bestows upon us in every moment, I thought it might be worth sharing some music that has come out as a result of this war... music to open our hearts and souls to God, each other, and all of our family in Israel...for we are all Am Echad, One People. Listen to one or all, but we need to remember to feel God's kindness and grace in every moment, and I hope these help...

This beautiful prayer is sung by choirs around the world in hope and prayer for the hostages to be returned safely. This choir in a Tel Aviv concert hall is composed of families of the hostages who are wearing the hostages' names on their shirts; and is joined by choirs around the world. May this beautiful music remind us that we must keep the hostages' names alive in our hearts and always hear the voices of their souls:

<https://youtu.be/koololam>

As our soldiers move forward in Gaza, they sent this out to remind us in the Diaspora of this song and teaching of Rebbe Nachman. "All the world is just a narrow bridge, and above all is to never be afraid":

<https://youtube.com/rebbenachman>

IDF soldiers on the front remind us that even as they wait for the next battle, they must know that Am Yisrael Chai, the people of Israel live!

<https://youtube.com/amyisraelchai>

These IDF soldiers remind us that "God is King, God was King, and God will be King forever and ever" as they choose to recite those words and a commitment to always praise God:

https://youtube.com/g_isking

And how could we have a meaningful musical morning without at least one version of our national anthem...an anthem to remind us to ALWAYS have hope:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?hope>

May these short pieces of music help us all to have perfect faith in God's grace for Israel and the Jewish people; and to know that above all is to never be afraid. Am Yisrael Chai and Good morning!

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 3, 2023

20th of Kislev, 5784

December 3rd 2023 at 5:27 pm PST

Hannukah & the Most Righteous Non-Jews in the Conejo Valley

Chevre

Please read this entire email...I think it will give you a big smile, which is so needed in these challenging times.

Hannukah begins this Thursday eve, December 7th. We place our Hannukah menorahs in the window, and it is a statement of faith in God, who brought us victory over 2000 years ago (if you want to learn more of what Hannukah is really

about, I hope you will join us on this Wednesday night at 7:30pm at Stonehaus for a special teaching session.)

For many years we have had our community Hannukah celebrations at the **Stonehaus** at the **Westlake Village Inn**: placing our 12 ft menorah there throughout the week long holiday; having our annual Hannukah party there; and lighting candles each night for the whole Westlake community.

But is this the right thing to do this year with the war, the recent death of Paul Kessler, and the general Jew hatred that is pervading the world? Does this put the Stonehaus in jeopardy in any way?

These are the questions I came to **John Notter**, the owner of the Westlake Village Inn, with this past week. God forbid anything we do would ever put the Stonehaus in any potential jeopardy, and given that the large menorah is kept there 24/7 during the holiday, I was concerned.

When I saw John, he said that he and his executive staff had already discussed this. They all showed up to personally tell me that they will "**always have our back**", "**you're not alone**", that they will "**not be intimidated**", and insisted on "**keeping this community tradition**". I told them we could do it at our temple, or just put up the menorah for the one night of a party and then take it down, but they would have none of it...they want to host the celebration and be a home for the light all holiday long.

John and his staff are not Jewish, but they are more committed to ethics and values of our faith than many who are. They gain nothing from this, and it could potentially even be a problem...but they are committed to our community and to spreading familial love and joy.

These are the ultimate examples of what it means to be "**Righteous Among the Nations**". John, Chris, and Melissa are truly holy individuals who should be blessed with all that is good for this kind of righteousness. And so...

We will be having our annual Hannukah Lighting and Party next Sunday, Dec. 10th at 6:00pm at The Stonehaus! There will be pizza and fries (as close as we can come to fried food since the chefs aren't really proficient at latkes); and Mat and Benny will be adding their musical talents and joy to the evening. (The

rumor is that Benny is even going to bring out his tuba.)

Stonehaus is being so kind in hosting us, and we need to show them our gratitude and appreciation.

PLEASE INVITE EVERY FRIEND YOU KNOW TO JOIN US IN THIS CELEBRATION OF LIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF DARKNESS. WE NEED TO SHOW OUR APPRECIATION TO THE STONEHAUS AND THEIR SUPPORT OF OUR COMMUNITY.

We will also be having a toy drive, so please bring new toys for children, which will be given to the Fire Department and dispersed to needy families for the holidays.

I hope you will join us next Sunday, Dec 10th at 6:00pm for this extra special celebration at the Stonehaus. There will be armed security to ensure our safety, and heaters all around to keep people warm.

I look forward to seeing you at the special class this Wednesday; at our latke tasting competition next Friday eve; at the [Latke Launch](#) next Sunday at 10am; and especially next Sunday night at 6:00pm at the Stonehaus for our Annual Hannukah Party and Menorah Lighting!

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 3, 2023

20th of Kislev, 5784

December 4th 2023 at 6:31 am PST

IDF Works Hard Through Last Night

Chevre

While Tony Blinken meets with Qatar leadership to broker another hostage release; the IDF had a busy night.

---Israel leadership has committed to not just defeating Hamas, but destroying them, and has started a ground offensive in the south. They pledge that the southern campaign will be just as deep as it was in the north.

---The Shin Beit has announced that they will go after Hamas leadership in the world, reiterating Netanyahu's commitment of the other day to let Hamas leaders know that they will not be able to live as billionaires in Qatar or Turkey while Gaza remains war torn.

---The IDF announced the destruction of over 200 Hamas sites, and increased the southern push last night.

---White House spokesperson John Kirby has again stated that the Palestinian Authority is unfit to govern in post-war Gaza; while simultaneously, US Sec of Defense warns Israel that it is "headings towards a strategic defeat".

May we, and all of Israel, be blessed with peace and safety now and always.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 4th, 2023

21st of Kislev, 5784

December 4th 2023 at 6:55 pm PST

Day 60

Chevre

As Jews worldwide prepare for Hannukah on Thursday eve, and our community gets ready for celebrations of a pre-Hannukah class on Wednesday, Latke Making (and eating) Contest and Shabbat on Friday; our **Annual Latke Launch Fundraiser** in Sunday (**did you buy your tickets yet?**), and an important community **Hannukah Lighting and Party at Stonehaus** on Sunday (please bring

a LOT of people to support Stonehaus, which is committed to always being there for our community)... we have entered Day 60 of this necessary and painful war.

In Judaism, 60 is a special number. The Talmud (Berakhot 57b) teaches us that:

Our fire is 1/60 of the fire of Gehenna

Honey is 1/60 of Manna

Shabbat is 1/60 of the World to Come

Sleep is 1/60 of Death

A dream is 1/60 of Prophecy

The letter Samech is the letter for the number 60, and related to the word "**Simcha**", meaning "**joy**".

Perhaps, after the conclusion of this day in Israel, we will start to experience some joy...some significant movement that demonstrates that we now going to move from the fire and death of war to a lasting peace of honey... seeing our dreams of a lasting peace become a prophecy of a safe Israel that we all will be able to experience.

It has been a busy day in Israel and worldwide. The operation in the south is expanding as it finds and destroys more and more tunnels, now also using seawater to flood the tunnels. We are still clearing the north, but IDF officials are saying that Gaza City is greatly cleared of Hamas, though there is still more to be done. A new evacuation strip for Gazans who want to leave has been established, and Israeli fighter jets spent the last 24 hours taking out Hezbollah missile launch sites in Lebanon that were attacking Israel.

A demonstration was held at the United Nations in response to the hypocrisy and double standard of UN Women consciously ignoring the rapes and sexual abuses of women by Hamas. For those of you unaware, UN Women (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women) has equated Hamas' rape and torture of civilian women with Israel's military actions. Late last month, they condemned "the brutal attacks of Hamas" on their instagram account, but quickly deleted it as a result of anti-Israel pressure, and on Dec 1 published a lip service statement about all women. The demonstration today was for the world to notice the hypocrisy of the UN when it comes to Israel.

As the world is dark, we all look forward to lighting candles and spreading the

light of peace and all good blessings to the world this coming week.

I hope to see you multiple times this week, and especially Sunday night at our community lighting and Hannukah party.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 4th, 2023

21st of Kislev, 5784

December 5th 2023 at 7:43 am PST

The Hanukkiah

Chevre

While Israel is progressively getting more involved in the north with Hezbollah, and the IDF is clearing out more of Gaza, we must also prepare for the importance of lighting the candles of the holiday, beginning in Thursday eve. Each year I get repeated questions about the holiday, so I thought I would answer some of the most common ones here:

Is it a menorah or hanukkiah?

Yes. Technically, a menorah has 7 branches, and the hanukkiah has 9. But because it is the custom of so many people to call it a menorah, both become acceptable...even though it should at least be called a "hanukkah menorah"

How do we light the candles?

Candles are placed in from the right to left. On Thursday, the first candle is placed in the farthest right. As we start to add candles, we light them left to right, lighting the newest candle first

Why are there two blessings (3 in the first night)?

The third blessing of the Shechianu is always said at the start of something or when we experience something new... so we say it on the first night only. The

other two prayers are each said to honor two different experiences. We recite the first one in observance of our Patriarch Jacob. His son Joseph ordained that we should observe the holiday starting on the 25th of Kislev in memoriam of Jacob (Genesis, chapter 50). The second prayer is to honor the Maccabees and the miracle of the oil. This is why they are different in structural pattern; the first prayer is biblical, and the second Rabbinic.

Where should the hanukkiah be placed?

It should be placed in a window so it can be seen from the street. It is a testament to God's partnership with the Jewish people as evidence by the military victory of the Maccabees and the confirmation of God's covenant with us through the miracle of one day's oil lasting for 8 days.

Given the intense Jew hatred in the world, should that affect my lighting the candles?

No, and maybe. The candles need to be lit, but there is a Rabbinic injunction that it does not need to be on the window during times of war or danger to the Jewish people. Only you can evaluate whether you consider us at war here in America. Always remember that health and safety trump halacha, as we are taught to live by the words of Torah, not die by them. We will be shining the lights out our window, but each family needs to evaluate if there really is any danger for you and act accordingly

I hope this helps clear up any questions, and for more practices and understanding of the holiday, I hope to see you on Wednesday night at Stonehaus at 7:30pm for a special class on the hidden secrets of Hanukkah.

And make sure you get your latke launch tickets, and to bring friends and join the community at 6:00pm on Sunday December 10 at the Stonehaus for the community candle lighting

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 5, 2023

22nd of Kislev, 5784

December 6th 2023 at 7:43 am PST

Never Forget

Chevre

As we look around here in America, everything seems to be filled with the cheer of the holidays. Holiday parties; Christmas movies, tv specials, and music surround us; Hanukkah menorahs are getting ready to be lit tomorrow night; and things seem to be shifting away from the seriousness of the world events into the joy of the holidays.

But today is also December 7, the 82nd anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. A "day of infamy", this surprise attack brought the United States fully into World War II. For those of you have not been, the site is still an operating military base in Oahu as well as a national landmark commemorating the loss of that day: 21 ships, including 5 of the 8 battleships were sunk; and out of 402 U.S. aircraft, 188 were destroyed and 159 were damaged. Although there have been discussions for decades about what the US government did or did not know in advance, it was one of the worst military defeats in our nation's history. For the people of Hawaii, even 80+ years later, for all WWII veterans of the Pacific theater and their families, and for all American patriots... the day still holds meaning and should never be forgotten.

But it's Christmas time, and we want to do our holiday shopping, enjoy the respite from serious things, sing about Rudolph, and drink egg nog and hot chocolate.

George Santayana was right. "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Americans can never forget the horrors of WWII, and how the United States saved the world from the true evil of the Nazis. An evil that tried and almost succeeded in taking over the world.

An evil that has never been matched until October 7 and the atrocities of Hamas, which like the Nazis of the last century, also want, by their own admission in their charter, to take over the world.

It's easy to forget the horrors of October 7 from the comfort of our cushy homes in America. No one really wants to think about the depraved atrocities of Hamas;

the footage that we saw of torture and terror; and the evils of kidnapping and death. But we must never forget. Never.

As Israel starts to make progress in the south of Gaza and world opinion, including in Washington D.C. shifts towards sympathy to Hamas, we must never forget what they did, and what they are promising to do again if given the chance. Never.

We must never forget the devastation of Pearl Harbor; the horrors of the Holocaust; and the details of a war in the mid twentieth century that nearly destroyed the world. We must never forget how early capitulation to the Nazis allowed them to grow and gain such power that they were nearly unstoppable in their quest for world domination. We must never forget how close the world came to Hitler's goal of an empire that would last a thousand years.

And we must never forget what Hamas did on October 7.

May our holiday season be rich and beautiful, filled with light and all that is good in life. And while we enjoy this holiday time and all of the joyous comforts of American life; may we remember the struggles of each battle in Gaza, where the IDF are fighting not only for Israel's survival, but against an enemy that has even less morality than the Nazis of decades ago.

May we never forget. The attack on Pearl Harbor 82 years ago; the war that we fought then; nor the horrors of October 7 and the evils of Hamas now. May we never forget these risings of evil lest they, God forbid, get repeated.

Never.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 7, 2023

23rd of Kislev, 5784

December 6th 2023 at 8:51 am PST

Mea Culpa for Dates (oops!)

Chevre

Please forgive me. In writing early this morning and having had little sleep since this war started, I made a HUGE error

TODAY IS DECEMBER 6, NOT 7! lol

Please forgive my calendar mistake, and I guess I'm not writing an email tomorrow morning and you can read it then?

Or you can meditate in the teaching a day early?

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

DECEMBER 6, 2023

23rd of Kislev, 5784

December 7th 2023 at 1:02 am PST

Israel Always Has and Always Will Shine Light in the World

Chevre

Israel is continuing to clear out Gaza of Hamas while the conflict in the north by Lebanon keeps intensifying. Families living in the north are remaining away from their towns and communities until Hezbollah is fully stopped. And yet at the same time, the country is getting ready for the first night of Hanukkah.

As Israel prepares for the first night of Hanukkah, which begins at 6:36am PST this morning (4:36pm in Israel), we all need to remember how Israel and the Jewish people really have been and continue to be a light to the world

When the world was filled with idol worshippers performing human sacrifice.... Abraham and his family shone the light of believing in one God. From that time

until now, Judaism has always been a shining light of morals and ethical values for the world. Whenever tragedies have happened in the last 75 years; from Hurricane Katrina to the fires of Hawaii, Israeli organizations like Zaka have been some of the first to arrive with help.

And now, in the aftermath of the horrors of October 7, Israel is continuing to be a light as we remove the darkness of Hamas from the world.

2300 years ago, in the face of the all-powerful Seleucid Greek army; a group of men committed to peace declared war. The Maccabees were Cohanim and had little knowledge of warfare. The rest of the world was against them, and they were just one family. But they had "emunah shlema".... "perfect faith". Using that faith as the foundation for all their actions, they changed the world of their time; demonstrated the success that comes with relying on God as our partner; and brought the light of monotheism to the Greeks.

Faith and action: the alchemical recipe that is the proscription and prescription of Judaism.

So when you light your hannukiah at sunset, remember that you are part of a chain composed of thousands of generations of Jews who have brought light into the world.

The Baal Shem Tov taught that the numerical value of the Hebrew word for light (ohr) is the same as the value of the word for secret (raz). Light holds many secrets, and here is one to remember as you light the Hanukkah candles:

Each time we light the small candle of the hannukiah, that light permeates the world. Each time that we light the wax candles, we must remember that "the soul of the human is the candle flame of God" (Proverbs 20:27)... and as we light the hannukiah, it in turn lights up our souls, which then can bring more of God's light of true peace into the world.

"Hanukkah" means "dedication", and lighting your candles, both externally and internally, brings more Godliness into the world as we let the lights of our souls shine.

...and that helps bring safety, protection, and a lasting peace to Israel and the

world.

May your soul shine brightly into the world during this holiday, and may each of us always remember that we are part of an unbroken chain of Jewish souls who have brought light into the world for thousands of years.

In Israel, the dreidel, one of the symbols of Hanukkah, is marked with the letters Nun, Gimel, Hey, Po...standing for "Nes Gadol Haya Po".. "a great miracle happened here". Outside of Israel, we see the letters Nun Gadol Hey Shin, "Nes Gadol Haya Sham", meaning "a great miracle happened there". (The miracle referred to is the double miracle of the military victory of the Maccabees and the miracle of one day's supply of oil lasting eight days.)

If I was an artist, I would make a new dreidel this year to add to the two styles of the last 2000 years. Nun, Gimel, Yod, Shin; for "Nes Gadol Y'hiyeh Sham".. "A Great Miracle Will Happen There". May this be the time that we see miracles in the land of Israel that keep it safe; that destroy the evil of Hamas; and that lead to the miracle in Israel of a time of a lasting peace for Israel... and for all the Jewish people in the world.

Happy Hanukkah, and I look forward to seeing you at our annual Hanukkah Party and Candle Lighting this Sunday, December 10 at 6:00pm at Stonehaus on Westlake Village.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 7, 2023

24th of Kislev, 5784

December 7th 2023 at 6:25 am PST

Happy Hanukkah & Some Holiday Tidbits

Chevre

Happy Hannukah!

Happy Hannukah, Hanukkah, Channuka, or any way that you would like to spell it! As children we often think this is an important holiday for gift giving, then as adults decide that it's not so important. The reality is that this holiday is extremely important on multiple levels, and so I thought it would be worthwhile to share some history, theology, and insights from our Sages into the holiday to hopefully make it deeper and more filled with light for all of our lives.

There is a LOT of information in this , so please feel free to skip around and find the history or insights that are most interesting to you...and either look at a different part each night of the holiday, or keep it as a reminder for next year!

Let's start with some simple practices that we all seem to forget each year. The candles are to be placed into the Hannukiah (the actual name for the Hannukah Menorah) from the right to the left, and lit from left to right as we are to light the newest candle first each night. As an example, on the first night we place a candle on the farthest right, and we light the shamash (helper candle) and then the candle. On the second night, we place two candles in the farthest right of the Hannukiah, and then light the one on the left and then the one on the right.

The Hannukiah must be placed in a window so that the world sees it. This is a political statement going back to the Hasmonean revolt (Maccabees) in the second century B.C.E. that we are proud to be Jews, and that we are obligated to share the light of Torah and Judaism with the world. The only exception to this obligation is if we are at war and being attacked, and only if the placement of the Hannukiah in the window would increase the physical danger to our household. While we are not currently in a war here in the U.S., I know that some of you are concerned. If you are at all hesitant about any potential danger, then light your hannukiah away from the window. If you do not feel that we are in a war right now in the U.S. that would put you in jeopardy; then I invite you to join my family in the practice again this year of placing a hannukiah in the window for all to see.

The Festival of Hannukah is both a biblical commandment and a rabbinic commandment, which is why we say two prayers every night (the first night we also say the Shechianu prayer). The first prayer: "...who has sanctified us with Your commandments and commanded us to kindle the Hannukah lights" is a

reference to the biblical commandment that we find in the Chapter 50 of the Book of Genesis. Our patriarch Jacob had died on the first evening of Sukkot, and then the Egyptians mourned him for 70 days. After that, his son Joseph led the people to go bury his father. They traveled for a day, and then Joseph ordained (commanded for all time) a Festival of Mourning for Jacob for an additional seven days. 70 days after the first evening of Sukkot (Jacob's death date) is the 25th of Kislev in the Hebrew calendar...now known as the first night of Hannukah. So....Joseph ordained an eight day Festival to honor Jacob beginning on what we now call the first night of Hannukah! That's the biblical part and the first prayer.

The second prayer, "...who did who did wonderful things for our ancestors in days of old at this season" is in reference to the Maccabee revolt against the Seleucid Greeks in 167 BCE and the miracle of the oil. This is the rabbinic part of the holiday, so let's take a brief look at some information about what these miraculous things were.

The historical background is that in the Second Century B.C.E. the kingdom of Judea (modern Israel) was controlled by the Seleucid Greeks. The practice of Judaism had become banned, and a revolt was led by Mattathias and his five sons commencing in 167 B.C.E. Known as the "Maccabees" (meaning "hammer"), this family led the people in a war for their spiritual freedom. When they were victorious and re-took Jerusalem, they needed to clean and rededicate the Holy Temple (the word Hannukah means "dedication"). In this rededication they needed pure oil for the Temple's Eternal Light, and there was enough oil found to last only one day. It would take eight days for more oil to be procured, and what is known as the "second miracle" is that the one day's worth of oil lasted for eight days: until there was new pure oil. As a result, we light candles for eight days in commemoration of this miracle.

But this is not what the holiday is really about at its essence, for there was a "first miracle" that is significantly more important both in ancient times, and in which our Sages instructed us that we need to teach every year. Our Sages recognized that the miracle of the oil would be remembered easily as we light the candles; and that the biblical commandment of remembering Jacob would also easily be remembered with the candle lighting. But the first miracle is one that we need to remember to constantly tell each year..

That first miracle of the holiday is that this group of spiritual warriors actually defeated the powerful Seleucids. These Syrian-Greeks, the most powerful army on Earth at the time, were defeated by a group of guerilla warriors who were fighting not for their physical lives, but for their spiritual survival. This military victory is the initial miracle that we commemorate.

Most wars are fought due to a threat to the physical lives of the combatants. One side wants to kill the other side in order to acquire land, power, wealth, resources, etc. The other side defends themselves so as not to be physically killed. But the Talmud teaches us that the Hasmonean conflict was different: it was truly a war for the spirit. The Greeks had no desire for the Jews to die. The exact opposite: they wanted the Jews to live and to give up their spiritual practices. They did not desire to subjugate the Jews for slaves or kill them to acquire wealth. The Seleucids wanted to destroy the souls of the people by prohibiting their worship and making the Jews assimilate. These Greeks understood that if they could get the Jews to stop their worship practices, then they would be able to ultimately conquer and control them more fully. They knew that as long as the Jews worshipped something above the government, the government could never be ultimately powerful.

The Talmud contrasts the war of Purim against Haman, who wanted to physically kill the Jews to the war of Hannukah, where our bodies were safe but our Jewish identity and souls were at risk. It makes it clear that the Hasmoneans took up arms not to defend their bodies, but to protect their spirits. They risked their lives and wellbeing in order to have the ability to worship God as they believed. They refused to become the atheists that the Greeks desired, and were willing to risk everything to ensure that they could practice the worship rituals needed for the survival of their souls. The Maccabees were committed to not allowing anyone else to control their spiritual lives...and we are to remember to never let our Jewish souls be destroyed by assimilation.

So the holiday has three main purposes. A: A yahrzeit memorial for our Patriarch Jacob. B: A miraculous military victory in a war that was fought not for physical survival, but for spiritual survival. C: The miracle of pure oil lasting for as long as it was needed...and a reminder that miracles will always be provided to the Children of Israel when we really need them.

From a Kabbalistic point of view, the holiday deals with light, for as we are

taught in the Book of Proverbs, “The soul of the human being is the candle flame of God”. So here are a few points about light that I hope deepen your Hannukah celebration:

- In Judaism, Physical light is an extension of the spiritual Light of God that permeates the Universe.
- Light illuminates and destroys Darkness. Light illuminates a pathway so that we can follow and consciously be in God’s Presence.
- Spiritual life force is expressed as God’s light permeating throughout the world, contained in vessels. “These vessels are the letters of the Hebrew Alphabet” (R. Shneur Zalman, Tanya Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah 79b)
- Fundamentally, light does not belong to this world. Rather it is an emanation of a different essence, from the other side of reality. Light serves as the symbol of good and the beautiful, of all that is positive. (R. Adin Steinsaltz)
- The Talmud points out that the menorah stood at a remove from the table in the Holy Temple. An earthly king retiring for the night would place the light on a table by his bed. Finally, the Talmud contends again from scriptural evidence, that in Solomon's Temple the windows of the building were wide on the inside and narrow on the outside suggesting that the holy light of the sanctuary flowed out to grace the world. In short, the true purpose of the menorah, according to the Talmud, was to offer testimony to all humanity that God's presence resided among the people of Israel (B.T. Menahot 86b). And once having affixed this meaning to the menorah, it was but a small step to an eternal light in the synagogue to signify the same comforting message to Jews wherever they might be dispersed. (Ismar Schorsch, Chancellor Emeritas of Jewish Theological Seminary)
- The Hannukiah lights up 10 pathways
 - o 10 Commandments
 - o 10 Sephirot
 - o 10 Utterances of God in Creation

o The Hebrew letter Yod (first letter of God's Name, and "yod" literally means "hand")

· The Hannukiah is publicly put out in the window. It, like the ancient blood on the doorpost, is a public sign of our commitment and faith to God. It is an open revolt against tyranny, and an action of faith that God's light will always reign supreme.

And a few other insights from one of my favorite commentators....

From Nifloit HaTorah (R. Yosef Haim Schwab)

· There is a fundamental debate over whether the primary reason for Hannukah was because of the victory in the war, or the miracle of the oil. "Why do we celebrate Hannukah", not "What is Hannukah?", After all the debate, we are told in the gemarra that the primary reason is the oil, not the war. If so, why do all the special prayers of the days talk about the war only and not mention the oil at all? According to Meain Beit HaShevah, the reason is that it is unnecessary to talk about the oil because there is a menorah in the window and we are commanded to light with a blessing. We are constantly reminded about the oil. The battle, however, does not have any visuals to remind us. So, we talk about the war in our prayers. Furthermore, if there was enough oil for seven days, why do we keep it for eight? Answer: Even the first day was a miracle because they split the oil into eights, so no one day had enough to burn the full day. But why did they divide the oil for the seven branch menorah into eight parts? What was the significance of the number 8? Answer: A few months prior to this, they had been forced to miss celebrating the Succot of Torah, which lasts for eight days. So as to make up for this, HaShem wanted Hannukah to last for eight days. Hence, the miracle.

· After the war of Hannukah, it took the Hasmoneans another 25 years to free the land of Israel, from 165-140 B.C.E. The Hasmoneans were Cohanim (priests) and the greatest tzaddikim in the world. They made one fatal error. In addition to retaking their priesthood, they usurped the kingship too, which they had no right to do. It belonged to the children of Judah, not the children of Levi. The end result was that, after 100 years, they ended up being some of the greatest Rashaim in the world, and caused the destruction of the Second Temple. They

became traitors to HaShem, and intermarried with non-Jews. And, because of this, Rebbe (Yehuda HaNasi, author of the Mishnah), who came from Yehudam didn't include a tractate for Hannukah, even though there is one for Purim. This was his way of showing his disapproval for them for usurping the kingship, which belongs exclusively to Yehuda, not to Levi.

- The word Hannukah is an acrostic that stands for God, Candles, And Law, Because of the House, Praise (Cheit, Nun, Vav, Chaf, Cheit... "Chai, Nerot, V'Halacha, C'Beit, Hallel)

- Why do we spin a dreidel from the top while we shake a grogger from the bottom? This symbolizes that our salvation on Hannukah came from above. HaShem was motivated to help us even though we didn't deserve it (there was no public tshuvah). However, on Purim, our salvation was from below as a response to the fasting, praying, and tshuvah. We therefore hold the grogger from below

- Hannukah was an onslaught against our religion, whereas Purim was an onslaught against our bodies. Hitler, and Haman before him – racists – didn't care what type of Jew you were. They wanted to wipe out the entire Jewish People. The Greeks, on the other hand – atheists – wanted to wipe out the Torah and all signs of our religion. Therefore, we light lights on Hannukah to symbolize the battle for Torah (lights), whereas we eat a festive meal on Purim to remember the fight in HaShem's Name to preserve our physical well-being. Similarly, Nazis, as opposed to Communism, means racism as opposed to atheism (RB note: although one leads to the other). Hitler/Haman, as opposed to Ashaheurus/Lenin and Stalin.

So have a great holiday, don't let the lights go out, and I hope to see you at our Hannukah celebration on Sunday night, December 10th at 6:00pm as we light the community Hannukiah at The Stonehaus at the Westlake Village Inn.

Happy Hannukah!

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 7, 2023

24th of Kislev, 5784

December 7th 2023 at 5:15 pm PST

The Lights Shine In the Middle of Darkness

Chevre

Happy Hanukkah! As we commence lighting the way through darkness in our own lives, we need to see that there is light going in in the world's darkness right now

While Israel has now been told officially that the U.S. "demands" that the war be over in a certain time frame and without "palestinian" casualties, we are experiencing a light in Germany (of all places), as Chancellor Olaf Scholz lit the first candle tonight at a national menorah in front of the iconic Brandenburg Gate.

While the U.S. has asked Israel not to respond to attacks by Houthi rebels from Yemen; CUFI (Christians for United Israel) is placing billboards around the United States that say "Israel, You Are Not Alone"

While threats increase on local Jewish leaders and "pro-palestinian activists" interrupt public classes with their ignorance and hate spewing; the righteous owner and executives of the **Westlake Village Inn** insisted that we keep our large menorah at their property and have our annual Hanukkah party there in Sunday night at 6pm. To quote them: "**Rabbi, we've got your back. You are not alone.**" **John Notter** and his people are true lights in the darkness, and I hope we will honor them by coming to the Hanukkah party this Sunday at 6pm at Stonehaus.

And here are some videos to help inspire you by seeing how Hanukkah is being celebrated in Israel, including in Gaza...and to get you in the mood to light up the world!

From the Maccabeats, this brand new Hanukkah video is one of the best

reminders that Israel and Judaism "are still here!":

<https://m.youtube.com/watch=Maccabeats>

From our soldiers in the battlefield:

<https://m.youtube.com/shorts/OurSoldiers>

And

<https://m.youtube.com/shorts/Soldiers>

And from the Wall, the lights were lit:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch=FromThe Walls>

Happy Hanukkah and Am Yisrael Chai!

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 7, 2023

24th of Kislev, 5784

December 8th 2023 at 7:46 am PST

Day 63 and Shabbat

Chevre

A few hours ago, as Israel prepares for Shabbat and the second night of Hanukkah, more sirens went off in Tel Aviv and central Israel as shrapnel landed in the sea.

Because we live physically far away from Israel, it can be easy to put the horrors of war, October 7, and Gaza out of our consciousness. But it is a daily reality of every minute for our brothers and sisters in Israel. 91 IDF soldiers have died so far in this ground operation in Gaza...an operation that must be properly finished

so that the depravities of Oct 7 never happen again.

I implore you to not allow yourself to become "war weary", but to keep Israel and her plight constantly in the front of your mind. "Hanukkah" means "dedication", and we must remain dedicated and committed to Israel.

Dedicate yourself to do something every day to keep Israel in your prayers and consciousness. Make a daily donation to an Israeli cause such as Bnai Zion Hospital, or a Jewish cause here. But do it manually every day, not as an automatic donation, so that it will stay in your mind. Make a choice to read The Times of Israel or Jerusalem Post every morning...not just the headlines but the actual articles that talk about who has died, who is still being held hostage, etc. Decide to start wrapping tefillin or reading Psalms for 15 minutes every day in honor of a hostage or IDF soldier. Watch an IDF youtube video each morning.

Do something! Hanukkah is about dedication, and Israel needs our support on all levels right now for her survival. Please don't let these be just words, but dedicate yourself with actions so that the passion you felt for Israel in that first week after October 7 stays alive in your soul.

During Hanukkah we say "don't let the lights go out". Please keep your own light lit up in every day, and make sure that you are doing your part on a daily basis to keep the Jewish flame lit in Israel and the world.

I look forward to seeing you tonight at 7:00pm for a latke tasting Shabbat; on Sunday morning at 10:00am for our annual latke launch (you can still buy tickets [HERE](#)); and for our Community Candle Lighting and Hanukkah Party at Stonehaus in Sunday night at 6:00pm.

Shabbat Shalom, Chag Hanukkah Sameach, and Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 8, 2023

25th of Kislev, 5784

December 9th 2023 at 6:25 pm PST

War Continues; There is Some Justice; and an Important Hanukkah Party

Chevre

As the war continues through day 65, more videos have come out from hostages who were released. They describe experiences that are comparable to the Holocaust, and beyond disturbing to watch. If you find yourself getting "war weary", then here are just 3 videos that are not graphic, but that might remind you of the pain we all need to be conscious of:

https://x.com/Elad_Si/status/1733559929682727015?s=20

<https://x.com/avniyayin/status/1732190597107061021?t=rFolk5dWgBTqZKtRlh1vw&s=01>

And, if you watch, don't look away...

<https://x.com/AdamAlbilya/status/1732156995799601417?s=20>

The IDF is making progress in Gaza, and Netanyahu is hopeful that in 3-4 weeks much of the heavy work will be done in the south of Gaza. Meanwhile, the IDF was attacked a few hours ago by a United Nations school in Gaza, and hostage Sahar Baruch's death was announced, may his memory be a blessing.

But here at home we are seeing some small justice happening. Liz Magill, Pres. of Penn, resigned today after her horrific lack of courage this past week, where she refused (along with the presidents of Harvard and MIT) to condemn calls for Jewish genocide as being antithetical to the university's code of conduct. Perhaps this will lead other university presidents to stop the crazy Jew hatred that is taking place on campuses.

And into this darkness, we must bring light...

In honor of our commitment to light, to the hostages, and to Israel; I hope you will join me tomorrow night, Sunday Dec 10 at 6pm at **Stonehaus** for our annual **Community Candle Lighting and Hanukkah Party**. Please arrive early as parking will be crowded (plus, pizza and french fries for those who get there early); and we will sing songs and say prayers to celebrate Hanukkah. We especially need a large group as a way of saying thank you to John Notter, Chris Culty, Melissa, and the Stonehaus/Westlake Village Inn team. Despite the

jeopardy that hosting a pro-Jewish public event could cause, they refused to even hesitate and insisted that we keep our menorah there all week and celebrate together with them.

John said it all. "Rabbi, you are not alone. We've got your back."

Come celebrate Hanukkah, the triumph of light over darkness, and the actions of the truly righteous people at Stonehaus by joining us tomorrow night

This year is more important than ever, and I hope to see you tomorrow at 6pm at Stonehaus.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 9, 2023

27th of Kislev, 5784

December 10th 2023 at 10:51 pm PST

Polls, Jew hatred in schools, and Happy Hanukkah!

Chevre

I apologize for not getting an email out earlier today, but our synagogue had two Hanukkah events, and between that, a memorial event; and 2 other events, I am only now getting to a computer.

If polls are to be trusted, then some sad news came out today. According to a new poll by Economist/yougov, 20% of Americans 18-29 believe the Holocaust is a myth. This is a direct result of universities being run by Jew haters like the Presidents of Harvard, MIT, and Penn (well, I guess "former" since she resigned yesterday); who last week were all unable to admit that a call for Jewish genocide was against the code of conduct for the schools.

If we are to turn around the growth of Jew hatred, we must all be more involved

in our schools: not just college campuses, but locally in K-12 as well. Too many school systems in California and nationwide have A: removed the Holocaust section out of their studies; B: been teaching a myth of palestine in their school books; and C: teaching classic anti-Semitic tropes and defamatory myths about Israel as a "colonialist". It is no wonder that a fifth of young people believe the Holocaust is a myth, nor that institutions of "higher learning" are committed to a Jew hating agenda.

But as we light the 4th candle tonight, we also need to focus on bringing light into the world through education...locally and nationally, and for all ages. As a synagogue, that includes Jewish education in community events, and we had a lot of fun tonight at Stonehaus, lighting the community Hanukkah menorah, eating lots of food, and singing Hanukkah songs. Again, many thanks to John Notter, Chris Cuiilty, and Melissa for being such amazing people and supporting our community so beautifully.

As Day 65 of the war continues in Israel, we must realize the importance of educating our young people in the actual truth about history, theology, the Holocaust, and Israel. We are Diaspora Jews, and we need to take that responsibility seriously through educating our young people. The results of that economist poll are distressing. If we can do our jobs by better educating young people in the Diaspora, then future polls will show a very different result. Then the world may be more inclined to support Israel and condemn the Jew haters of the world.

Over 2100 years ago, the Maccabees fought and won a war because there was an attack on their spirits, hearts, and minds. The result of this latest poll shows that there is an attack on us again...and again, like the Maccabees, we must fight for our values. We can do this through Jewish education; getting involved in educational institutions from K-Universities; and by exposing ignorance and Jew hatred whenever we see it.

Then we will truly be shining the lights of Hanukkah into the world...dispelling darkness, benefitting and supporting Israel, and keeping our Jewish lights alive and bright.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 10, 2023

28th of Kislev, 5784

December 11th 2023 at 12:47 pm PST

Multiple War Fronts, the United Nations, and Politics

Chevre

As Israel starts the 5th day Hanukkah (remember they are 10 hours ahead of PST), it has been a day of challenges on many fronts.

8 rockets were fired in the north, and it is becoming clearer every day that there is going to be significantly more conflict with Hezbollah. As a result, Lebanon, which was once called the "Paris of the East" will probably be dragged into war again. Violent incidents are occurring in the West Bank as well, as Hamas supporters feel empowered by the foolishness of the "progressive" West and are trying to make this a three front war. This, as 5 more IDF soldiers were killed by an explosive device set up in a school in Khan Younis, a city in the south of Gaza.

104 IDF soldiers have now died in the ground operation in Gaza. We must always remember that the IDF must destroy Hamas entirely for the sake of the survival of Israel... but also for our sake as Diaspora Jews. They are on the front line, but this war against Judaism is worldwide.

The UN has announced that they are having an emergency vote tomorrow in the General Assembly to demand a ceasefire. Sponsored by the UN Arab Group and the Organization for Islamic Cooperation, any resolution would be non-binding... but this is just another reflection of the hatred against Israel that the UN has expressed repeatedly for decades. Starting in 1975, when the UN General Assembly resolved that "Zionism is racism" (a resolution repealed in 1991), the UN has consistently tried to divide Israel from the rest of the world.

Israel is the only nation in the world with a standing agenda item against it. Not North Korea, with over 100,000 of its citizens in gulags, nor Syria, which has

gassed its own people. Israel is alone in being the recipient of UN attacks in this way. The UN has appointed "rapporteurs," who have officially justified Palestinian terrorism as an "inevitable consequence of Israel's actions" (John Dugard in 2008), officially endorsed the anti-BDS movement, compared Israel to the Nazis in the Holocaust (Richard Falk 2008-2014), and in 2016, blacklisted companies operating in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights.

From 2015 to 2022, the United Nations General Assembly has adopted 140 resolutions against Israel. At the same time, it only adopted 68 resolutions against all other countries combined. According to the UN, Israel commits almost twice as many atrocities as every other country in the world combined! (Truly amazing when we remember that Israel has less than one-tenth of one percent of the world's population.)

We can all be relatively assured that a United Nations that supports Iran, hates Israel, justifies Hamas and Oct. 7, and is led by a clear Jew hater in Sec. General Antonio Guterres will probably give another resolution against Israel tomorrow. And that resolution will be used by Jew haters domestically as "proof" that the United States should stop supporting Israel.

But in this time of Hanukkah, when we are reminded of the necessity to stand up for our religion, people, and Israel, there is something that everyone of us can do to help Israel.

We are now less than a year from the next election, and candidates are starting to campaign. More than anything, these candidates want to win their elections. While we don't know who the political challengers will be, the incumbents need to be challenged as to how they stand for Israel...not just with platitudes and words, but with their actions. We each can make a difference by writing to our representatives and doing three things:

- 1: Wish them a Happy Hanukkah and Merry Christmas
- 2: Ask them for specific statements in writing about how they feel and will act regarding supporting Israel in a continual war with Hamas and Hezbollah until those organizations are destroyed; what they have done during their tenure to support Israel unconditionally; and to specifically answer the following question with just a "yes" or a "no": are they willing to publicly condemn the pro-Palestinian demonstrations on college campuses that are calling Israel a

perpetrator of genocide?

3: End your letter with a statement that if you have not received a written answer to these questions by Jan 1, that it will be your assumption that they, in fact, support the Jew hate that is expressed as being anti-Israel, and that you will be forced to actively work for the success of whomever their opponent will be.

....and depending in their answer, either get actively uninvolved in supporting them or supporting their opponent...with your time and finances.

The UN constantly tries to pin down answers to hurt Israel both directly and indirectly. In this time of Hanukkah, we need to pin down our representatives to demonstrate that are either like Antiochus (the head of the Seleucid Greeks who wanted to destroy Judaism) or the Maccabees. Politicians feel vulnerable right now, and are scared of losing votes. Make them take a stand one way or the other, and then act accordingly.

This is another direct way to help Israel....and she needs all our help in this time of crisis.

To make it easier, here are some contact emails for local representatives:

Congressman Julia Brownley (Ventura County and parts of Agoura and Simi):
<https://juliabrownley.house.gov/contact/email-me/>

Congressman Brad Sherman (San Fernando Valley and parts of Agoura):
<https://sherman.house.gov/contact>

Congressman Mike Garcia (Santa Clarita) :
<https://mikegarcia.house.gov/contact/>

Congressman Ted Lieu (Westside, Santa Monica, Beverly Hills): https://lieu.house.gov/address_authentication?form=/contact

Senator Alex Padilla. <https://www.padilla.senate.gov/contact/>

Five emails you can send that can help Israel. 104 IDF soldiers have died so far for us....isn't it right that we try to help them by solidifying US support for Israel?

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 11, 2023

28th of Kislev, 5784

December 12th 2023 at 12:25 am PST

This Day in Our History

Chevre

As Jews, we look to the past for insights into the present and future. See if you can see any pattern in some events on this day in history (29th Kislev/ Dec 12) that help understand the world today, and the situations that are occurring nationally, and going on in Israel and all the Jewish world.

* Our Sages teach (through a calculation inter-textually) that on this day in 2104 BCE, the rains of Noah's flood stopped.

* 1240 BCE, Moses and the ancient Hebrew finished the completion of the Mishkan (Tabernacle).

* 1524, Pope Clement VII approves Organization of Jewish Community in Rome.

* In 1961, Adolph Eichmann was found guilty in His trial in Israel.

These are some of the more significant things that happened on this day. May this give us all hope that the evils of Hamas and Hezbollah will soon be entirely washed away; that holy places will get built; that Jews in Israel and worldwide will be able to get together without fear and in support of Israel; and that evil is eradicated.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 12, 2023
29th of Kislev, 5784

December 12th 2023 at 7:45 am PST

Hamas in the North

Chevre

It has been confirmed that Hamas is trying to set up operations out of Lebanon for what they are calling "Vanguards of the Al-Aqsa Flood". (Al-Aqsa flood was what they called Oct 7). Backed by Iran, they are attempting to plan a similar invasion of Israel, God forbid, this time from Lebanon...dragging the Lebanese people into their horrors of war.

Lebanese Parliament members are saying that this can only be happening with the approval of Hezbollah, which has been continually sending rockets into Israel. Parliament members have been enjoining Iran and Hamas to stay out of Lebanon, and have expressed their concerns for a Lebanese civil war if Hamas/Hezbollah/Iran try to attack Israel from Lebanon.

We must pray that this group dedicated to hate and violence does not get a foothold in Lebanon. And we must continue to bring light into the world through supporting Israel in this time of war.

Yesterday, the IDF posted this Happy Hanukkah message to the Jewish people. Let us always remember what these brave men and women are doing for all of us, and I hope you enjoy this inspiring video: <https://x.com/IDF/status>

Chazak U'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay
December 12, 2023
29th of Kislev, 5784

December 12th 2023 at 11:16 am PST

Today is Also a Fun Day of Celebration!

Chevre

Sometimes we just need to remember to have fun while we light the Hanukkah lights...which today are also birthday candles for an important member of the Jewish community:

Frank Sinatra!

You didn't know Old Blue Eyes was actually a Jew? Well he wasn't, but he in many ways, he was certainly an honorary member of the tribe. He was a huge supporter of **Israel**, the **IDF**, the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and the Simon Weisenthal Center. He did so much for **Israel** that his recordings and films were banned by the Arab League and Lebanon in the 1960s.

Sinatra personified the concept of "righteous among the nations". Growing up, he was very close with his next door neighbor Mrs. Golden, who babysat him while his mother worked, and spoke to him in Yiddish. In 1942, when Nazi brutality against Jews was first getting international attention, **Sinatra** had hundreds of commemorative medallions struck with St. Christopher on one side and the Star of David on the other; which were sent as gifts to soldiers and given out to his friends.

And he was a great friend of **Israel**, even before she was established. In 1947, he performed for 20,000 people at the Hollywood Bowl at a rally for an independent Israel. In 1948, he put himself at risk by helping the Haganah smuggle over a million dollars to help get munitions to **Israel** from New York. He did many benefit concerts for **Israel**, the **IDF**, and other **Israel** causes, raising and/or personally giving many millions of dollars; and according to those close to him, often said that **Israel** was his favorite country to visit.

We don't need to wonder how **Sinatra** would have felt after the horrors perpetrated against **Israel** on October 7. His pain and commitment would have been massive. Sadly, there are many Jewish superstars who have never done for our people what **Sinatra** did, and even now, in **Israel's** time of crisis are choosing to pay lip service rather than raise money and help **Israel**. From their mansions in

Malibu or Beverly Hills, there are Jewish superstars who could raise millions of dollars for **Israel**; apply political pressure to help **Israel** on the candidates that they have supported for decades; and could be drawing attention to the depravities of Hamas...but are being quiet and still. They all should take a lesson from Old Blue Eyes and step up as **Sinatra**, the Maccabees, and our ancestors did who said "**Hineni!**"..."**I am here!**"

Happy 108th birthday **Mr. Sinatra!** May your spirit inspire us all to support **Israel** and be proud Jews...especially in these challenging and important times.

(And as an aside...apparently it is also the birthday of some of our active community members including **Orrin Karp** and **Ken Kaplan**, and others that I'm not aware of...so Happy Birthday to you too!)

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 12, 2023

29th of Kislev, 5784

December 12th 2023 at 9:49 pm PST

Sad, but Expected...

Chevre

As expected, the United Nations General Assembly voted to demand an immediate ceasefire. The vote was 153 for, 23 abstentions, and 10 against. Joining the US and Israel against were Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Austria, Czech Republic, Guatemala, Liberia, Micronesia, and Nauru. The next time you're thinking of taking a foreign vacation, consider the votes of these nations.

While the resolution is non-binding; it puts even more pressure on Biden and the U.S. In many of the statements and press conferences after the vote, the U.S. was pressured that it is "out of step with the world". It makes it even more

difficult on Biden et al to support Israel... but we must constantly let our government representatives from local to national know that we demand that the U.S. support Israel: the only democracy in the region; the only place that will always welcome Jews; and America's greatest ally.

In Israel, it is becoming ever clearer that war may be approaching in the north. In the south, apparently the process of flooding tunnels is getting very close to a reality, and the Wall St. Journal is reporting that seawater flooding is already starting, but there has been no other confirmation.

If flooding does become a tactic, we can be assured that Israel will be attacked in the media for drowning innocents. If/when you hear that...please remind people that Egypt used the tactic of flooding Hamas tunnels in 2015/2016. Similarly, when people bring up innocent deaths of Hamas, it can be useful to remind people of Dresden, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and Iraq to name a few of the many codes where sadly, in order to destroy evil, innocents also died. The IDF does everything possible to save every individual life...even exposing themselves to additional danger. Also, please remember that as of last week, only 13% of people living in Gaza did not support what Hamas did on Oct. 7.

Reports are coming out from Israeli doctors about the state of the hostages' health...and we are hearing consistent stories of torture, drug torture, sexual abuse and rape, etc. NEVER forget what was done on Oct 7, what they have continued to do with hostages, and what they have vowed to continue doing. It is profoundly sad, but we must remember that Hamas is the modern incarnation of Amalek and must be destroyed. Please do not let the joy of the holiday season make you forget....for the moment that is forgotten is the moment, God forbid, when they will followup up their threats with more actions like Oct. 7.

As of tonight, the death toll from the ground operations is 113, may their memory be a blessing and may their families be comforted among the mourners of Zion.

Hanukkah is a time to dedication, and while we celebrate around the lights of the hannukiah, may we also rededicate ourselves to full and unconditional support of Israel; and like the Maccabees of old, commit ourselves to always fighting for our spiritual wellbeing as Jews, and against those who would assimilate us into a world without values or truth.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 12, 2023

1st of Tevet, 5784

December 13th 2023 at 11:16 am PST

Hate, War, and Today is Jewish Daughter's Day!

Chevre

As many of you may already know, much of downtown Los Angeles has been shut down since earlier this morning. Pro-Hamas demonstrators calling for a permanent cease fire (isn't that what existed before **Oct. 7** in theory) have marched arm in arm to shut down the 110 freeway as well as many surface streets. Their ignorance and their hate for **Israel** knows no bounds, and they seek to shut down an entire city to achieve their Jew hating goals. Will they be arrested and prosecuted for violating the law and shutting down a city? Watch what, if anything happens, and then consider that when elections for District Attorney come around in November.

In **Israel**, the government has again committed to continuing the war until Hamas is eliminated, and says they will not bow to world pressure as expressed in the United Nations yesterday.

But today is the **6th day of Hanukkah**, and **Rosh Hodesh Tevet**...the first day in the Hebrew month of Tevet. This is a special holiday in North African and Middle Eastern Jewish communities called "**Chag HaBanot**", "the **Holiday of the Daughters**". In the Jewish communities of North Africa such as Morocco, Libya, and Tunisia, women would be allowed to come up to the ark and touch the Torah; and daughters were honored for their special connection to God as women.

So for today, don't just remember the challenges of the world, but celebrate

women. The daughters of **Israel** have always been powerful leaders. From the matriarchs of **Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel** and **Leah**; through the biblical leaders of **Miriam, Judith**, and **Devorah**; to the great modern leaders like **Golda Meir**...Judaism honors the feminine and treasures the wisdom, strength, and power of women.

So go hug your wife, mother, daughters, and/or female friends... and let us all remember that while today is the special Holiday of the Daughters, every day should be a day to honor the women of the world and in our lives.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 13, 2023

1st of Tevet, 5784

December 14th 2023 at 8:41 am PST

Israel, Colleges., and Hanukkah

Chevre

As we observe the 7th day of Hanukkah, the world continues to try to manipulate Israel into having a ceasefire. Realizing that this would just be another ploy for Hamas to regroup, Israel is standing strong and continuing the necessary mission to destroy Hamas; which Gallant is now saying will take several months.

While the world pressures Israel, Hamas tries to attack the world. Danish officials stopped a Hamas based terror attack last night in Denmark; and it will hopefully help Western Europe to realize that Israel is the front line of an intended global war from Hamas.

And while most college campuses remain unsafe for Jewish students, there is starting to be some movement as a backlash to the statements of the Harvard, Penn, and MIT presidents last week. Brown University students who protested

for palestine and tried to stop University business by taking over buildings were arrested. Similarly, a pro-palestinian protest at Haverford College in Pennsylvania was stopped as it was getting out of hand.

As we light the 8th and final candle tonight, take some time and really look at the menorah. Turn off the lights in your house, and see how the menorah lights the world. While each individual candle may not give off a lot of light by itself, they shine so much light into the world when they work together.

This is one of the secrets of Hanukkah and the Jewish people. When we are apart from each other and separated from the light of Torah, each of our candles can only produce a small light, easily extinguished. But when we work together as a Jewish community, held together through the menorah of Jewish text, teachings, and practices; the light becomes great and impossible to put out.

Take a few minutes after lighting the 8th candle tonight; really look at all the candles together, and allow yourself to glean personal insights about yourself, your relationships, life, and God

Let our lights always shine, and may we bring the power of Hanukkah into every moment all year long.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 14, 2023

2nd of Tevet, 5784

December 15th 2023 at 1:22 am PST

Lighting the Lights will ALWAYS Destroy Confusion of Darkness

Chevre

While we finish celebrating the last night of Hanukkah, may the candles always stay lit, Israel is dealing with dangerous and duplicitous comments from the

world.

Hamas is dedicated in its charter to the obliteration of every Jew worldwide; but the White House is publicly calling for Israel to end any "high intensity" fighting in Gaza. The head of the International Red Cross, Mirjana Egger has said that no amount of public pressure will get Hamas to let the Red Cross visit hostages; and Article 13 of Hamas' charter is clear that it will never negotiate for peace except to use as subterfuge with the intent of destroying its enemy; and at the same time Hamas chief Haniyeh is saying that there could be a two-state solution as long as Hamas is involved (something Hamas is totally committed against in their charter as well).

No matter what news source you read, there are constant contradictions...mostly around whether the US is really standing with Israel; and how much Hamas is lying at any given moment.

But all this darkness is another opportunity for us to shine a light in the world. The candles of Hanukkah are not just for these eight nights, but we are to carry them with us throughout the rest of the year as well...lighting up the world with the teachings found in the Torah and our sacred texts. The holiday reminds us to be proud and practicing Jews. We owe it to our ancestors, we owe it to ourselves, and we owe it to the men and women of Israel who are risking their lives for all of us too.

So I again recommend the following (I did it at the beginning of the war): Take on one new mitzvah or practice. Do it in honor of the IDF soldiers. Do it in memory of the many killed on October 7. Do it for yourself...that we may each become better human beings who shine the light of Judaism into the world.

And let those lights of each of our souls shine out and illuminate the darkness, helping the world to recognize that this is not just a war between Israel and Hamas...it is truly a war between good and evil.

If you don't recognize that truth, I invite you to remember how you felt on October 7 and 8, when you first saw the images of rape, beheadings, kidnappings, murder, and torture.

Don't let the light go out. We must all realize that there is a darkness that must

be dispelled, and its our job as Jews to carry that light in our words and actions into the world.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 15, 2023

3rd of Kislev, 5784

December 15th 2023 at 7:49 am PST

Zos Hanukkah

Chevre: Today is Zos Hanukkah, a Day of Miracles

Happy Hanukkah! With the holiday ending at sunset, today is the last time you can give that blessing during the holiday this year.

This last day had a traditional name of "Zos Hanukkah", meaning "this is Hanukkah". Today, as we look forward to lighting the Shabbat candles, but not the Hanukkah ones, our Sages teach there is special power between bow and sunset.

This is Hanukkah....meaning that today is the epitome of the potential of the entire holiday. All of the candles have been lit; but the intense light of last night carries into this day...and throughout the entire year, If We Let It.

Our mekabilim (mystical Sages of history) have taught that today is one of the penultimate days to receive miracles; a special day to pray for a spouse; children; finance; healing; or anything for your life. There are at least two reasons for the strength of this day and the power the day itself gives to prayers.

The first reason is that this is the holiday of miracles, and so an opportune time to pray for miracles in our personal lives. Simple and straightforward enough. But the second reason is a bit more complicated, and taps into some of the most foundational understandings of God and Life in Judaism.

There are three types of prayer in Judaism: petition, praise, and thanks. Hanukkah is referred to by Chazal (ancient wise Sages) as a holiday of thanks and praise: we praise God and thank Him for the miracles that the Maccabees manifested, and we thank God for those miracles that God bestows on us. Hanukkah is even specifically referred to as a "holiday of thanks" in some of our texts.

But this last day...today... is the culmination of the holiday. Zos Hamulkah! (This is Hanukkah) After over a week of praise and thanks, it has become a custom over the centuries to take this day, the 8th day of Hanukkah, from sunrise to sunset, and daven with petition. After praising and thanking God for the last week, we have become intimate with God enough to ask on this 8th day, this last day of the holiday, for miracles. It is the time to ask how we can make the lights of our souls brighter, and even request miracles.

It's part of the reason that on this 8th day especially, I try to adapt the words found on the dreidel from "A Great Miracle Happened There" (Nes Gadol Haya Sham) to "a Great Miracle.Will Happen Here" (Nes Gadol Y'hiyeh Po)

So let's all do some hardcore personal praying today...and make some miracles!

Let us all celebrate Hanukkah with joy and passion, praise and gratitude. And may we all receive even more gifts from God as we spread His light from the Hanukkiah to the rest of the world.

Happy Zos Hanukkah!

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 15, 2023

3rd of Kislev, 5784

December 15th 2023 at 10:52 am PST

Breaking, and Extremely Sad News from Israel

Chevre

Less than hour ago, IDF soldier were clearing a Hamas base in Shejaiya, an area filled with suicide bombers and many terrorists. In the battle, three hostages were mistakenly killed. This is an example of the extreme difficulties the IDF is having by clearing each house one at a time: it is virtually impossible to know who is a terrorist and who is a civilian, and as this tragedy demonstrates ..who may even be a hostage.

It has been a terrible day for Israel and her morale. Yesterday, we lost ten IDF elite forces when terrorists ambushed 4 of them in a house, and 2 officers and other soldiers went in to save their comrades, and were also killed in the ambush.

May their memories be a blessing; may their families be comforted among the mourners of Zion; and may all of us Diaspora Jews never forget what has done on October 7 and continues to be done by the evils of Hamas.

Shabbat shalom; vChazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 15, 2023

3rd of Tevet, 5784

December 16th 2023 at 6:46 pm PST

6 Degrees of Separation & Follow the Money

Chevre

Many of you may have already heard about an article in today's New York Times. The article goes in detail about the financial machinations of Hamas over the last decade, and posits that the Israeli government and Netanyahu not only knew about the hundreds of millions of dollars that were being funnelled into Hamas, but allowed it to happen in the hope that financial success in Gaza would keep peace.

There are two large takeaways that we must be conscious of about this article. The first is that it is written by Jo Becker, who is the daughter-in-law of Francine Markow, an active member of the community and our Sisters of Simcha. Further proof how all Jews are related within six degrees. Kol HaKvod Jo, Ari (her husband), and Francine.

The other large piece to remember about this article is that whether it is totally accurate or not, it doesn't matter: our response as Jews needs to be the same. The information that she shares in the article, much of it provided by ex-Mossad personnel, must be ignored for now.

But Rabbi, you may ask, how can we ignore something like this? It is possible that their funding sources contributed greatly to allowing Hamas to attack? We have to hold people responsible, and there must be investigations and people must be held accountable.

There will be a time to investigate Jo's findings. But that is not, and cannot be now.

Whatever mistakes were made in the past are inconsequential right now. Israel is at war with an enemy that is truly evil. An enemy that must not only be defeated, but utterly destroyed. As long as Hamas exists in any form, their commitment to the destruction of Israel also exists; and like Amalek, Hamas must have "their remembrance be blotted off the earth" (Deut. 25:19).

We have a war for our survival to win right now, and cannot allow ourselves to be distracted by ANYTHING that takes us away from that goal.

George Tenet, the Director of the CIA at the time of the Sept. 11 attack by al Qaeda, publicly admitted that US intelligence officials knew "something very, very big" was about to happen, and that "the system was blinking red". Hessian Colonel Johann Rall clearly knew in advance that Washington was going to launch a surprise attack on Trenton in 1776. And there are many sources that demonstrate that American governmental officials, and possibly even Roosevelt himself, knew in advance that Japan was going to attack Pearl Harbor.

But in those times and others like them, people were wise enough to realize that

first the war needed to be won, and only after that victory could an evaluation of mistakes be investigated.

The primary goal is to win this war and destroy Hamas. There will be time after that victory to analyze mistakes that were made that allowed the horrors of October 7 to occur. We can all be assured that Israel will thoroughly investigate mistakes, and correct them so that they never happen again. There are many questions beyond financial funding: what happened to intel; why were soldiers not where they could/should have been; why was Israel unprepared?

But those questions cannot be asked now. Right now, we must handle the task at hand: to decisively win this war, destroy Hamas, and with God's help, hopefully get any hostages still alive back to their homes and families.

Anything that takes us away from that goal is detrimental. We must be present in the moment... a moment of war for the survival of Israel and the Jewish people.

Throughout the bible, people are asked by God, "Ayecha?", which means "where are you?". The biblical characters answer, "Hineni!", which means "I am present!". We each need to be present in the current moment: a moment of war with evil. We cannot let ourselves be distracted from being present with what is directly in front of us and needs to be dealt with.

Congratulations to Jo for a well researched article for the New York Times, but I pray that it is entirely ignored until after the war is finished and Hamas is destroyed. Otherwise it becomes fodder to hurt the war effort... a price that we cannot afford.

May we all have the wisdom to keep our intentions focused on the goal; succeed in that goal; and then, and only then, explore what Jo has investigated.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 16, 2023

5th of Tevet, 5784

December 17th 2023 at 12:48 pm PST

Day 72

Chevre

The IDF has discovered the largest ever Hamas attack tunnel. 50 meters deep and wide enough to drive vehicles, it is in the north of Gaza near the Erez border crossing, and its intent was clearly to facilitate attacking Israeli border communities with armored vehicles, etc. It includes fortified blast doors meant to prevent IDF forces from attacking; and was built with one purpose; to cause death to Israeli border communities.

This is where the US and international humanitarian aid money was going. This is what happened to the concrete that had been sent to Gaza to build water pipes and infrastructure.

Never forget: Israel didn't cause the "humanitarian" problems in Gaza...Hamas did.

Channel 12 in Israel is reporting that released hostages met with Defense Minister Gallant, and told him that there were huge numbers of terrorists in the tunnels and that it is dangerous for soldiers and hostages beyond what we already know.

Please keep Israel in your consciousness. It is all too easy to avoid thinking about the war from our comfort in America... but we must remain vigilant and supportive. Our support... through prayers and actions, do make a difference.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 17, 2023

5th of Tevet, 5784

December 18th 2023 at 7:39 am PST

How money is Used in Gaza

Chevre

Five more IDF soldiers died as Israel made more progress into hardened Hamas strongholds in the north, bringing the death toll to 127 of military in this Gaza ground operation, z"l (z"l stands for zichrano livracha, meaning "of blessed memory").

The IDF also found over 5 million NIS (\$1.36 million US dollars) in suitcases at a home of a Hamas leader in Jabaliya, as well as a weapons cache. When the world media write about the poverty situations of the people in Gaza, we need to remind them of these kinds of financial caches of Hamas leadership; along with the tunnels (over 800 discovered so far, including the 50 meter deep, over 2.5 mile long tunnel found on Sunday)...all taken from "humanitarian aid" sent to Gaza in the last years.

Israel has spent years and millions sending aid to Gazans. Hamas has spent those same years taking the money and supplies to make weapons, tunnels, and line their personal pockets. To put things in perspective, Hamas has built a tunnel system under Gaza to attack Israel (colloquially called "Gaza metro") that is just over half the size of the entire New York subway system, at a cost of over 1 billion dollars... money, effort, and supplies that had been sent to Gaza to help the people, build pipes and infrastructure, and turn Gaza into a self-sustaining beachfront paradise. Instead, Hamas has made Gaza a place of poverty; an exporter of war; and a cult of death. And while Israel uses its army to defend civilians; Hamas uses civilians to defend its army.

The anger of the world, and of us, should never be at Israel; but always and entirely at Hamas, their leadership, and the people who put them there (over 90% of Gazans chose Hamas as the political leadership).

...and we need to remind everyone we know of those simple truths. Constantly and consistently.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 18, 2023

6th of Tevet, 5784

December 18th 2023 at 6:47 pm PST

Shabbat & Shooting

Chevre

As the war continues, anti-Semitism increases, and there have been credible bomb threats to Jewish institutions in the Western United States according to the ADL; it is important that people are situationally aware. A number of you have asked about the temple hosting firearms training classes. While we will B"H have some gatherings with Bullets and Bagels, a Jewish shooting club headquartered in Orange County in 2024, we are arranging with Covered 6 (who provide our High Holiday security) to have classes for those people who are interested in doing serious firearms training and obtaining a license to Carry a Concealed Weapon (CCW).

There will be 2 classes, each 8 hours long, and held at a private range in Simi Valley, and we are hoping to start in January or February. Depending on how many people are involved, the class will be between \$300 and \$400 per person. The first class will be on a Sunday, and the second class will be the following Saturday (there are reasons that the shooting portion must be done on Saturday). We will have a Shabbat morning service at the range prior to the second class. (Shabbat & Shooting)

If you attend this program, you will need to have the following items to attend (rentals are available):

Pistol

Ammo

Eye protection

Ear protection

Sturdy belt

Holster

If you are interested, please email me directly at RabbiBarclay@aol.com with the following information:

Name

Address

What county you live in

What, if any, firearm experience you have

If you own a firearm

This is not to be taken lightly, and is extremely serious. To own a firearm is a commitment.

Again, please email me directly with the information requested if this is something that you seriously would like to pursue.

May this precaution never be needed, and may the Holy One and His Presence keep us all safe and protected at all times.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 18, 2023

7th of Tevet, 5784

December 19th 2023 at 10:51 am PST

Latest News Means Wrestling With an Important Religious Question for Us All

Chevre

As day 74 in this war goes on, and rockets continue to be fired at Tel Aviv, the United Nations is discussing yet another resolution to condemn Israel and insist on a ceasefire. The IDF and Shin Beit jointly announced that Subhi Farwanah has been killed. Farwanah was one of the major money exchangers for Hamas, responsible for funneling tens of millions of dollars into Hamas over the last few

years.

Hamas has again reiterated that they would love to talk about a hostage exchange, but will only do so when Israel has gotten out of Gaza and the ground operation.

Again, Hamas is demonstrating that they truly are the modern incarnation of Amalek and must be entirely and utterly destroyed. Think about the insidiousness of Hamas, and the Pollyannaish ignorance of people pushing for a ceasefire at this time. On October 7, Hamas attacked innocents and committed horrific depravities beyond most humans' comprehension. They kidnapped over 240 people as hostages. When Israel retaliated, the hostages became leverage points to slow down Israel's operation; force IDF soldiers to be in greater jeopardy to try to keep hostages safe; and used to divide Israeli families who both want Hamas destroyed and also want their family members returned. Hamas has done all this while continuing to launch daily rockets at Tel Aviv (costing them millions of dollars that could have gone to help Gazans if that is what they ever really wanted), and after spending billions on extensive tunnels, weapons, etc. And as predicted, each time that Israel gets closer to destroying Hamas, they want a hostage release deal only if Israel gets out of Gaza.

This, from an organization that has put in writing for almost 40 years that they will do everything to "obliterate the Jew", and destroy Israel. An organization that proudly claims they are to never talk about any form of peace or negotiation except as a way to get their enemy of Israel to be lulled to sleep so they can destroy them.

...and the world condemns us, and wants us to stop fighting and let aid into Gaza, which Hamas will use for regrouping and to make more dangers for the IDF.

Given all these circumstances, I have a theological question for each of us to personally explore...

We know as Jews from our history that there have been many times when we have had to stop relying on people and commit ourselves entirely to relying on God, and receiving His miracles. The Maccabees of Hanukkah; the events that led to Purim; the Exodus from Egypt are only a few instances. More recently, the

very existence of Israel against all odds since 1948 demonstrates that our greatest ally has always been God.

Given that, here is my theological question: at what point do you personally believe that we need to listen to the teachings of Torah, and destroy Amalek...even if it means the castigation from much of the world?

This is not a question that I can answer for anyone, and is something that I am constantly wrestling with as well. But I believe that we all need to honestly observe the world's opinion of Jews and Israel no matter what we do, and decide where our personal theology leads us.

Against all odds, we have survived for thousands of years. The Canaanites, Moabites, Amalekites, Romans, Babylonians, et al have come and gone...and we are still here thanks to God. At what point do we each need to realize that we are in a special partnership with God as the Jewish people? Is there a point when we need to rely totally on that as opposed to relying in the machinations of men?

I believe each of us needs to wrestle with that question. And then, based upon our answer, act for Israel in ways that are reflective of our own personal theology.

And we must never forget what Hamas did on Oct 7, continues to do, and is committed to doing. Never forget, and know that Never Again is now

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 19, 2023

7th of Tevet, 5784

December 20th 2023 at 7:19 am PST

Hamas is Moving and This Day in Jewish History

Chevre

Hamas billionaire leaders are moving all around...possibly because they are "looking for peace", or possibly because the IDF and Mossad have made it clear that they intend on killing all Hamas leadership. But many of them have left their palaces in Qatar and are traveling. One of them has arrived in Egypt, where he is supposedly working on another temporary truce to exchange hostages.

Today is also the 8th of Tevet, and is, along with the next two days, significant in Jewish history.

Most bible translations read today are based on the first translation from the Hebrew into the Greek. Discussed in Talmud (Megillah 9a) the story is told that King Ptolemy in the 3rd century BCE wanted a translation of the Torah into Greek. He commanded 72 Jewish elders to be placed in 72 different rooms. He then told each of them to write a translation of the Torah into Greek. The Talmud goes on to teach that God put the same ideas in each man's head, and the 72 translations were exactly the same, word for word. Miraculously, there are also 13 instances of conscious mistranslations (in order not to confuse the Greeks) that are also all identical to each other. This Greek translation was called the "Septuagint" (based on "septa" or 70). In today's world, most people refer to the Septuagint to be the Greek translation of the entire Hebrew Scriptures, but historically it was only the Torah and not the rest of the Tanakh.

The 72 identical versions of this document were all delivered to Ptolemy on this date of the 8th of Tevet.

Why is this interesting factoid actually important in our world today?

Generations later, many of our ancient Sages made this a day of mourning, as the Greek translation lost much of the subtle content that can only really be understood in the original Hebrew. But for many of us today, the creation of this document was truly miraculous.

There were many Jews in Alexandria who were no longer literate in Hebrew. By having a translation they could now study, they could more deeply understand and relate to Judaism and Jewish practices and beliefs. The Septuagint set the foundation for all Jews who aren't fluent in Hebrew to study in their own language. Rather than losing the connection to the Torah, the Septuagint and

other subsequent translations over the last 2000 years have allowed Diaspora Jews to learn and connect to Judaism.

Those 72 elders in actuality created a document that has helped preserve the Jewish people for over 2000 years in their homes around the world. For me, this is something to celebrate.

In honor of this momentous day, I ask that you take a few minutes today and read a bit of the Torah. It doesn't matter how much or for how long, but study a bit of Torah for yourself, and in honor and with prayers of protection for the members of the IDF who are unable to study as they fight this war for all of us.

Your reading will benefit them, and if it's a good translation (or if you are fluent in Hebrew), you might decide to keep on studying these sacred words after today... and that is good for your soul, Judaism, and the world.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 20, 2023

8th of Tevet, 5784

December 21st 2023 at 7:09 am PST

This Day in History and Bringing Judaism Back to Jews

Chevre

Today is the 9th day of the Hebrew month of Tevet. Traditionally, this is considered a "hidden fast day", meaning that it should be a fast day, but we don't observe the fast publicly. The "hidden part" has to do with the Christian elder Peter, the first Bishop/Pope of Rome, known in Hebrew as Shimon Kipa, for this day is his yahrzeit. There are long and complicated reasons why (which we will explore in a future class on the Jewish roots of Christianity), but we honor his yahrzeit (yes, there are many Jewish sources that actually honor Shimon/Peter, the first pope, as a tzaddik for the Jewish people).

But the deeper reason for this fast day, as expounded upon by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l (the Chief Rabbi of Britain and one of the great Jewish minds of the last century) among others, is that it is the yahrzeit of Ezra the Scribe. Ezra, along with Nehemiah, led the Jews' return from Babylon back to Israel after the destruction of the first Temple, and built the Second Temple. Moreover, Ezra was considered a "second Moses" who brought the Torah back to the Jewish people who had been in exile. He is credited with writing both Chronicles and Malachi in the Bible; and many academics actually believe that he was the redactor of the Torah...putting it all together from multiple sources.

This may seem like useless academics...but it has incredible view and insight into the world's situation today. I hope you will read on to see how this day, and Ezra, contain hopeful teachings that are extremely applicable in this current war we are experiencing.

Let's go back to the First Temple. According to the Talmud (Yoma 9b) we are taught that it was destroyed because of the irrelevance of three sins that had become commonplace in society: idol worship, immorality, and bloodshed. Simply put, our ancestors had turned away from the traditional values of Judaism. As a result, the First Temple was destroyed and the people were exiled into Babylon. Then along came Ezra the Scribe, who led the people back to the Jerusalem and rebuilt the Second Temple. He additionally established the Great Assembly, which became the Sanhedrin. Close to six centuries later the Second Temple was destroyed. This time the destruction was attributed to "Sinnat Chinnam"... "baseless hatred" between Jews.

What can be gleaned from this history that is useful today? What can we learn from Ezra that can help us in the horrific war that we must wage against the evils of Hamas?

When we look at the last number of years, there are far too many parallels to the ancient Jewish world. The vast majority of Jews have been at each other's throats. Diaspora Jews have not been supporting Israel, while Israel has not always been respectful of the Diaspora. Even within Israel, baseless hatred between Jews had been the norm. I was in Israel in July, and saw secular Jews showing nothing but disdain for observant Jews; protestors marching (in organized protests...these were not organic, but well funded political rallies)

against the government; and genuine hatred between Jew and Jew.

And then October 7 happened. Suddenly, all of Israel became unified. Diaspora Jews suddenly felt a new connection to Israel. All Jews worldwide proudly screamed Am Yisrael Chai..Am Echad. We are one people that live.

But in the ensuing weeks and now months, cracks in that unification have started. Some Jews are calling for a ceasefire. Some Jews, and even Rabbis, are marching alongside anti-Semites in support of a Palestinian state that has never existed in history. For many, the outrage and pain of October 7 has faded away.

But the reality is that the war continues; the depravities of Hamas continue; and there is a true evil that needs to be destroyed.

Interestingly here in the Diaspora, many secularized Jews started coming to services after October 7. In the pain of the moment, Jews gathered together in community to find support. But as the war has continued, attendance at services around the country have diminished back to pre-October 7 levels. On October 8, every Jew realized the evil of Hamas, and we were all committed to destroying Hamas. Now, many have forgotten what happened (and is happening), and have gone back to their obliviousness to the realities of the Jew-hating world.

And this is why we need to remember Ezra. Ezra and his teachings can help us navigate through the challenging times.

Ezra reminded all the people that they needed to return to Jewish values... including being able to simultaneously disagree with each other (called a "machlochet) and yet support each other totally and unconditionally. This is one of the foundation principles of the Great Assembly. A principle that has been lost all too often in the years prior to the horrors of October 7.

We need to remember Ezra, and take his lessons to heart today. For us to succeed, as the Jews led by Ezra and Nehemiah did, we must keep ourselves unified as a people tied together with Jewish values, practices, and beliefs. As Ezra brought disparate Jews together under the umbrella of Torah, we too need to be unified. In order to be able to succeed in this war. And in order for the Jewish people to survive both in and out of Israel.

After the destruction of the First Temple, many Jews had assimilated in Babylonian culture, but Ezra led them back to the eternal values of the Torah and to reconnecting with their Jewish community. Like our ancestors, we must come and stay together in this war for the survival of Judaism and Israel.

And we need to remember that the Second Temple, Ezra's temple, was ultimately destroyed because of baseless hatred. We need to take that as a cautionary lesson, and choose to support each other rather than hate our brother in our heart.

We need to remember that even if we think we are assimilated, part of American culture, and a part of the very infrastructure of this nation, we are not viewed that way by other Americans. Universities; street rallies; and the media have shown us clearly in the last three months that while many of us think of ourselves as Americans who happen to be Jewish; the majority of Americans view us as Jews first who happen to be living in America.

Ezra gives us an answer as to how to efficiently win this war in Israel, and this war for our survival in America and throughout the world. We must return to Jewish values and the teachings of the Torah. We must return to being active members in Jewish communities. And we must unconditionally support Israel. To win the war in Israel, and to make a safer world for all Diaspora Jews.

How can we reconnect with each other, and in so doing, strengthen the Jewish people and identity here and in Israel? The best ways are often the simplest. Take on a new Jewish practice in your life. Start lighting Shabbat candles; observing Havdalah; or keeping kosher. Give charity to Jewish causes both in Israel and here. Start to study a book in the bible; or study Pirkei Avot (Ethics of our Fathers...an amazing tractate of the Mishna, and you can borrow a copy from the temple library if you desire). Make a personal commitment to start taking classes or to attend weekly services (either in person or online...we provide both options). Consciously reconnect to Judaism, Israel, and Jewish practices. It will enhance your spiritual life and strengthen your relationship with your people.

As much as anything, Ezra taught the assimilated Jews of his time the truth of Am Echad...we are one people. Today, on this anniversary of his death, we must remember that teaching and strive to be a unified community. We can disagree

with each other without being disagreeable, and we must stay unified with each other here, and with our brothers and sisters in Israel.

May Ezra's teachings of the importance of embracing Jewish values, Jewish community, and a unified Jewish people lead us to strengthen each other, and to a conscious manifestation of Am Echad...always remembering that we are in truth, one people.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 21, 2023

9th of Tevet, 5784

December 21st 2023 at 9:54 pm PST

The News of Today, and of 2600 Years Ago

Chevre

It's been a dark day for Jews in the world. We have had already had two sad days in our calendar this week, and are about to begin a third. And today, the world, and the US government showed where they really stand about Israel.

Although the vote has been postponed until tomorrow, the US is now supporting the despicable United Nations resolution calling for a cease fire. At the same time, Hamas leadership reiterated that no hostages will be released until all fighting ceases and there is a full cease fire, and Israel abandons Gaza to Hamas.

Tonight also begins the 10th day of the month of Tevet, a fasting day of mourning. In 588 BCE, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon began his siege of Jerusalem. This would culminate 18 months later (Tisha b'Av) with the First Temple being destroyed, and the Jewish people being exiled into Babylon.

So both historically, and in the present, there have been challenges on this day. We need to remember the pain, and commit ourselves to not repeating the

mistakes of our ancestors that the Talmud teaches caused the destruction of the First Temple: idol worship (which includes idolizing things like greed, fame, power, etc.), immorality, and bloodshed.

And we need to remember what ultimately happened as a result of the destruction of the First Temple. Yes, we were exiled into Babylon, but it is because of that exile that our ancestors eventually left us the Babylonian Talmud. A community in Babylon was created that exists even today as the Jews stayed there continually through multiple empires until Persian Jews left Iran in the late 20th century. The Temple was destroyed, but God kept his covenant with the Jewish people and a Second Temple was built 70 years later. (That temple too was destroyed, but we know that the time will come when a Third Temple will exist on the holy mountain.)

Although things may seem dark now, Judaism is committed to faith in our relationship as a people with God. We must remember this relationship as we go through the gamut of feelings that have come up since October 7 of pain, grief, anger, fear; and now with the US heading down a path of supporting the United Nations against Israel, even the feeling of betrayal.

This day is a sad day of mourning for the loss of the Temple; and for our own loss of innocence as we perceive Hamas for the evil that it truly is. But it is also a day for us to recommit to that relationship with God: both a collective relationship with our people, and an individual relationship that each of us can deepen through prayer, action, study, and personal meditation.

So as we mourn the destruction of the Temple, and feel the pain of both Hamas' commitment to not release hostages as well as the pain of the US allying itself with the anti-Israel United Nations; let us all retain hope and faith. Faith that this is only another hiccup in the history of the Jewish people. And hope that from the sadness of this day will come a time of peace and prosperity for Israel and the Jewish people that we will all experience.

From the midst of the darkness can still be heard the words of our ancestors...

Am Yisrael Chai...the People of Israel will always live.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 21, 2023

10th of Tevet, 5784

December 22nd 2023 at 12:37 pm PST

Israel Was Just Abandoned by the US, and it May Change the World

Chevre

As expected, the United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution calling for immediate cease fire, for Israel to let all aid go unchecked into Gaza, and without condemning Hamas. The vote was 13 in favor, and zero against...with both US and Russia abstaining.

On this anniversary of the action that led to the destruction of the First Temple, we are seeing an action that could lead to another devastation of our people, God forbid.

The ramifications of this, as well as what it shows about the United States, are significant and disturbing; and need to be understood by every Jewish American.

The United States abstained. Had it vetoed the resolution, it would have failed as the US is a permanent member of the Security Council and can stop any resolution with a veto. The UN ambassador, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, whined after abstaining that she couldn't understand why other members would not condemn Hamas; she complained that they weren't stopping evil: and she said that she was appalled about the silence of the evils of Hamas.

But when it came to the actual vote she, and the United States remained silent.

When the United Nations attacked Israel with a resolution that will ultimately hurt every Jew in the world, the United States chose to be silent. Our ambassador whined, but did nothing...and all the political double-speak doesn't change the fact that the United States tacitly approved of an attack on the world

stage against Israel for defending herself against Hamas, the most evil and depraved organization since the Nazis.

The ramifications of this resolution will be significant to every Jew in the world. Because it is a Security Council resolution, it is considered "binding" for U.N. countries. This means that if they choose to (which the anti-Semitic IN undoubtedly will), the UN can impose international sanctions against Israel if they do not abide with the resolution. Simply put, if Israel doesn't allow "humanitarian aid" to go unchecked into Gaza (where it will be used for Hamas' war effort, not for the Gazan people), economic sanctions could be placed against Israel that would be devastating.

For the Jews worldwide, this is equally as devastating. This resolution empowers all the Jew haters to attack Israel even more. It gives them a moral right to condemn Israel, and all Jews.

All because the United States chose to remain silent by abstaining.

Despite the words of the ambassador, the cowardice of the United States' action should be despicable to every American Jew. The US has made it clear that when push comes to shove, they will abandon Israel. This abstention by the United States in the face of evil parallels Chamberlain's demonstration of weakness in the face of Nazi Germany with the Munich Agreement in 1938. The question we must ask is if this will have the same long term effect of supporting the modern Nazis of Hamas.

To avoid that horrible consequence that we have seen historically 85 years ago, every Jew in America needs to change the US government's stand on Israel that they demonstrated today. Each of us needs to do whatever is necessary to get the United States back to the policy of supporting Israel on the world stage.

If not, we may, God forbid, be finding ourselves in a recapitulation worldwide of the horrors of the last century.

Judaism promotes prayer and action together. Given this abstention by the US, now is the time that we must act to help get the US back to unconditional support of Israel...for Israel, for the world, and for the preservation of our people.

Shabbat Shalom, and Chazaknu'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 22, 2023

10th of Tevet of 5784

December 24th 2023 at 1:44 am PST

As Fighting in Israel and Hate Increases, What Can We Do?

Chevre

Saturday was a day of heavy fighting especially in the South of Gaza, where eight more soldiers were killed, bringing the total to 152 troops killed in the ground operation. Four were killed by an anti tank guided missile (including a paramedic), and the other four by bombs planted by Hamas gunmen. May their memories be a blessing, and may their families be comforted among the mourners of Zion.

The IDF Rear Admiral said that IDF troops are getting engaged in heavy battles as they work very intensively to clear the Hamas underground infrastructure of tunnels in the south. He also said that the IDF has seized or destroyed over 30,000 items of explosive weaponry so far, including anti-tank missiles and RPGs. Gaza continues to launch rockets at Israel, firing a number today which thank God did not cause any serious injuries.

Rockets, missiles, 30,000 items of explosive weaponry... this is where the "humanitarian aid" money has been going for years: to create weapons and worship death.

Expect to start seeing higher prices in large stores as the Iranian backed Houthis continue to stop shipping lanes in the Red Sea. Ikea was the first to announce today that prices may be forced to rise because of supply chain issues, and other chain stores are sure to say the same in the near future.

Outside of Israel, it has already been a disturbing weekend. Israelis were beat up in London as they were putting up flyers about the hostages; the Lincoln Memorial was tagged (on video) with pro-palestinian slogans; and in London, New York, and other cities, the day was one of demonstrations that were simultaneously for Hamas and against Christmas. It seems that to want Jewish genocide and a Palestine from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea now means to not only want Jews killed, but is an expression of desire to ruin all things Christian...even Christmas. Perhaps it will alert our Christian friends that the evils of Hamas are not only focused on Jews, but on all people of a different belief than the fanatical Hamas and Moslem Brotherhood.

With all these challenges every day, what can we do? On Yom Kippur we read that prayer, acting in righteousness, and charity can remove the severity of any decree. We all need to be doing all three of these things. Come pray at our services; make it a point to treat all those you come into contact with respect and caring; and give tzedaka to a Jewish charity. Bnai Zion Hospital in Haifa is a great charity as they desperately need to purchase more medical devices (www.healthcareforisrael.org) and do some giving to Jewish organizations (like www.NerSimcha.org/give is a good one...sorry for the shameless plug for our temple) while you can still get the deduction for 2023.

If you want to attend but still have not responded to me directly about the CCW class, please get your information to me asap so that we can lock in dates for those classes as well.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay
December 24, 2023
12th of Tevet, 5784

December 24th 2023 at 11:29 am PST

Contradictions & Xmas, Pain, Peace, and Music

Chevre

The war and the world continue to be filled with contradictions, conundrums, and paradoxes. As the world prepares to celebrate Christmas, a celebration of peace, love, and worship based around the Holy Land of Israel...war continues.

While TikTok bans ads run by families who have hostages in Gaza for being "political"; Tel Aviv University has recognized the horrible psychological damage that this war and Oct 7 has done, and opened an emergency national PTSD clinic.

As the **IDF** uncovers more of the evils of Hamas, the world condemns Israel and seeks the perpetuation of this fanatical death cult. Today, Israel discovered a huge cache of weapons hidden in a school in Gaza City that had been supposedly transformed into a shelter, but in actuality had been transformed into an arms storage facility by Hamas. At the same time, Egypt has proposed a peace solution that will probably be embraced by the entire world that is both dangerous and despicable. It includes a 2-4 week cease fire and removal of all Israeli forces from Gaza in exchange for 40 hostages (we would also release 120 terrorists currently in prison); all "humanitarian aid" could enter Gaza freely; a joint Palestinian Authority/Hamas government would be created: and then after all that would be done after a few months, they would release the remaining hostages.

The world condemns Israel and attacks Jews, while the world simultaneously prepares to celebrate the birth of a man who was born, lived, and died as a Jew in Israel.

And the irony of this Jew hatred while they celebrate a Jew's birth is ignored.

But we are a people of faith and hope. We are a people of peace that look towards a future of real peace, not backwards to the darkness of an Islamic theocracy of Sharia law. As Golda Meir once said, "We hate war. We do not rejoice in victories. We rejoice when a new kind of cotton is grown, and when strawberries bloom in Israel."

So to help us look forward as the Christian world celebrates the birth of a Jew, here are some videos to hopefully keep your spirits up and your souls filled with faith.

Some of our **IDF** soldiers chanting "Ani ma'aeen"... I believe in perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah (a time of peace), and even though he may delay, I still

believe':

https://youtube.com/shorts/IDF_Soldiers

Some words of Golda to a group of children about peace:

<https://m.youtube.com/When-Arabs-love-their-children-more-than-they-hate-us>

And our national anthem with voices around the world...the song of hope

[https://m.youtube.com/Hatikvah\(התקווה\) Across the Globe - Acapella Israeli Anthem for Hope](https://m.youtube.com/Hatikvah(התקווה) Across the Globe - Acapella Israeli Anthem for Hope)

And as a special bonus (because let's be honest, some Xmas songs really are terrific) here is my personal favorite song of Xmas with David Bowie and Bing Crosby together in a prayer for peace:

https://m.youtube.com/Bing_Crosby,_David_Bowie_-_Peace_On_Earth/_Little_Drummer_Boy

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 24, 2023

12th of Tevet, 5784

December 25th 2023 at 9:03 am PST

Words, Actions, & Christmas in Israel

Chevre

As Americans open gifts, go to church, and eat Chinese food; Israel continues to deal with a war that has so far lasted for 80 days, and that was precipitated on October 7 by some of the most heinous acts in history.

The IDF has announced that they are starting to take control over main routes in Khan Younis area, and destroyed a concrete factory and weapons manufacturing plant there.

In Gematria (Jewish numerology), the number 80 is related to the mouth and speech; and this Christmas day has been filled with words from around the world that express what people's true feelings are. Aron Dolgopyat, who won a gold medal in both the 2020 Olympics and 2023 World Championships for Israel (Israel's first ever) announced that he is auctioning off his World Championship Gold (at a starting bid of \$100,000) to benefit Gaza border communities in Israel that were devastated by Hamas. On this day, he uses his speech to remind us all of the work that needs to be done to repair the physical horrors of October 7, and that we can all help.

The Pope used his Christmas message to the Catholic world to call for an immediate ceasefire and return of hostages...entirely ignoring the evils of Hamas, October 7, or their continual depravities. Instead of even mentioning the evil of Hamas, his message on the holiday of celebrating the birth of a Jew in Israel was dedicated to wanting to allow aid into Gaza and the cessation of military operations.

It is a reality that the Pope has conveniently forgotten that evil will never be defeated if it is not even recognized.

As we observe this 80th day of war and celebration in the Christian world, I suggest that we all pay special attention to the words we speak. Words can be powerful, and we can all emulate the Israeli gymnast by using our own words to raise money for Israel and Jewish causes, by speaking for Israel without qualification or exemption, and by sharing the honest truths about the evil of Hamas and its supporters in the world stage. Let us use this day to remind both Jews and non-Jews that this holiday of peace is antithetical in every way to the depraved actions of Hamas.

Today is Christmas, and it is a good time to remind the world that if Hamas were in charge, they would have killed Jesus even quicker and more brutally than the Romans did.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 25, 2023

13th of Tevet, 5784

December 25th 2023 at 6:58 pm PST

Netanyahu: Destroy, Demilitarize, Deradicalize; and Purim Hebron is today!

Chevre

Israel Prime Minister Netanyahu wrote an op-ed in today's Wall St Journal which he starts:

" Hamas must be destroyed, Gaza must be demilitarized, and Palestinian society must be deradicalized. These are the three requisites for peace and its Palestinian neighbors in Gaza."

What he goes on to say, and not say, are significant. He makes it clear that the Palestinian Authority cannot administer Gaza, saying, "expectation that the Palestinian Authority will dematerialize Gaza is a pipe dream". He goes on to point out that the "PA is itself responsible for funding terrorism" and "educates children to seek the destruction of Israel." He even rightly points out that since PA President Abbas can't even bring himself to condemn the Oct. 7 atrocities", and points out Abbas' lack of "moral leadership".

Netanyahu makes it clear that Israel must ensure that Gaza is never again used as an attack base. He also writes about the ideal of Gaza transforming the way Japan and Germany did after WWII, ultimately becoming allies with their enemies after a period of "successful deradicalization".

What he doesn't write about are the hostages. With Israel yesterday finding the bodies of another 5 dead hostages, his noticeable lack of their mention may indicate that Israel has little to no faith that any hostages are coming home... or at least very few. I am not positive, but think this may be the first time hostage retrieval wasn't included in the goals for the war. The absence of including hostages speaks volumes.

At about 2pm PST, an Israeli airstrike killed the Iranian Revolutionary Guard

General who was responsible for coordinating between Iran and Syria, and was the bridge and supplier of weapons between Iran and terrorist groups like Hezbollah. Iran has spent the last two hours sabre rattling and threatening that "Tel Aviv is facing a tough countdown".

On a much happier note, many Jewish communities around the world celebrate local "Purims" at different times to commemorate a special event that saved the local Jews. Today is Hebron Purim for Sephardic Jews. The story is moving and ultimately joyous... with some important teachings for our times.

The story is that in 1740, Hebron was populated by Sephardic Jews who had been expelled from Spain. Two Jewish emissaries came to town to raise money to redeem Jews from slave traders, and needed 5000 piasters from the Hebron community. Community elders said that "charity begins at home" and the money was needed for the local poor, and they tried to bargain to give less charity than needed. The emissaries said that they could redeem the slaves and God would show them that they still had enough, but the wealthy Hebron leaders refused and the emissaries left emptyhanded.

Shortly thereafter, a new Jew hating Pasha came to power. He levied huge taxes in the community; and then issued an edict that the Hebron community had to pay him 50,000 piasters or the Jewish community leaders would be killed and the rest of the Jews enslaved.

The rabbis of the community realized that this was all caused by not giving 5000 piasters to redeem slaves a few months earlier, and that now they were being taxed tenfold by the pasha. The rabbis decreed a community fast (a la Esther's fast in Shushan centuries earlier), and that they would then appeal to the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to redeem them. They fasted, took a mikveh, wrote a letter beseeching the Patriarchs, and bribed the guard at the gate to the Cave of Machpelah (where the Patriarchs are buried) to throw the letter into the cave, which he did.

That night, the Pasha was disturbed in his sleep with a dream of three old men telling the pasha to give them 50,000 piasters or the pasha would die. When he awoke, he was grateful it "was just a dream". That morning, the pasha and his soldiers came to the temple to collect their taxes or Jewish slaves. When the shammash opened the door and they demanded their money, the shammash

nearly tripped over a heavy bag of gold that was in his way. He brought it to the pasha... who recognized it as his own bag of gold that he kept locked in his personal storeroom. The pasha turned pale, and told the shammash that the Patriarchs must have risen from their graves in Machpelah to deliver the money to the Jews and redeem them. The pasha promised that if the local Jews prayed for him, he would never try to cause problems for the community again. It was the 14th of Tevet.

The miracle of the redemption of the Hebron Jews created this annual holiday in the Sephardic community, and is a teaching and reminder that we should always give charity... for our sake and for the sake of those it goes to.

It is why my own father of blessed memory always taught me to say "thank you" when giving charity to anyone, and I have taught that to my children. Those who ask for charity are giving me the opportunity to do a good deed, and I am always grateful for that.

If this story gives you hope that we will ultimately be fully redeemed from the evils of Hamas and their supporters around the world... then you have gotten the point. Faith (combined with the Hebron community's fasting) led to the miracle. And with God's help, we too will see the miracle of a redeemed Israel protected and safe.

If the story inspired you to give tzedakah to Israel, I suggest going to www.HealthCareForIsrael.org and donate to the Bnai Zion Medical Center in Haifa. 100% of donations go to much needed hospital equipment (staff and administration are endowed), and you will directly be saving lives. If you wish to donate to a local cause, you can go to www.nersimcha.org/give as well... but most importantly, take away from this story that we all need to choose faith... for God has promised that the people of Israel will live.

Am Yisrael Chai

To help remind you of that, here is an inspiring video:
[https://m.youtube.com/watch?Eyal Golan - Am Yisrael Chai](https://m.youtube.com/watch?Eyal+Golan+-+Am+Yisrael+Chai)

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 25, 2023

14th of Tevet, 5784

December 26th 2023 at 9:46 am PST

American Jews MUST Wake Up and Stay Awake

Chevre

We American Jews live in a bubble. Even the anti-Semitism we experience in our cities and college campuses is watered down compared to what our ancestors experienced, what international Jews go through, and what is happening in Israel. The anti-Semitism has always been as strong in the US as internationally, but it was usually covert. While some of us have been pointing out the signs of growing Jew hatred for the last decade, most American Jews outside of the Orthodox have been asleep... unaware of the cancer of Jew hatred that festers in the world.

October 7 was a wakeup call for American Jews. Suddenly, every American Jew felt connected to Israel; experienced the shock and pain; and realized that the Jews in Israel and in the Diaspora are all one family. As American Jews saw the support of Hamas that came from their neighbors, BLM, on college campuses, etc., many American Jews realized the need to band together and support Israel and each other.

But that was 81 days ago, and too many American Jews have been going back to sleep with a weariness of war. The justifiable rage of October 7 has been replaced with an ennui that just wants to see the war over. The recognition of the desire of Gazans and the world to destroy Jews has all too often been replaced in American Jews with a desire to just finish the war and "let's talk about how Gaza should be governed when the war is over".

The war is nowhere close to being over, and we must desist from worrying about Gaza after the war until Israel is safe and the job is completed.

And we are not yet close to that goal.

Defense Minister Gallant was clear in his dialogue with the Knesset today. He pointed out that we are in the midst of a 6 or 7 front war (a veiled hint about whether Iran is currently about to become a front), and that this war may take years.

As long as Israel fights a war with its hands tied; searching house by house and tunnel by tunnel in a ground operation, we will continue to lose soldiers. With the pressure of the world, especially the United States on Israel to cease fire and let Hamas regroup under the guise of "humanitarian aid", the war will continue. If there is a respite in the war, we can be guaranteed that more October 7 events happen, God forbid.

And we can see domestically the growth of Jew hatred all around us. Jew hatred has been called by Jeremy Kay of Bartleby Press, a "hate that mutates". On October 7, American Jews realized the truth of that. But from the cushiness of our communities, many of American Jews (and leaders, including many rabbis) have gone back to sleep: preferring to ignore the virulent hatred towards Jews and Israel.

The moment that we allow ourselves to put our heads in the sand and go back to sleep, is the moment that we will suffer the pain of October 7 again...in Israel and in the Diaspora. While it seems that rallies for Hamas have lessened in recent weeks, they have not. Domestically, there were credible bomb threats on synagogues in the West for the last week, and Christmas celebrations from New York to San Francisco were shut down by pro-Hamas protestors. Israel is being attacked from Gaza every day, while there are more attacks from Hezbollah, in the West Bank, in the Red Sea, et al.

This war has not slowed down; we are seemingly far from it being over at the speed that we are progressing; and each day that it continues risks more Israelis dying, as well as increases the pressure from the United States and international community for Israel to just let Gaza alone.

And yet...American Jews are drowsing...

Please stay wide awake; support Israel daily and unconditionally in this war

against evil; and actively combat Jew hatred in the U.S. If you want this war over with its mission accomplished, then I enjoin you to let American politicians, political parties, and candidates know that you will only support candidates (with your votes and finances) who unconditionally support Israel in this war. If you want to stop the Jew haters in the U.S., along with their ignorant slogans and claims; then learn the real history of the region of the Middle East and educate people. Keep a copy of the Covenant of 1988 on your phone to show people the evil in this charter of Hamas.

Don't be silent. Don't be ignorant. And remember October 7, the pro-Hamas rallies, the words of University presidents at Congress, and fight back against the Jew hatred.

Don't be complacent, for complacency is the predecessor to failure, and we cannot fail in this war for Israel's survival, nor the war for safety for our Jewish children and grandchildren.

Stay awake...

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 26, 2023

14th of Tevet, 5784

December 27th 2023 at 11:00 am PST

A New and Deadly Enemy to Israel

Chevre

Hezbollah is launching more rockets every day. The head of the Palestinian Authority spoke of a potential war starting in the West Bank, while in the same speech he avoids condemning Hamas in any way. And Biden and Qatar's ruling emir spent time talking and working out how "Gaza should be administered". Qatar, a nation that sponsors terrorism and houses Hamas leadership met with

an American President who has repeatedly talked out of both sides of his mouth regarding Israel, to discuss Middle East relations without the actual parties involved being present. Does this seem at all sensible?

It speaks volumes that Qatar and the US both feel that they can exert enough pressure to get Hamas and Israel respectively to do their biddings.

But another dangerous enemy to our IDF ground troops in Gaza has reared its head: treatment resistant infections.

A badly wounded IDF soldier succumbed to his wounds, which were infected with a new strain of virus that wounded soldiers are contracting in Gaza. It apparently is a super fungal infection that the soldiers are then bringing back to Israeli hospitals. Diseases know no borders, and these super fungal infections are another danger posed to IDF soldiers...a danger that increases the longer the soldiers are on the ground. By going slowly through Gaza, our IDF soldiers not only put themselves in greater danger, but put the country of Israel at risk as these soldiers start to bring diseases back to Israel.

It is common for people to contemplate issues and make resolutions as they approach the secular new year.

As we are about to enter this secular new year, we all need to be thinking: should Israel allow herself to be at the mercy of politicians like the Qatar emir and the American president? Should the IDF be put at greater and greater risk, now not just through bombs but by diseases? How should Gaza ultimately be administered after Hamas is destroyed? How affected should Israel be by world opinion, and what should be done about the many hostages still being held?

These and questions like them should be thought about. But there can ultimately be only one resolution that every Jew must be committed to this year:

We must all commit to supporting Israel unconditionally in 2024 and beyond. No matter what pressure we receive or internal conflicts we face, we must all resolve to support Israel fully; and choose to walk as proud Jews in a confused world.

With that commitment, we can truly be lights for the world.as it enters 2024.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 27, 2023

15th of Tevet, 5784

December 28th 2023 at 6:14 am PST

Retaliation Against Attacks is Imperative

Chevre

Over the past days, we have been seeing more aggressive rocket launchings by Hezbollah in Lebanon, at the same time that Gaza is staying challenging as the IDF is going door to door. The West Bank is getting more active as well, with recent knife attacks over the last few days. Israel has increased its response to Hezbollah as we need to defend the Galilee and northern regions, which heard many sirens today.

This evening (Israel is 10 hours ahead of PST), hundreds of Israeli armed vehicles went through many regions in the West Bank, in an attempt to mass arrest known Hamas terrorists. This has been done to avoid another surprise attack on Israel from Hamas.

Again, Israel is defending herself in both the West Bank and North. But we can be relatively certain that Israel will be compared to Nazis in the world's media for rounding up known Hamas terrorists as opposed to letting them have a repeat attack on Israel like October 7. The fact that Hezbollah continually violates international law and treaties by firing continual rockets at Israel is inconsequential to the world and its Jew hating media; and we will probably see more and more media talking heads saying that Israel's response is disproportional to Hezbollah rockets.

We must stay awake and clear, and share accuracies with friends and families...especially those Jewish friends who are in any way less than 100% in

support of Israel currently. Most Jews who are attacking Israel in any way and/or want a cease fire because, after all, the Gazans are "just innocent victims", are uneducated about what is actually happening. As you see those people who support Hamas/Gaza, make it a point as we exit 2023 and are about to enter 2024, to teach those people about the evils of Hamas et al, and to shine a light of education into their darkness of ignorance. As Diaspora Jews, we can all help the war effort by educating those around us, and changing their hearts and minds through education so that they start supporting Israel.

May we see the world start to support Israel more, and may each of us be a light of truth that shines its way and brings healing into the darkness around the world.

Chazak U'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 28, 2023

16th of Tevet, 5784

December 29th 2023 at 5:00 am PST

The War Continues; Be Safe This Weekend; and Am Yisrael Chai

Chevre

Each day, the IDF is uncovering more hidden Hamas tunnels, each filled with weapons, rocket launchers, etc.; and more were found in the last 12 hours. Just think what could have been built in Gaza if they had not dedicated their entire efforts to building weapons and tools of war. All those miles of tunnels could have created work and prosperity for the people; hospitals, schools, and good housing; electrical plants and water desalinization facilities... and enough money would have been left over to build world class resorts on the Gaza beach to create a tourist industry as well.

Each day we are also seeing more battles in the north against Hezbollah, and Israel is being forced to go into Lebanon to stop Hezbollah.

Israel also made 21 arrests on Thursday. They have released information that these were money launderers who have been helping fund Hamas through both digital currency and cash. A different type of battle, this may have dramatic effects on terrorist activity through stopping the easy flow of money to Hamas.

New Year's Eve is Sunday night, and I suggest that you stay home if you can. Both San Francisco and New York are preparing for a night of pro-Hamas demonstrations, and Mayor Adams is preparing for there to be conflicts in Times Square with the dropping of the ball. With the demonstration at LAX this past week, Los Angeles is also on high alert.

Please stay safe and encourage friends to stay in their neighborhoods on Sunday eve: it is safer, can be more fun, and you can avoid being on the road with a lot of drunk drivers.

This Shabbat, we read in the Torah portion about the deaths of both Jacob and Joseph, which led to a period of slavery in Egypt. But we must remember that after the suffering that would be coming in Egypt, God redeemed us... and he will again redeem us in this war. We should always remember the words of Jabotinsky, the early Zionist pioneer in Israel (1880-1940):

"Whether you like us or not, it doesn't matter to us. We came before you and will leave after."

God made a covenant with us through our ancestors, and we need to remember that this covenant ensures our survival as Jewish people and a Jewish nation. Am Yisrael Chai

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 29, 2023

17th of Tevet, 5784

December 30th 2023 at 7:48 am PST

Torture, Rape, & Inspiration

Chevre

Sometimes a synopsis is easier on the soul than the full story, especially in cases of torture.

Yesterday, the New York Times published an article dealing with the Hamas methods of torturing Israeli hostages through rape and sexual torture of women. This is in conjunction with the interview of hostage Mia Schem on Israeli television, a 22 year old young woman who was taken hostage at the rave party and then released 54 days later. Her interview is powerful and painful; and she speaks clearly and with examples as to why there are no innocents in Gaza. Her exact words were "I experienced hell. Everyone there are terrorists... there are no innocent civilians, not one."

Both Mia's interviews and the NY Times article are reflective of the same truths: Hamas is truly evil; supported by Gazan "civilians"; and has perpetrated sexual tortures on Israeli women that are beyond despicable, sick, and depraved.

We must never forget, and never let the world forget nor ignore what Hamas really is and what they have done.

If you wish, you can learn the details of some of Hamas' horrors by reading the article in the Times or watching the interview on Israeli television. But if you do, be prepared for the pain and please have a friend to discuss it with afterwards.

Or you can focus your anger at what Hamas has done into a passion for healing and beauty, as was done in the video below. It is self explanatory, but spectacularly beautiful and inspiring; using the talents of 1000 Israeli musicians at the Amphitheater in Caesarea... one of the most beautiful venues in Israel and close to 2000 years old.

https://youtube/Israel_Musicians_Play_to_Bring_Them_Home

Never forget, and Never Let the Woeld Forget. Never again is now.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 30, 2023

18th of Tevet, 5784

December 31st 2023 at 6:00 am PST

Egyptian Proposals & Planting Trees

Chevre

Hamas leaders are in Cairo, and Egyptian leaders arrived in Tel Aviv today, claiming to bring a deal to "end the war". "Anonymous" reports/leaks suggest that this will be a proposal to release some Israeli hostages in exchange for A: release of terrorists currently in Israeli prisons; B: IDF withdrawing entirely from Gaza; and C: that there will be a joint PA/Hamas government in Gaza.

While most of us see the danger this would bring to Israel; please remember that the Netanyahu led government of Israel is getting tremendous pressure from the Biden government to do any deal that will get the war, as well as the Jew hating demonstrations, out of the headlines as we get closer to the election in 2024. At the same time, there has now been increasing media accusing Netanyahu of not doing enough to prevent October 7. This type of peace deal would be dangerous... remember, the Covenant of 1988, the charter of Hamas, specifically says the only reason to sit at a peace negotiation table is to gain an element of surprise in another future attack, and directly say that there are never to be honest negotiations with Israel. But the challenges of politicians and behind the scene pressures can create dangerous scenarios.

It is for this reason among others that we need to make sure that every political office from local to state to national needs to be held by people who are 100% committed to ethics, and to unconditionally supporting Israel (and not believe the myths of "palestine"). We need to relieve the pressure in Israel to negotiate any type of "peace deal" that does not entirely destroy every aspect and cell of Hamas.

It would seem that for our own survival, each of us need to get involved in politics and help pro-Israel candidates.

Even in challenging times, there is always light, if we look. Today is the 19th of Tevet, a day marked for two anniversaries that affect us. December 23, 1888 (19th of Tevet 5649) is the yahrzeit of Lawrence Oliphant. A British MP who wrote the book "Eretz HaGilead", the Land of Gilead.. This powerful book calls for a Jewish state to be established in the region north of Transjordan. The Turks were not interested at all. Oliphant's work identifies two realities that we need to remember: 1: Both the Turks and the British referred to the country of the area as Transjordan (not "palestine", and 2; Moslems who believe in "waqf", the Islamic rite of holy possession, will never let go of the land willingly...and this is a truth that we must always keep in mind when dealing with Hamas-type fanatics.

The other significance of this date is that today, the 19th of Tevet, is the establishment date of the Jewish National Fund in 1901. The JNF was established to help purchase settlement land in Israel; and has subsequently become responsible for planting over 220 million trees in Israel. Israel is the ONLY country in the world to end the 20th century with more trees than they started the 20th century with.

Let us all choose in 2024 to get more involved in politics that support Israel and fight Jew hatred domestically. And may we all plant a tree... or a glade... or even a forest... here or in Israel.

And may all our individual plantings birth a Tree of Life that supports and sustains Israel. now and always.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 31, 2023

19th of Tevet, 5784

January 1st 2024 at 6:00 am PST

Hamas Attacks to Bring in 2024 in Israel

Chevre

Happy New Year! May we all be blessed in 2024 with good health, prosperity, fun, love, and peace.

Israel was attacked by at least 27 rockets from Gaza to Tel Aviv at exactly midnight. Thank God, the Iron Dome protected the people, but it is a reminder for all of us that as we celebrate, watch football, go to NYE parties, etc., our brothers and sisters in Israel are under constant attack.

We need to always remember that one of the darkest moments in Jewish history happened in 2023, on Oct. 7. As Hamas expected, the world has little empathy or compassion for Jews, even those kidnapped and tortured. In less than 3 months, the rage at Hamas kidnapping young and old civilians has dissipated... and the hostages are being used as pawns for Hamas to regroup, re-arm, and repeat the horrors they have committed to verbally and in writing...their commitment being to repeat that depraved day even a "million times".

As we enter 2024, it is imperative that we Never Forget 2023 and what happened; that we Never Forget the evils perpetrated by Hamas; and that we re-commit ourselves to prayer and action to support Israel and Judaism.

Do your new year resolutions include a greater personal commitment to supporting Israel? To tying yourselves to other Jews in community?

I enjoin us all to make a New Year resolution to Never Forget Oct. 7; and to remind everyone we can about the horrors of that day, the evil of Hamas, the actual geopolitical history of the region, and the importance to the world that Hamas is entirely destroyed.

Let the fireworks around the world become lights of commitment to fight evil, to be connected with Jews, and to always support Israel with prayer, action, and constant words.

Happy secular New Year, and let our resolutions be strong and true.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 1st, 2024

20th of Tevet, 5784

January 2nd 2024 at 5:00 am PST

Attacks and Politics in Israel

Chevre

You may have noticed that as the IDF makes progress in Gaza, the attacks on Israel intensify elsewhere. Hezbollah has been firing progressively more rockets, requiring evacuation in some towns in the north of Israel; and terrorist attacks have increased in the West Bank... this morning 4 terrorists were killed after throwing grenades and shooting at IDF troops. It seems more and more like we are in a war on 3 full fronts.

Then there is the internal war and strife over Israel politics. You will probably read today about the Israeli High Court of Justice's decision. Simply put, the Knesset is the elected political body in Israel. The courts are appointed. A bill was passed this past year that gave more power to the legislative branch than the judicial. The argument on both sides:

---those favoring curtailing the judicial branch's power do not like that an elected body of legislation can be overruled by non-appointed individuals, who may not represent the will of the people.

---those favoring leaving the law in place that allows judicial to overturn legislative feel that laws should not be able to be changed so easily by a government that might have a tiny majority in the legislature.

The issue has to do with which body has more control. The Court in Israel determined that the Court should continue to have more power than the legislation.

I know that those of you who deeply follow Israeli politics will say that there are many more issues, but that is the simplistic overview of the High Court's rulings.

What is most important about this issue is that we do not let it tear us apart... in our communities, our support of Israel, which must be undying, or in Israel herself. We cannot let any political issue interrupt us from finishing the job that must be done in Gaza.

Israel is being attacked on all sides, and we must never allow any issue to prevent us from fully supporting Israel in this time of need. Rather, we should continue to support good causes that help Israel... and do important work for Jews here, Israel, and the world.

Chazak, "Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 2, 2024

21st of Tevet, 5784

January 2nd 2024 at 10:23 am PST

Hamas Leader Killed

Chevre

In November, PM Netanyahu announced that he had instructed Mossad to "act against the heads of Hamas wherever they are". At the same time, Defense Minister Gallant said that all Hamas leaders are "living on borrowed time...the struggle is worldwide".

It has been reported that at approximated 8:30am PST, Hamas deputy leader abroad Saleh al-Anouri was killed in a targeted strike on a suburb of Beirut. He was the head of Hamas political bureau; and considered the head of Hamas in the West Bank; managed West Bank attacks for Hamas; and was was one of the main financial cogs that arranged for money to be transferred to military operations for Hamas and Hezbollah. Although the IDF has yet to confirm it, Hamas and Reuters have each confirmed his death in the srike.

This was one of the heads of the snake of Hamas, a reptile of evil devoted to the

destruction not only of Jews and Israel, but of the Western world in favor of the Islamic theocracy that he sought. There can be no sorrow for his death.

But neither can there be any joy. I know that for many of us, there is an initial reaction to celebrate the death of this monster. But I pray that none of us rejoice in this, for the moment that we rejoice in the destruction of evil is the moment we become that evil. To destroy Hamas and kill its leadership is truly a mitzvah, a commandment, based on the instruction by God to destroy Amalek. But we cannot allow ourselves to take any joy in doing this.

There is a teaching that cannot be repeated enough in these days of war. The Midrash teaches that the angels started to rejoice when Pharaoh's soldiers were drowned in the Sea of Reeds. God stopped them, saying that the work of His hands was being destroyed, and they wanted to sing hymns? God showed us in that moment that we do what needs to be done... in that case the death of Pharaoh's soldiers, in our case the destruction of Hamas and death of men like al-Anouri. But God also shows us that we cannot be joyous about killing anyone...even those as evil as Hamas that must be utterly and completely destroyed.

We must and will do what is needed, and Gallant and Netanyahu were clear that this includes the death of every Hamas leader. But for the sake of our own souls, let us not rejoice in this mission lest we become the evil we seek to destroy.

Baruch Dayan Emet...Blessed is the One who judges in truth

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 2, 2023

21st of Tevet, 5784

January 3rd 2024 at 2:56 am PST

The Rollercoaster of War & Some News That Isn't Being Reported in the U.S.

Chevre

We must remember that in Judaism, the goal of war is not "victory", but a lasting peace (this is clear through the Torah, Tanakh, Talmud, and subsequent commentaries). In terms of war with Amalek, Chazal (ancient Sages) are clear that means the utter destruction of the evil; for without that destruction there can be no lasting peace. And Hamas is the modern incarnation of Amalek, and must be destroyed. The death of the Hamas leader yesterday is a step in that direction, especially because of his influence in the financial arm of Hamas.

We are at war on so many levels, from physical survival to the deepest spiritual aspects of our souls. All war is like a roller coaster, filled with ups and downs until we get to a lasting peace. Some of the ups of the last 24 hours, such as al-Arouri's death have been reported, but we need to be aware of other parts of the roller coaster that also happened.

Al-Arouri is apparently dead (although we are still waiting for confirmation from the IDF); and it was a blessing that Claudine Gay resigned from the Harvard Presidency. Her Jew hatred was clear in her words to Congress, and her forced resignation seems to create an optimism for colleges.

But not everything is as clear as it may seem.

Gay will be stepping down as President of Harvard, but will still be teaching there as tenured faculty. Her replacement will probably have similar views towards Israel, given that her resignation is based in her plagiarism, not her anti-Semitism. Soon after October 7, the Dean of Harvard's Graduate School of Education sent out an email blaming "both Hamas and the Israeli government" for October 7...and that Dean was not criticized nor were there statements from Harvard that specifically blamed Hamas. Jewish students feel unsafe there; Rabbi David Wolpe resigned from his position there; and the university still has not said nor done anything to combat anti-Semitism on campus. Given that the Harvard Jewish Alumni Alliance found data that Joel Pollak reported on showing that it is Harvard's goal to reduce the Jewish student population to 1-2 percent (it was 20-25% in the 1990s and 2000s), it is doubtful that the anti-Semitism will change on Harvard's campus.

While a top Hamas leader died, there are now credible threats that have caused

the IDF to formally be put on "very high level of readiness", as Iran, Hezbollah, et al are making threats of retaliation for al-Asouri's death. This is concerning as the IDF has discovered this week Hezbollah tunnels in southern Lebanon that apparently dwarf the Hamas tunnel system; are much deeper and more sophisticated; and were started long before the Gaza tunnels.

At the same time, the U.S. media seems to be quiet about what has happened in Turkey on Tuesday night. Turkish police arrested 34 Israelis accused of being Mossad with intent to kill Hamas leadership. Unlike most Western nations and even some Arab nations, Turkey does not recognize Hamas as a "terrorist" group; and has made it clear that they will consider the death of Hamas leaders living in Turkey as an act of hostility from Israel.

So while there is the positive news of both Gay's resignation and al-Asouri's death, these successes are also prompting additional potential challenges as Hezbollah, Iran, and now Turkey are vowing to retaliate. Gay's resignation is already being blamed on racism from Jews towards blacks, and it is likely that anti-Semitism will increase institutionally on college campuses as tenured faculty and administration seek to double down on their hatred for Israel and Jews.

And so we must continue to have faith and act. To pray and speak out to our friends and neighbors in order to educate them. To recite Psalms for protection of the IDF, and donate to Israeli and Jewish causes.

(www.healthcareforisrael.org will immediately transform your financial donations into much needed medical equipment at Bnai Zion Hospital).

Pray in your own personal way or with a community (you can come to services this Friday for a Shabbat together, or stream the services if you can't be there physically), and have faith that God will always fulfill His covenant with our people. And please combine action with your prayers in the form of time, finances, and/or education.

The people of Israel will always live... but we need to partner with God through our prayers and actions.

As Hillel said, "If not now, when?"

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 3, 2024

22nd of Tevet, 5784

January 3rd 2024 at 6:53 pm PST

An Appeal: Be Prepared

Chevre

As a result of the death of the Hamas leader in Beirut, Iran and Hezbollah are ramping up their rhetoric, and their missiles

The past 12 hours have seen threats coming towards Israel, especially from Hezbollah Chief Hassan Nasrallah, who has made it clear that he wants to have an all out war. In 2006, the United Nations Security Council Resolution was accepted by Hezbollah to no longer attack Israel. Within a short period of time, Hezbollah broke that agreement; and they have consistently been periodically attacking Israel from the north for 17 years. With the Gaza War, they have increased their attacks. Now, after the death of Hamas leader al-Arouri, they are verbally committing to war, and the IDF is on high alert in the north.

In Iran, the temperature is the same. With the death of over 130 people at the grave of Iranian General Soleimani; Iran is blaming both the US and Israel for the deaths (which were apparently actually caused by suicide bombers). Iran too is clamoring for war against Israel.

The IDF is on alert and prepared, and Israeli citizens see the very real possibility of another war front. Tensions are high, and the people have both nervous tension and a strong commitment to doing what must be done...on however many fronts it takes.

As it looks progressively more likely that Hezbollah tunnels will be used for an attack on Israel in conjunction with rockets, the north of Israel is in need. The Bnai Zion Hospital (that our community has helped raise over \$500,000 for) is in

Haifa, and the equipment that we helped provide, which has already saved hundreds of lives, may be needed for much more (for those unaware, Haifa is in the north of the country) in the coming days and weeks.

I know that I have asked for help for this hospital over the last three months, and may each of you who helped so far be blessed a thousand times over for your help.

And I need to ask again. Medical equipment is needed, and that doesn't happen in a day... it takes time to purchase and have delivered to the hospital. But we may only have days until the north becomes filled with casualties, God forbid.

And so I am asking you again to help our brothers and sisters in Israel. I am asking you to help now so that medical equipment can be obtained before things get even worse in the north. Please donate whatever you can to HealthCareForIsrael.org for preparing the hospital for darker times.

I have been asked why I support this hospital so much, and there are a few reasons. For those people who want to support Israel, but would rather directly help the healing as opposed to helping the battles...this is a great way to follow your heart. The new facility was built inside a nuclear proof bunker, and is one of the safest places in Israel. And as much as anything, I know that every dime donated goes directly to buying medical equipment. Most charities take an "administrative fee" for staff. Bnai Zion does not as the staff costs are endowed; and this is a guarantee that is rare. Many temples are taking the same type of fee for raising money for Israel, but not in this case, every dollar goes directly to the hospital.

And we can be proud that we are saving Israeli lives.

Please be aware of how the currents are shifting towards violence in the north, and I hope you will help prepare Israel for that by going to HealthCareForIsrael.org and donating whatever you can afford... be it a dollar or a thousand dollars (or more).

I have given charity my entire adult life, but the help given to Bnai Zion is the first time I know with certainty that my money is not paying for high salaries at a non-profit; and more importantly... that my gift is helping save the lives of people

who will B"H have children, grandchildren., and many more.generstions.

Those of you who know me well now that I am always recalcitrant to ask for donations for anything, even our own temple (and am grateful each year for community members who make that appeal). But I said to Allison when our community helped to purchase the medical equipment, that it was the first time in my life that I felt like I really did something important. That I am part of actually saving the lives of others. I ask that you join me in that amazing feeling, and give generously.

Please forward this email to all you know, and together, let's get some much needed equipment to Bnai Zion Medical Center now... so that it is at the hospital if and when the time comes and it is needed.

Thank you for your help and generosity, and may you and your children be blessed for this good deed, and I look forward to seeing you on Friday night for Shabbat services.

[Www.healthcareforisrael.org](http://www.healthcareforisrael.org)

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 3, 2024

23rd of Tevet, 5784

January 4th 2024 at 8:17 am PST

The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same

Chevre

It is joked that all Jewish holidays consist of "they attacked us, we won, now let's eat". While not true in any way (Jewish holidays have some of the most powerful teachings and potential personal experiences of any spiritual rituals in human history), there is a truth that patterns emerge if you bother to look

Israel traded rockets with Hezbollah today in the north, while sirens went off in the south from Gaza. This seems like an almost daily pattern: a pattern of Israel being attacked on all sides, and it has been Israel's situation since 1948: we are attacked; we successfully retaliate; and then we get a brief respite with promises of peace. With God's help, we shall continue to overcome all these attacks, destroy the evils that want to turn the world into an Islamic theocracy without Israel or Jews, and this time create a time of lasting peace in Israel... but for now, the pattern continues.

Patterns can be seen in the recent Harvard debacle. Like many universities, Harvard has a history of institutionalized Jew hatred. From inviting Ernst Hanfstaengl, Hitler's foreign press chief to speak in 1934 to still maintaining the Harvard Alfred Krupp Fellowship (Krupp was a Nazi industrialist who was convicted for crimes against humanity), Harvard has a sordid history of Jew hatred. As we saw in the now famous Congressional testimony, they are not alone, as the Presidents of MIT and UPenn joined in Harvard President Gay's inability to condemn Jew hatred.

In the past, after a university's Jew hatred is exposed, there is public act of contrition before the institutionalized hatred of Jews is integrated back into the school's practices. In 1934, it was Harvard not accepting a \$1000 check from Hanfstaengl. Today, the act of contrition is to hire a token Jew, Alan Garber, the current provost and a professor of economics, public policy, and related topics, is now the interim president of Harvard.

This is a very public act of contrition, but is analogous to a bigot saying that he knows lots of people who are black. While it would be fabulous if Garber fights against the institutionalized Jew hatred at Harvard, that is probably overly optimistic. A graduate of Harvard, Garber has been integrated into the university community since completing his undergraduate degree in 1979, and continuing on with his graduate work there and subsequent professorship. As Provost, he has been in charge of academic policies. When the horrors of October 7 happened, Garber said in a November interview that Harvard did not respond correctly. But he also did not use his position as Provost at the time to push the issue: something he could have easily done, but that would have taken courage.

As the new interim President, we can look at a few things to see if this is the

hiring of a token Jew as a public relations stunt to keep Jewish donors to Harvard from leaving because of former President Gay's Jew hatred; or if Harvard really does want to stop the prevalent Jew hatred on campus. We can see how Garber reacts to the pro-Hamas groups on campus, and whether he condemns their hate and enforces the conduct code of Harvard. We can watch and see if he makes any changes to the policy revealed by the Jewish Alumni Association data that showed that Harvard's goal is to reduce Jewish student population to 1-2 percent (it was 20-25 percent in the 1990s and 2000s, and is currently 5-7 percent). Will Garber finally remove the Krupp Fellowship to the University, or continue to have the name of a convicted Nazi war criminal tied to Harvard.

Will he be the token Jew who remains quiet, and allows the patterns of Jew hatred to continue at Harvard? Or will he lead Harvard, and as a result, either universities around the country, into taking a stand against Jew hatred, a stand against the genocidal goals of pro-Palestinian demonstrations, and a stand for Israel, the only democracy in the region?

Let's all hope and pray that patterns change; that we seedily are blessed with a real and lasting peace in Israel; and that with the leadership of Alan Garber at Harvard, that institutionalized Jew hatred at universities at Harvard and beyond is stopped.

And while we wait and see, may we all stay strong and stay safe.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 4, 2024

23rd of Tevet, 5784

January 4th 2024 at 11:55 pm PST

Today; History, the Present; and Our Future...

Chevre

As we enter Day 91 of this war, it is worth pausing for a moment as this is a powerful day in Jewish history; and can help us understand what is going on in 2024 at a deeper level.

Every day of the year has momentous events in our long history. Today may be remembered for the attack from the Iran backed Houthis on American and commercial vessels in the Red Sea. It may be remembered as the day when Israeli War Cabinet ministers yelled at each other about how Gaza should be handled after the war. It is doubtful, but it may even be remembered as "Tetris Day", since today was the first time in history that anyone beat and broke the game of Tetris. (a 13 yr old did it...I know it's silly, but silly news can be healing in these dark days).

But it is already remembered for 4 moments in Jewish history, and we should pause, remember these events, and use them as guideposts for our own behavior and understanding

In the 3rd century BCE, this was the day that the Septuagint was delivered to the Greeks. 72 Jewish elders (6 from each tribe) each translated the Torah into Greek. Without dialogue between them, the translation was the same (implying Divine intervention). Although there are some challenges with the translation, it allowed our Torah to become the foundation stone of all Western culture. As God gave it to us, we delivered it to the entire world through this Greek translation. The Jews demonstrated the crucial part we play in world history.

On this date in 1785, Haym Salomon died. Recognized as the financier of the American Revolution, he was responsible for our nation's independence. When the war was on the edge of victory or defeat for the battle of Yorktown and the Continental Army had no funds for food or equipment, George Washington said only one sentence. "Send for Haym Salomon" This Jewish financier, who died penniless, got Washington the money needed, and we won Yorktown and the war. Salomon demonstrated the importance of Jews in America from the very beginning of this nation, and is the model of how we should give charity of our time, effort, and finances.

On this day in 1812, R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of the Lubavich movement of Hasidism also died. The author of the Tanya, he combined intellect, wisdom, and mysticism and founded what came to be known as

Chabad. Through his teachings, countless people have achieved a more conscious awareness of their relationship with God. The Alter Rebbe, as he was also known, demonstrated to the Jewish world that intellect and spirituality are not contradictory, but complimentary.

And on this date in 1949, Israel held elections for its first Knesset. We had our homeland, and showed the world that Jews will always survive and thrive by having those elections...becoming and remaining the only democracy in the Middle East.

Each of these four events have one thing in common: they were demonstrations to the world of the importance of the Jewish people. They were gifts that made Judaism, Israel, democracy, and God more present in the world.

Our Sages teach that we should contemplate how we will be remembered after we leave this physical world. Looking at this day in history, we need to all ask ourselves the question:

What positive gifts have we demonstrated to the world on behalf of the Jewish people?

And after really contemplating that, let us all act in ways that make the world a better place...and may we all leave it better than it was when we came into it.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 4, 2024

24th of Tevet, 5784

January 5th 2024 at 5:15 pm PST

How Our Hebrew Names Will Help Us Win This War

Chevre

Many of our Sages throughout the centuries have recommended that we look to the Torah portion of the week to understand world circumstances.

As we look at Israel, the war, and the world, it seems oppressive. The horrors of October 7 have developed into a full blown war on multiple fronts... a war that will probably continue to expand. American society has embraced Jew hatred more than any time in my lifetime, and many people have reached out to speak with me about how scared they are of even letting people know that they are Jewish. As our Sages taught, we can see what to do and deepen our understanding by looking at the Torah reading this week.

This week, the Torah reading is the first chapters of the Book of Exodus, called "Shemot", meaning "names". It deals with the birth of Moses, and goes into detail about how our ancestors were living in slavery, pain, and fear. The portion includes God assigning Moses his mission, and beginning the confrontations between Moses and Pharaoh. ("Pharaoh" can also be split into the hebrew words "peh rah", meaning "evil mouth")

The circumstances of the ancient Hebrews were dark. They were truly slaves both physically and spiritually. They were hated by their Egyptian neighbors. They could be attacked without provocation at any time. They were outnumbered and faced with an oppressor that was ruthless: even forcing them to make bricks without straw.

The times are not so different now, as we face Jew hatred on all sides, and Israel is constantly being attacked by enemies who have repeatedly demonstrated that they have no ethics or morals. And we too are slaves (as we say at Passover): slaves to our fears; to Jew haters who have made our college campuses and streets into Jew hating demonstration areas; slaves to a society that wants us to abandon our Judaism and Jewish identities.

The ancient Hebrews learned a lesson that we must all learn in these present day challenges: our ally for survival is not man, but God. Our ancestors cried out to God for relief in the same way that we are doing now. They wanted release from physical slavery, and we now cry out for the freedom to be Jewish (safely) and for the survival of our Holy Land.

We all know how the story turned out for the Hebrews: they were released from

slavery by God, and ultimately came to the promised land. To quote Debbie Friedman z"l, "Not by Might and Not by Power, But By Spirit Alone". Any strength or power we might have to triumph in these days is a gift from God, and we need to accept that gift so that we, like our ancestors, are redeemed from this darkness.

How can we do this?

The Midrash teaches that the Hebrews were released from Egypt because of a few reasons; one of which is they kept practicing the brit milah (circumcision), another of which is that they retained their Hebrew names. Both are clear statements that they were Jewish both privately and publicly. We need to do the same...

I don't mean that you should go out and get circumcised (again). But the use of their Hebrew names was a public statement that no matter what Pharaoh and the Egyptians did, the people would always take a public stand of being Jews.

We need to do the same: be proud of being Jewish, connected with Israel, and of our ties to our Judaism. Unless it is clearly a danger, we need to wear our chai necklaces, our hebrew t-shirts, and keep our mezuzot on the door. We need to stand up as Jews... as partners with God, knowing that this partnership is what will always give us might and protection in all ways.

So here's a practical and simple way to do this. Use your Hebrew name more often. Identify and integrate yourself with it. If you don't know your Hebrew name, or if you have never resonated with the Hebrew name you have, reach out to me and we will find your soul's Hebrew name together. If there are a lot of people who reach out to me, we will do a special Hebrew naming ceremony: it is very beautiful and involves the community and the Torahs, and is both ancient and meaningful.

May we all be blessed to embrace our names and our partnership with God; and may we always remember our special, unique, and individual relationship with the Divine.

Shabbat Shalom, and Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

(HaRav Moshe Yisrael ben Avram HaCohen)

January 5th, 2024

24th of Tevet, 5784

January 6th 2024 at 6:29 pm PST

A Worldwide Call for the Murder of All Jews & What Hezbollah is Really Attacking and Why?

Chevre

Shavuah tov. Islamic State spokesman Abu al-Ansari, in a speech that was also published and sent out worldwide, has called for all supporters of ISIS around the world to attack and kill Jews to avenge the deaths of Hamas terrorists. He instructs all Moslems and terrorist cells to "kill them wherever you can find them", specifically encouraging attacks on "synagogues, Jewish gatherings, and Israeli diplomatic missions" in the United States and Europe. Please be situationally aware, and know that at every gathering, service, or event at our Temple there is always armed security.

After three months, the IDF has announced that it has dismantled the Hamas' military framework in the northern Gaza strip. They are now focusing on the central and southern parts of Gaza. While there will still be "battles and sporadic rocket fire", the IDF is saying that the infrastructure has been dismantled and can no longer carry out large scale attacks.

At the same time, things are getting more intense in the north of Israel as Hezbollah fired over 40 projectiles into northern communities today as "an initial response" to the death of the Hamas leader in Beirut last week; and Hezbollah chief Nasrallah is vowing even more attacks. At the same time, Defense Minister Gallant has told the US envoy that there is only a "short window left for diplomatic understandings with Hezbollah", and that "there is only one possible result---a new reality in the northern arena, which will allow for the secure return of our citizens".

So far, 80,000 residents of the north have been displaced by Hezbollah attacks, which began in conjunction with the Hamas depravities of October 7, and are direct violations of UN treaties agreed to by Hezbollah.

On a spiritual level, these attacks are directly against the essence of Judeo-Christian values and history. The north of Israel is important theologically to both traditions (but not to Islam). For Christians, it is the home of the Galilee (called "kinneret" in Hebrew), where Jesus spent most of his life, taught, found most of his disciples, and where according to the Book of Matthew, many of the most famous of his miracles happened, including walking on water. To attack that region is to attack the heart of much of Christianity.

For us, these attacks are equally as deep. The city of Tiberias on the shores of the Galilee is considered one of the four holiest cities of Judaism, along with Safed (also in the north), Hebron, and Jerusalem. Founded by Herod around 20 C.E., it has been a Jewish hub of spirituality for almost 2000 years. To visit Tiberias is to see the tombs of many of Judaism's greatest Sages and historical figures. Moses' mother, sister, and wife are all buried there, along with Bilhah and Zilpah (handmaids of Rachel and Leah) at the Tomb Mark of the Matriarchs. The list of other final resting places in tombs or graves in Tiberias reads like a who's who of Jewish History: Maimonides and Ramchal are joined by Rabbi Akiva, Rabbi Meir, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai and others from the Talmud to name a few. But Tiberias is not the only town being assaulted by Hezbollah.

Safed, one of the other four holiest cities, is also under siege. Safed (also called Tzfat) is considered one of the homes of Jewish mysticism. Former residents of Safed who are now buried there include R. Shlomo Alkabetz (author of L'cha Dodi); R. Moshe Cordevero, the great mystic and master of meditative techniques; and R. Yosef Karo, author of the Shulchan Aruch, the code of Jewish law. It was also the home and is the burial place of R. Isaac Luria, the great mystic who developed the Lurianic Kabbalistic understandings and techniques that we practice today. For those who have been to Safed, the entire city emanates a holiness and "mysticism", as it overlooks the Galilee from the highest point in the region.

These attacks by Hezbollah are not just attacks on the nation of Israel; they are purposeful attacks on the roots of both Judaism and Christianity. For numerous reasons, there is something deeply moving to both Christians and Jews when

they arrive in Tiberias and Safed. The land itself seems to be infused with a Divine spirit that is at the root of both faiths...but not of Islam, for which the city bears no meaning. Hezbollah seeks to destroy that Judeo-Christian mystical root.

Gallant's comments about creating a new reality in the north is a double entendre. There must be a safe reality for the citizens living in the north; and there must also be a reality where this heart of not only Judaism, but Christianity is safe and protected.

In the land of Israel, history combines with the present to create a unique holiness in this world. The attacks on the north are attacks on our past, our present, and by extension, our future.

May the Master of the Universe keep the north of Israel protected; its people safe; and its spirituality pure. And May the Holy One and His Presence protect and keep safe all Diaspora Jews as we continue to support our brothers, sisters, and ancestors in the Holy Land.

Chazak U'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 6, 2024

26th of Tevet, 5784

January 7th 2024 at 2:39 pm PST

All the World's a Stage as the World Puts Israel in Trial

Chevre

When Shakespeare wrote that "all the world's a stage" over 400 years ago, he could not have imagined how we would be seeing that truth in the form of Jew hatred today. I think that even the creator of Shylock would be shocked at the play that goes on about Israel.

We see it daily: the hypocrisy of the United Nations, who has accused Israel of

more crimes than all other countries combined; the disparity between what Israel's "allies" in Europe and America say about the horrors of October 7 and how they actually act towards Israel when it seeks to defend itself from that evil; even the hypocrisy of "Jewish" organizations and leaders more concerned with placating pro-palestinian demonstrators than standing up for Jewish values and the Jewish people.

And now another "play" is being performed on the world stage this coming week, this time at The International Court of Justice in The Hague. South Africa has charged Israel with committing genocide in Gaza.

The ironies abound. South Africa, who for decades practiced apartheid policies and persecuted its own people, is charging Israel, a nation conceived and dedicated to the respect of every human soul. The court itself is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations, which has become a mouthpiece for Jew hatred and anti-Israel rhetoric for decades. The current 15 Justices on the ICJ include representatives from Lebanon, China, Somalia, Morocco, and the Russia Federation among others: nations with a pre-established history of anti-Semitic patterns. The Chief Justice is an Obama appointee, and has repeatedly demonstrated her anti-Israel views. But this body is now supposed to judge Israel for responding to the horrors committed by Gaza on October 7. These people are putting themselves as judges over Israel's right to defend herself. They are going to act out a play whose theme is anti-Israel on a world stage: a kangaroo court as a show to castigate Israel.

Israel announced today the actor that they will be sending to the court. Retired President of the Israel Supreme Court Aharon Barak will be defending Israel. An 87 year old Holocaust survivor, he is a brilliant scholar; but also the leader of interpreting Israel's Basic Law as a Constitution. It was Barak who really passed the idea during his Presidency that the courts in Israel have power over the elected legislature, effectively making elections by the people subservient to the decisions of appointed judges. He was chosen for his legal brilliance and respect in the international community, and also because he is anything but an ally of Netanyahu, who personally approved his selection.

Whatever Barak does or does not do, the odds are stacked heavily against him and Israel. It is anticipated that he will attempt to present footage of the depravities of October 7 from Hamas body cameras as well as other evidence

supporting Israel's actions in Gaza. Barak has been reviled by Israeli activists on both the left and the right, but both sides believe he is dedicated to Israel unconditionally, and will serve the country well.

Are we seeing history repeat itself? It all feels familiar to those who are aware of the Disputations of Barcelona in 1263, where the royal court was to determine if Judaism was legitimate in not accepting Jesus as the Messiah. Despite the odds stacked against the Jews, represented by Nachmanides, the ultimate decision was a "draw". Nachmanides was so effective in his arguments that Jewish theology was accepted as legitimate even by the panel of Catholic judges. So much so that King James 1 awarded Nachmanides 300 gold coins; declared that never before had he heard an unjust cause so nobly defended"; and attended and spoke at a Shabbat service in the Barcelona synagogue, where he addressed the congregation... a thing unheard of in that time period.

We can only hope that Barak will be at least as successful as Nachmanides almost 700 years ago. The court is stacked; the world's public opinion is waiting to convict Israel; and the terrorists are waiting for justification for their actions.

May Aharon Barak find the strength, wisdom, and tools needed to change the preformed judgment of this court; and may the world clearly see the evil of Hamas and the need for its entire and total destruction.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 7, 2024

26th of Tevet, 5784

January 8th 2024 at 7:50 am PST

We Must Not Let Ourselves Get Weary, But Always Know that Am Yisrael Chai

Chevre

I know that we are all tired of the war in Israel, weary of the non stop media

attacks, and of the pressure to just end this war already.

But as tired as any of us are, it is nothing compared to those living in Israel.

Perhaps they are serving in the IDF in Gaza or the north: cold and without sleep. Maybe they are praying non-stop for a friend or family member who is still a hostage, and has been suffering as a prisoner of Hamas for over three months. Or it could be a "fortunate" Israeli, who has not personally lost a family member, but knows so many other families who have been saying Mi Sheberach, or God forbid, Kaddish.

We must all stay conscious of what is happening in Israel every moment of every day. This is a war for the survival of Israel, the Jewish people, and Western culture.

And the war is expected to continue...as is the pressure from Western media to have a cease fire and let Gaza recover. But we must realize that the truth of Hamas (and all incarnations of Amalek) is that they do not view a cease fire as a peace, but as a pause until they can commit more atrocities. Their charter is clear about that, as is the words of their leaders.

But the leaders in Israel recognize this sad truth, and as Prime Minister Netanyahu's office said today, they are committed to finishing the mission. "I have a clear message for our enemies: what happened on October 7 will not happen again."

But the fighting continues, especially in the south of Gaza and on Israel's northern border areas. The IDF announced that a Hezbollah attack took out some of the north's air traffic communications. Israeli commanders have spoken about the war lasting through 2024; and Defense Minister Gallant warned that Iran backed Hezbollah must be stopped, and that Israel "can copy paste what happened in Gaza to Beirut".

I believe in miracles, and Judaism is based in the repetitive miracles with which God has always blessed our people. God will again redeem us from this evil, but it may not happen overnight. Cleaning up Gaza will take time, and the fighting with Hezbollah in the north intensifies every day.

Which is why we Diaspora Jews must be vigilant in our prayers and action. We must do all that we can to support Israel, and pray daily for her protection, safety, and a lasting peace.

One of the things that have come out of this war is an amazing version of Am Yisrael Chai by Eyal Golan, which has swept Israel. In it, he reminds us that "The nation of Israel lives, if we don't forget to always be united".

Listen to the song; read the english translation of the words; and see the images of the faith of our brothers and sisters in Israel. And have faith...

<https://m.youtube.com/Eyal Golan - Am Yisrael Chai>

We are all part of the nation of Israel. An eternal nation and a people dedicated to all that is good in the world.

Say a Psalm a day for the IDF. Pray from your heart. Cry or dance, and let our honest emotions support our people in this time of need.

Now is the time to embrace your Judaism, your faith, and show your heart and soul to the world through prayers and by being a proud Jew who shows the world the beauty of our faith in words and deeds.

Am Yisrael Chai

Chazak U'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 8, 2024

27th of Tevet, 5784

January 9th 2024 at 6:00 am PST

A Second "War" in Everything But Name & Rabbi Schwartzie and the Tzaddikim of Safed

Chevre

For all intents and purposes, Israel is in a war on a second front in the north in everything but an official declaration.

At approximately midnight PST, dozens of rockets were shot in the north, and sirens have been blazing across the region, including over the holy city of Safed. Within 5 minutes of the start of the attacks, Lebanese media reported that Israeli drones were attacking a mere 10 kilometers (about 6 miles) from the Israel/Lebanon border. The targeted strike took out a car containing 3 Hezbollah leaders.

At about 2:00am PST, a Hezbollah drone successfully attacked the IDF Northern Command Headquarters. We are at war in the north.

This intensified conflict comes after months of Hezbollah launching rockets across the border, and in the wake of the death of Al-Arouri, a senior Hamas leader who was killed in a targeted strike in Lebanon a few days ago.

Although Israel never wants war, and certainly not on simultaneous fronts, the country has resigned itself for months that war would probably flare up in the north eventually, as a "new reality" must be created where Israelis in the north can live safely. Over 80,000 Israelis are currently displaced from their homes in the north.

Please take a few moments to send prayers of safety, protection, and healing to Israeli civilians and soldiers in the north. Study online a few words or teachings by Rabbi Isaac Luria, Rabbi Yosef Caro, or a meditation by Rabbi Moshe Cordevero... or just think about Rabbi Shlomo "Schwartzie" Schwartz; all of whom are buried in the cemetery in Safed. Our synagogue would not exist without Schwartzie, who inspired me to recognize that American Jews needed a community with no mandatory dues or fees that would exist only on voluntary donations of the heart.

(If you want to see more about Schwartzie, [click here for a brief talk by Rabbi Barclay at Schwartzie's memorial](#).)

[Or click here to see Schwartzie give a brief teaching](#))

Let us all pray that these tzaddikim (righteous souls) of blessed memory help to keep the north of Israel safe now, always, and forever.

Rabbi Barclay & Rabbi Shlomo "Schwartzie" Schwartz z"l



Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 9, 2024

28th of Tevet, 5784

January 9th 2024 at 11:54 am PST

News Just in From Safed & Inspiration From the Carlebachs

Chevre

I just received the following text from my friend and teacher Reb Avraham Greenbaum in Safed:

"Just to give you a heads up the Israel health ministry has ordered all hospitals to prepare for thousands of possible casualties and that transportation between hospitals could become difficult

So we are expecting serious escalation ahead.

This will be our finest hour"

The fact that the health ministry has put the citizens in the north on alert implies that things are about to get even more intense. Again, I want to encourage you right now to go to www.healthcareforisrael.org to help the Bnai Zion Hospital as it's new bomb proof bunker hospital will be desperately needed, and they need more medical equipment.

I believe in the saying that "coincidence is God's way of staying anonymous". Immediately after I got that text from Reb Avraham, I received an email with a link to Neshama Carlebach's new song and video "Invincible Spirit", which is a powerful and moving piece that combines different music of her father, R. Shlomo Carlebach z"l. Watch it here: [Neshama Carlebach - Invincible Spirit \(In Solidarity with Israel\)](#)

Be aware of where this is all heading. Experience the words and music of the Carlebachs. And have faith that Reb Avraham is right, and that out of this war we will finally have a real peace for the nation of Israel, safe in the blessing of God's protection.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 9, 2024

28th of Tevet, 5784

January 10th 2024 at 11:10 am PST

The Key to a Real Peace is Not Politics, But Faith

Chevre

As you are reading this email, the Cabinet is and has been discussing a Qatari truce proposal for return of hostages. There are all sorts of rumors about this proposal, but still nothing released formally as of 10:30am PST.

At the same time, Blinken is exerting pressure for Gaza to be controlled by the Palestinian Authority after his meeting with Abbas. Blinken is convinced that Abbas is "committed to reforming" the P.A., and that Gaza should be under their authority...the same situation that started this mess in 2005.

In Lebanon, the German Foreign Minister pledged 15 million Euros (16 million dollars) to bolster Lebanese armed forces in the south in preparation for a war with Israel.

If you ever wonder how even the Western nations stand in relation to Israel...see where they pledge their money and political support.

...and tomorrow the world puts us on trial for genocide in the International World Court, with charges brought against us by South Africa and judged by Jew-hating justices.

But we must always remember that the external world has always hated us, and yet we survive and thrive. Our partnership with God has kept us alive, and always will... whether in the face of rockets or politicians. Faith and action in partnership with God has always and will always lead to Am Yisrael Chai

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 10, 2024

29th of Tevet, 5784

January 10th 2024 at 3:03 pm PST

The Qatari Peace Deal that Blinken Supports

Chevre

Discussions are ongoing in the Cabinet about the proposed Qatari peace deal, which Blinken apparently is also behind, but the following parts of it were leaked to Channels 12, 13, and Ynet:

- Hamas leaders could leave Gaza in exchange for slow release of hostages
- IDF must immediately conclude its offensive in Gaza
- Palestinian prisoners would be released
- SkyNews Arabic is also claiming that Hamas would need to stay in governance of Gaza

Nothing has been confirmed by the Cabinet, so these are only leaks to media outlets. As a result, I won't comment on any of it other than to let you know what is supposedly being discussed

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 10, 2024

29th of Tevet, 5784

January 11th 2024 at 9:04 am PST

Why This Kangaroo Court is Extremely Dangerous For Israel's Survival

Chevre

The International Court of Justice (World Court) in the Hague began its trial of Israel last night. While many people are looking at it with disdain, it is important to recognize how potentially dangerous and destructive this show is.

I think we all understand what is actually happening here. South Africa is charging Israel with genocide, and there are judges from nations that have less than a stellar history with regard to anti-Israel and Jew hating. South Africa is basing its charges on the Hamas story of how bad it is in Gaza right now, as well

as the Cabinet Ministers including Netanyahu, Gallant, et al being clear that their ultimate goal is to utterly destroy Hamas. As the Israel Foreign Ministry has said, "South Africa is acting as the legal arm of the Hamas terrorist organization".

But this is much more than just a show, and is potentially extremely dangerous to Israel's very survival.

The ultimate decision of this trial may take years, but South Africa is asking for the court to immediately issue provisional orders against Israel. Provisional orders can be issued quickly, and more importantly, provisional orders require a much lower level of proof. All that is needed for the ICJ to issue provisional orders is if there is any "plausibility" to South Africa's claims, a much lower threshold.

Such a ruling, God forbid, would be perilous for Israel on multiple levels.

The ICJ is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations. It is the "legal" arm of the UN, but it has the power of the entire organization behind it. Although it can do little itself, any judgments it makes can be enforced by the United Nations in the forms of everything from sanctions to deploying UN Security Forces. It could, God forbid, effectively stop, or at least severely curtail Israel's ability to do international business. It could leverage sanctions against Israel, and against any nation that supports Israel in any way...even the United States. It can send UN troops into the area to "escort humanitarian aid" to Gaza, even getting in combat with the IDF who is screening all "aid" before letting it in.

There are countless ways for this to become problematic, God forbid. The South African representatives are playing to their audience both in the court and in the world opinion. Already, Linda Sarsour and her ilk have sent out mass emails this morning using the trial at the Hague as a fundraising opportunity for their Jew hating organizations (I'm not sure why she sent one to me lol). If the ICJ issues a provisional order, it could, God forbid, be more problematic than most people realize.

Let us pray fervently that by some miracle all Nachmanides and the Disputations of Spain, this ICJ speedily recognizes the falsities of South Africa's claims, and dismisses the entire case. Let us all recognize what the United Nations has become over the last decades: an organization that has condemned Israel in

formal resolutions more than all other nations combined.

And let us all do everything we can to give Israel the strength and courage to do what must be done, no matter the circumstances. This is a war against Amalek and for the very survival of Israel, and we cannot let any others like South Africa or the UN determine our right to survive.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 11, 2024

1st of Shvat, 5784

January 11th 2024 at 2:00 pm PST

Today is an Important Jewish Holiday!

Chevre

Amidst all the craziness at the Hague, and the war, we must still take a moment to recognize today as an important and ancient holiday in Judaism.

Today is Rosh Chodesh Shvat, the first day of the Hebrew month of Shvat

While all Rosh Chodesh days are important holidays in which the women lead the services of welcoming in the new month, this particular starting day of Shvat is one of the most important days in our calendar.

Today is a day of "Mattan Torah", the "giving of Torah". This important title is reserved for only two days: the holiday of Shavuot, when the physical written Torah was given to Israel; and today. On this day almost 3700 years ago, Moses began an oral recapitulation to the Hebrews of the Torah along with his personal commentary and understanding. (Deut. 1:3) On this day began the tradition of "Oral Torah" that continued through the Talmud all the way to today.

We are taught that today holds the special opportunity to open ourselves up to deeper meanings of the Torah for the whole year. So what does that really mean and what should we do?

If we study even just a little bit of Torah today, we open the doorway for each of us to have deeper understandings of Torah and Judaism all year long. Moreover, we create the opportunity for a deeper connection with Judaism, Israel, and God for the entire year.

So here's what to do. Take a few minutes and study just a bit of the Torah. It can be anything: the weekly portion (which deals with the beginning of the plagues visited upon Egypt); a Torah Talk that has been sent out any time during the past year; or just open up the Bible and turn to any page in the Torah (first five books only) and read the page you turn to.

All it takes is a few minutes today, before sunset, of study. It will help you understand more of Judaism all year long, and create a deeper soul connection with Israel... something that is desperately needed in this time of war.

A few minutes of investment will benefit you all year long. Isn't it worth taking just those few minutes today?

May the studying of today lead to us all being more aware and conscious human beings: Jews who are tied to our tradition, our people, and Israel.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 11, 2024

1st of Shvat, 5784

January 12th 2024 at 10:00 am PST

The Hague & the Houthis, Moses, & Shabbat Services Tomorrow Morning

Chevre

The "trial" in the Hague is continuing, and Israel spent their time last night pointing out the many fallacies to the South African charges of genocide. Images of how Hamas uses hospitals, schools, etc. as bases were shown to the court, as well as how Hamas is the one actually responsible for the killing of Gazan civilians. This morning at about 7:00am, the government of Germany made an announcement that Israel has not committed genocide, and that Germany will be seeking to intervene as a third party at the ICJ trial.

Last night, a coalition led by the U.S. and U.K. attacked Iran backed Houthi bases in Yemen in order to start freeing up the shipping lanes. By this morning, Hamas had already condemned the U.S. for doing this, as it will help relieve pressure on Israel.

All of this happens as our Torah portion describes the start of God's redemption of the Hebrews, and the beginning of the plagues sent to Egypt. The portion talks about how the Hebrews had little faith in God, and no faith in Moses, as "their spirits had been crushed by cruel bondage" (Ex. 6:9). As we all know, ultimately the plagues put on Egypt would help the Hebrews to start having faith again, and they would be redeemed into freedom and ultimately, to the promised land of Israel.

Like our ancestors in Egypt, many 20th/21st century Jews have also lost faith in God over the last decades. While our ancient ancestors suffered and were physical slaves in Egypt; modern Jews have experienced a devastation on October 7 that can easily lead us to a lack of faith (especially in combination with the history of the Holocaust). The hardships of the ancient Hebrews' slavery was increased when Moses first came, and their faith in God decreased as life was at first made even more difficult. As we see the world condemn us for defending ourselves; as we see the huge Jew hatred worldwide; and as we see the charade at the Hague... it would be easy for us all to also lose faith in God's relationship with the Jewish people.

But we all know the end of the story of the Exodus, and we need to have faith that this story we are living will also ultimately show God's Presence to the world. As challenging as this time is for Israel and all Jews, we need to have faith that it will all end up as a testament to God through the Jewish people.

The horrors of October 7 unified the Jewish people. It caused the entire Jewish

nation to cry out to God in prayer and anguish. Like our ancestors, we all cried out in the suffering. We need to keep that unified connection as we go through the challenges in the world; and know that we too will ultimately be redeemed.

One way to keep that connection is, as Rabbi Hillel taught 2000 years ago, to "tie ourselves to the community". Shabbat morning services are a great time to renew that unified connection... to remind ourselves that we are Jews and are not alone. I hope to see you tomorrow morning for Shabbat services and study session at 10:00am at our sanctuary, and for the pot luck brunch following (dairy or pareve).

While we are being attacked in physical war in Israel, we are also attacked worldwide. We must keep our faith and our connections to each other. It is true that as long as we are united, Am Yisrael Chai

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 12th, 2024

2nd of Shvat, 5784

January 12th 2024 at 3:30 pm PST

Single Source for Detailed History of Israel/Palestine/Hamas Now on Our Website

Chevre

Many people have asked that I create a single document that can be a one stop source of information about the history of Israel and the surrounding region, as well the myth of "palestine", the reality of Gaza, and the history of Hamas.

While by no means complete, there is now on our website this single document that you can refer to for undeniable information about the region.

The link is NerSimcha.org/The Truth About Israel/Palestine.

I hope this helps you personally and in discussions with others.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 12, 2024

2nd of Shvat, 5784

January 14th 2024 at 5:36 am PST

100 Days

Chevre

Today is the 100th day....

100 days since the Hamas terrorists surrendered their human souls and committed acts so heinous and depraved that they demonstrated that they are truly the modern incarnation of Amalek.

100 days since innocent Israeli civilians were targeted for rape, kidnapping, torture, and murder.

100 days since the old, women, children, and even babies were killed, and kidnapped into Gaza. 100 days since babies were beheaded, women raped on top of the corpses of their boyfriends, and horrors perpetrated that rivaled even the Nazis.

100 days since over 1200 people were killed, and over 240 people kidnapped... taken to tunnels and kept as bargaining chips for the evils of Hamas.

100 days of our brothers and sisters in Israel fighting the epitome of evil every moment of every day.

100 days since every Jew was united, and we all were saying things like "Never Again" will we allow the horrors of the Holocaust to be repeated.

100 days since we all said "Never Forget", and committed ourselves to never forgetting the horrors and depravities that they did to us on October 7.

100 Days...

100 days when each of us could have remembered better; done more for Israel, Judaism, and our fellow Jews; and made it a point to be active in every way to support the war in Israel and fight Jew-hatred domestically.

100 days... and I know that I could have done more for our people in every one of them...

What will each of us do...how will each of us step up for Israel and Judaism in the next 100 days...100 minutes... 100 seconds...

"Never Forget" is now

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 14, 2024

4th of Shvat, 5784

January 14th 2024 at 3:15 pm PST

Am Yisrael Chai - As Long As We Are United

Chevre

There are countless billboards, songs, and promotional spots throughout Israel reminding the people that "The People of Israel Live As Long As We Are Untied"

These are words that we must remember at all times.

It is the goal of Israel's enemies, both in battle and in the media, to divide the

Jewish people. In this time of war for our survival, we cannot allow that to happen.

On the physical war front things keep intensifying. Yesterday, a Hezbollah rocket from Lebanon killed two people in their home: Barak Ayalon from the Kfar Yuval security unit, and his 76 year old mother, Mira. What would your reaction be if, God forbid, a rocket from Mexico killed two of your family members in their home in a residential district, after hundreds of other rockets had been shot at your suburban area? What action would you demand be taken by the US government? Before judging any action of Israel, really emotionally connect with that, and with what your response would be to the deaths of your father, brother, or grandmother.

Israel will be retaliating harder against Hezbollah, and has already started airstrikes in Lebanon to take out Hezbollah bases. Hezbollah has sent hundreds of rockets into Israel since Oct. 7 on an almost daily basis; and Minister Gallant said last week that although Jerusalem prefers a diplomatic solution to war, "the hourglass is about to be overturned". Fighting in central and south Gaza is also intense as the IDF is forced to go house by house and street by street to remove Hamas terrorists, and they still keep finding tunnels.

At the same time, the world is working hard to create conflict within Israel and between Israel and Diaspora Jews on two fronts. The first front can be seen with the accusations that Israel's response to Gaza is "disproportional" that Israel is causing the suffering of "innocents" in Gaza, and that Gaza should be allowed to recover (and re-arm). This argument has resulted in the trial of Israel in the Hague; the castigation of Israel worldwide; and most sadly, with too many Diaspora Jews calling, along with the Jew haters, for an immediate cease fire.

The second attack on Jews and Israel by the media and Jew haters is even more insidious. Over 130 hostages are still being kept by Gazans, and this attack (which is becoming more successful over time) is the reason. By keeping the hostages, it is causing divisiveness within Israel, as family members of hostages are demonstrating against the Israeli government and demanding the war be stopped in order to get their hostage family members home. While there is absolutely no reason to believe that any truce would get hostages returned, and in fact the opposite would probably happen and at the best we might get a few of those 130 returned... like all of us, we want to believe anything in the hope of

taking care of our family. Right now there is a 24 hour demonstration going on in Israel by family members of hostages demanding that the government cease fire in order to get hostages returned.

Hostages were taken to create divisiveness among us, and to a certain extent, it is working.

As Diaspora Jews, we cannot let this two pronged attack to divide us. We cannot in any way succumb to the pressure for Israel to cease fire before the mission of eradicating Hamas is completed. If we stop before that mission is done, we can be guaranteed that the tragedies of October 7 will be repeated. As painful as all of this is, we must remain resolute in finishing this mission and creating a safe space for Israel to live in peace.

At the same time, today has found numerous demonstrations in European capitol cities that are demanding European support of Israel. Germany has already come out in support, and these demonstrations will hopefully inspire European governments to publicly back Israel in this war against evil.

We are Diaspora Jews, and we must stand with each other and with Israel. Unconditionally and without hesitation. In prayer and action, we must support her fully.

And we must remember... Am Yisrael Chai as long as we are united.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 14, 2024

4th of Shvat, 5784

January 15th 2024 at 7:11 am PST

Hamas Shows How Psy-Ops Works

Chevre

Psy-Ops is a term for psychological operations designed to hurt your enemy; weaken his resolve; and cause dissent within his ranks. It can be a vital weapon during a war; and whatever else you want to say about them; it is a skill that Hamas excels at as we see this weekend.

This weekend, Hamas released a 37 second video of three different Israelis still being held hostage. In the edited clips, which are tied together and undated (they could have been filmed yesterday or in October), the hostages each identify themselves and then ask the Israeli government to bring them home. At the end of the video, chyron subtitles say, "Tomorrow we will inform you of their fate." The release of the video was accompanied by more statements that no hostages will be released until Israel completely withdraws from Gaza.

We need to pull back the curtain on the magic trick of psy-ops and see the insidious but effective evil of a video like this. First, it is extremely effective in causing depression and a sense of hopelessness as we see these tortured souls begging to be rescued. It gives a questionable hope: are they still alive? Could we have saved them? It burdens the viewer with a false sense of self-responsibility, as if their actions could/would make a difference...and makes the viewer feel impotent as the hostages beg to be rescued.

And it destroys the unity within Israel. Based on the Hamas charter, the repeated words of their leaders, and their repeated actions since their inception, we all intellectually know that Hamas wants a cease fire so that they can re-arm and repeat what happened on October 7. But this video and those like it tug at our emotions... our hopes and prayers. Even though we intellectually know that Hamas is truly evil and we are being emotionally manipulated by this video, it still happens. As a result, we emotionally feel that we should stop the war so that we can get the hostages returned.

Rather...we need to remember what happened on October 7. We need to ask what kind of terrorist organization would kidnap those hostages in the first place?!?!?

Hundreds of hostages were kidnapped for just this purpose: to attack Israel and the world through psy-ops. Hamas terrorists wore body cams on October 7 so

that they could show those horrific videos of the depravities they did as a way of emotionally affecting our psyches.

Psy-ops really are like a magic trick: even if you know how it is done, it still affects you. We cannot let ourselves be affected by this type of psycho/emotional manipulation.

We MUST stay united, and disconnect from this emotional manipulation in order to finish the mission that we all took on after October 7. If we ever want a lasting peace for Israel, we must not let our hearts and minds be controlled; but must stay united in working towards the complete destruction of Hamas so that we can have peace and safety.

The People of Israel Live, As Long As We Are United. We must not allow psy-ops to divide us.

Am Yisrael Chai

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 15, 2024

5th of Shvat, 5784

January 15th 2024 at 6:00 pm PST

War Spreads, As Does the Psy-Ops

Chevre

At least 4 civilians were killed today in Iraq as Iran's Revolutionary Guard sent missiles into Kurdistan. Iran claims that they were attacking a Mossad headquarters in Kurdistan, and that the facility was destroyed. If it was really an attack on a Mossad facility, we can expect an escalation against Iran from Israel; and if there was no facility there, then we can expect more Iran vs Iraq conflict. Either way, it is a potential hotbed.

The psy-op release of a video of 3 hostages by Hamas has taken an even darker turn. Two of the hostages are now reported dead, and we can only hope that the third is still alive. Hamas, in its continual effort to divide Israel, is now saying that those two hostages were killed by the IDF in an airstrike... something the IDF vehemently denies.

And as often happens, we are reminded of God's relationship with Israel through today's date in history. On this date in 1393, the Jews of Majorca experienced a sudden miracle immediately following a tragedy. The massacres of Jews in 1391 and 1392 had devastated the Jewish community, but on this day in January of 1393 (6th of Shvat), the Governor of Majorca issued an edict protecting Jewish inhabitants, and declaring that anyone who harmed a Jew would be hanged.

As we traverse the darkness of the world, the Jew hatred and anti-Israel sentiment that is so pervasive; we need to remember this lesson from Majorca:

God will always redeem us. The Jewish people will always survive. When we feel as if we have been abandoned, we need only look to history to see that God is always faithful to the Jewish people.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 15th, 2024

6th of Shvat, 5784

January 16th 2024 at 6:41 am PST

War Persists and Increases Daily, Despite Most Media's Silence

Chevre

While the majority of Western media has slowed down its reporting of the war in Gaza, as if it is almost over, the exact opposite is true. From our bubble of safety in America, we need to remain conscious of what is happening in Israel.

At around 1:30am PST, over 50 rockets were launched from Gaza by Hamas. While over 20 of them were intercepted by the Iron Dome, there was damage in the city of Netivot and surrounding communities; but thank God, no casualties were reported. You can see in this video some Israeli workers who were narrowly missed: **Footage from the Netivot area shows a rocket fired from the Gaza Strip.**

There may be less reporting, but the war continues. Blinken and the White House are pressuring Israel to back down and away from Gaza, but Israel's leadership knows that until this mission is finished, any and all pauses will ultimately result in more Israeli deaths and tragedies. As Minister Sa'ar said after the attack on Netivot today, "We need to decide to increase the pressure on Hamas." He went on to reiterate that Israel needs to evaluate combat changes based on "achieving goals and not on a timetable". And Minister Gallant has publicly said that he believes it is only military pressure on Hamas that has a chance of bringing hostages home.

Hamas must be removed from Gaza. This goal is primary for Israel to eventually be able to have a peaceful relationship with its neighbors... but this cannot happen until Hamas, the modern Amalek, is utterly destroyed

May we all see the utter destruction of Hamas, and the birth of a new Gaza that becomes an ally of Israel

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 16, 2024

6th of Shvat, 5784

January 16th 2024 at 6:34 pm PST

Ironies & Conflicting Imperatives

Chevre

It has been said that any crisis, especially war brings out the best and the worst in people.

Thank God that the Senate just voted down a proposal to tie any financial aid to Israel to a forced State Dept report in whether Israel is violating any human rights. The proposal is the epitome of Jew hating, and an invitation for antisemites to justify America abandoning Israel. The irony is that the proposal was forced by Bernie Sanders, a man who grew up in a conservative temple, and who years ago abandoned any connection to Judaism other than trying to get Jewish votes. He is probably the most anti-Semitic man in the Senate, and one of the most consistently anti-Israel people in both houses of Congress. One has to wonder how his childhood teachers and rabbis of blessed memory would feel about his repeated abandonment of Israel.

...another reason and demonstration why it is so vitally important that we educate our children with a love for Judaism and Israel

Today, the United States again publicly pressured Israel to have a cease fire and end the war with Gaza. Also today, the Prime Minister was interviewed on Channel 12 in Israel, and said that he anticipates the war going on into 2025. He also started to describe the financial assistance that will be given to families to return to their homes that are close to Gaza.

So the U.S., Israel's greatest and most important ally is pressuring for a cease fire, and the Israel government is anticipating another year...

Either way, as Diaspora Jews we have a blessing and an obligation: to support Israel unconditionally. We must always remember that what happens in Israel will affect all Diaspora Jews, and we must support her in prayer and actions now and always

We must stay strong and aware of the turmoil in Israel, despite the comfort of our personal lives.

Let us have the awareness to know that we are all always connected with Israel; and the strength to always support her as the world turns against her.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 16, 2024

7th of Shvat, 5784

January 17th 2024 at 9:34 am PST

The Truth Exposed in Words and Actions

Chevre

Defense Minister Gallant said the truth simply and honestly this evening when addressing a Navy command unit:

"If the fate of Hamas is not complete dismantlement, we will not be able to live in the State of Israel. We continue fighting until victory... until we defeat the Hamas organization, take away all of its significant military capabilities, and remove it from power in Gaza."

Always remember that the enemies of Israel want to divide the Jewish people; and that we need to be unified in support of Gallant and the war cabinet that truly understands the dangers of this modern day Amalek of Hamas. Whether we like or hate Bibi (and there is a history of good reasons for either feeling), he is the current P.M., and we need to fully support him, Gallant, and the others who are trying to achieve Gallant's necessary goal without being fully castigated by the entire world.

Not just words, but actions are also indicative of realities, and an interesting action is happening right now in Egypt that we need to pay attention to. Qatar and France sent "medical aid for hostages" to Hamas, to come through Egypt in five trucks. At first, Hamas and Qatar announced that the "aid" would enter unchecked, but then the IDF announced a few hours ago that it will (thank God) check the trucks. This is interesting on a level that is very subtle: the aid was sent to Egypt to get to Gaza, not through Israel. We need to watch carefully if this is because Egypt may be willing to become more involved in creating a peace in the region (God willing), and letting Gazans into Egypt (something they have avoided

doing since 1967), or if it means that Egypt is going to get involved in supporting Hamas against Israel, God forbid. Either way, it is a good idea to start watching Egypt's actions carefully.

A week from tonight is our temple Tu B'shvat Seder. The holiday's importance is discussed in the Talmud, and the kabbalistic practice of celebrating the holiday with a seder (similar to Passover) is at least 400 years old. Using the 4 lettered Name of God as a key, the experience unlocks the power and teachings of nature, as well as the personal effects these powers have on each of us as individuals. I hope you will join me next Wednesday at 7:00pm at the Temple for this special experience...a holiday that we all need as a reminder to teach us the insights into what is really important in our lives

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 17, 2024

7th of Shvat, 5784

January 17th 2024 at 6:20 pm PST

We Must Stay United Against the Pressure of Politicians While Another War Front Looms

Chevre

IDF Chief of Staff Lt. General Halevi said today that the likelihood of Israel getting dragged into a war in Lebanon is growing as Hamas terrorists shot over 20 rockets at the town of Rosh HaNijra in the north. Halevi said, " I don't know when the war in the North is. I can tell you that the likelihood of it happening in the coming months is much higher than it was in the past."

And while on the one hand, the U.S is attacking Houthis with new airstrikes tonight, Blinken spent the day publicly putting heavy pressure on Netanyahu for Israel to end the war and accept a Palestinian state. As Netanyahu again rejected him and this idea, which would be horrific on every level for Israel, Blinken is

trying to work around Netanyahu and approaching other Israeli politicians like Gantz. If Blinken can, God forbid, sow dispute among the cabinet (by making promises to other Israeli politicians), he is hoping that he can get an independent state of Palestine and a cease fire.

Perhaps because he doesn't know Hebrew, but Blinken seems oblivious to the many billboards up in Israel saying, "Am Yisrael Chai As Long We Are United". Blinken isn't accounting for the support of all Jews in Israel and here in the Diaspora and our commitment to making the region safe and secure for Israel with a lasting peace...not a temporary one with extremists who are committed to killing Jews.

The Jewish people will live, but we must remain united in words, prayers, and actions as small communities that are each part of the larger community of Klal Israel...the Jewish nation.

We need to not only dream of a lasting peace on a safe and secure Israel, but we need to work together to achieve that goal, as one spiritual nation linked together by Torah across the globe.

"If you will it, it is no dream. And if not, a dream it is and a dream it will remain."
(Theodor Herzl)

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 17, 2024

8th of Shvat, 5784

January 18th 2024 at 6:00 am PST

Today is the Saddest Birthday in the World

Chevre

Let us all send birthday blessings today to Kfir Bibas, who turns 1 year old today.

Baby Kfir is being held hostage with his parents and four year old brother Ariel somewhere in Gaza, having been kidnapped on October 7 from their home in the Nir Oz kibbutz. Hamas reported that the family was killed when the hostage release happened in November, but that was then refuted by another hostage, and the IDF has said that the family's fate is unknown. Many of us have seen the video of 4 year old Ariel running in his Batman cape, or of Kfir's mother Shiri holding both boys close in terror as they were abducted.

Baby Kfir's family and friends made this video yesterday in honor of his first birthday. Called "They Call Me Gingi" (gingi is a term for red heads, and the baby and his brother have beautiful red hair), I invite you to take a moment, sit down, and watch this birthday song for a one year old baby who was abducted by Hamas.

<https://youtu.be/wld08EiSlkA>

When you think to yourself that this war has gone on long enough and we must make a truce with Hamas...look at this video again. When you start to buy into the idea that Hamas really isn't that bad, and they only want peace...watch the smiles of these two little boys...

And never forget what you see: the essence of life and love that Hamas proudly wants to destroy in the world.

If Hamas, Hezbollah, et al had their way, they would do this with all our children. What if, God forbid, those images were of your child or grandchild?

God says in the Torah, "I place before you this day life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore, choose life, that you and your descendants may live" (Deut. 30:19)

May we never forget what was done on October 7. May we never forget what these monsters who surrendered their souls and any sense of humanity did to innocents. May God remind us of the passion we all felt on October 7; remove our war weariness; and strengthen us to be united as a people... a people that will always live.

And May God bring Kfir and his family back to their home in Nir Oz safely.

Happy Birthday Kfir. Our prayers are with you, with all of Israel, and with all the Jewish people. Am Echad

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 18, 2024

8th of Shvat, 5784

January 18th 2024 at 7:25 pm PST

The United States is Now Openly Working Against Israel's Success and Survival

Chevre

I ask for your forgiveness if this email seems at all “political”. It is not meant that way, but I think it is important for the American government’s recent actions against Israel to be exposed and discussed.

Actions by the United States government and her representatives over the last weeks and especially the last 48 hours are forcing me to write this email...which makes me sadder than I can fully express.

There was a time when the United States government supported Israel unconditionally. When the executive and legislative branches were united in their support of Israel, the only democracy in the region; and when they unflinchingly called out the PLO, Hamas, Hezbollah, etc for what they are: terrorists committed to the destruction of Israel and the death of every Jew.

But sadly, those days are gone. The United States now has abandoned Israel and her safety.

While this has been a discussion for months (and some believe years), recent actions demonstrate it all too clearly.

Let's start first with Congress. We are all aware of how the House has welcomed the Jew hating trope of people like Omar, Tlaib, Presley, and the like. How these vitriolic anti-Semites have been allowed to spew their hatred without censure or any repercussions.

But now the Senate has fully joined in on the anti-Israel bandwagon. An amendment was proposed and voted on today that would prohibit any more aid to the Palestinian Authority or any governing body in the West Bank or Gaza until President Biden certifies that following conditions would be met, and, among other things, they

- Publicly renounce Hamas and condemn the October 7 attacks
- Formally recognize the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state
- Publicly recognize the State of Israel
- Remove all security personnel with ties to terrorist organizations
- Fully terminate all funding for anti-Israel and anti-American actions
- Free all hostages that are being held in areas controlled by the P.A.

It would seem that it would be a no-brainer for the Senate to demand in exchange for the hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to the Palestinian Authority. But this amendment was thoroughly rejected.

100% of Senate Democrats, every one of them (including John Fetterman, who recently has been a vocal supporter of Israel) voted against tying the aid to Palestine's willingness to condemn the atrocities of October 7, and to formally recognize the State of Israel and its right to exist. Senator Schumer, who immediately after October 7 attended pro-Israel demonstrations claiming he would always fully support Israel, voted against this amendment. Richard Blumenthal, Jacky Rosen, and every other Jewish Senator who only a few months ago were courting Jewish votes by condemning the horrors of October 7 and the evils of Hamas refused to stand up for Israel in this vote.

One hundred percent. Think about what that says about these Senators' real commitment to Israel, our best, oldest, and only true ally in the region.

Despicable.

But the executive branch has also spent the last few days demonstrating its disregard for Israel and that it too doesn't care about Israel or her people.

Although most Israelis were in favor of designing a two state solution last year; since October 7, the idea has been abandoned by the people. According to the most recent polls, 81% of Israelis, including Arab Israelis, have shifted their views and believe that there is no hope for peace with the palestinians, including 70% of left wing Israeli voters. An astounding 88% of Israelis do not trust the Palestinian leadership, and believe that the mission of this war must be truly finished and Hamas et al fully destroyed in order for Israel to survive safely into the future.

But despite that reality on the ground, the President and Sec. of State Blinken are demonstrating a level of ignorance and hubris that would lead to the elimination of Israel. Rather than being concerned about what the Israeli people need and desire, they are only concerned with ending this war and the pro-palestinian political demonstrations domestically that might affect their chances for reelection.

Blinken was in Israel and tried to strong-arm Netanyahu into supporting a two state solution to be administered by Saudi Arabia. When Netanyahu told him a resounding no, Blinken made it clear he would not accept that answer. He approached others in Israeli leadership, and God knows what he offered them to support this idea, and to remove Netanyahu from office. And his pressure and cajoling is working with some, who like politicians worldwide are often more concerned with acquiring personal power than the will of the people.

NBC's Andrea Mitchell reported on this yesterday. "Three senior U.S. officials say the Biden administration is looking past Netanyahu to try to achieve its goals in the region. The Biden administration is trying to lay the groundwork with other Israeli and civil society leaders in anticipation of an eventual post-Netanyahu government. In an attempt to work around Netanyahu [during his visit to Israel], Blinken also met individually with members of his war Cabinet and other Israeli leaders, including opposition leader ... Yair Lapid."

Minister Eisenkot is now calling for a special election with the intent to remove Netanyahu and replace him with someone who will support Blinken. Lapid is moving forward with Blinken. Even Defense Minister Gallant has started to talk

about what “the day after” looks like, parroting Blinken’s language.

But Blinken’s hubris has no limit. Now in Davos, he said that the only ones opposed to his plan are the Israeli public and Netanyahu. Apparently, to Blinken and his bosses, the will of the Israeli people is inconsequential. The long term safety of the nation and its people are unimportant.

If the Arab nations around Israel really were committed to peace, Blinken’s arrogance in determining the policies of a foreign nation would be inappropriate. In the wake of October 7, they are disgusting. Blinken seems happy to succumb to the evils of Hamas if it will serve his larger purpose.

It is no longer a suspicion. The current legislative and executive branches of the U.S. government are no longer the friend to Israel that they were historically. Rather they are concerned only with their own goals, even if their plans would subject Israel to danger and ultimately destruction.

We must always remember that a 2 state solution, with parts of a “Palestine” that are not contiguous is only a recipe for disaster. It only would be a matter of time until the fanatics chanting “from the river to the sea” would attempt to make their country whole, and destroy Israel, God forbid. A Palestine composed of Gaza and the West Bank under the authority of the P.A. is only a precursor to an Israel that is repeatedly attacked from all sides.

I always choose to be optimistic, and have faith that God will do his part to sustain Israel and the Jewish people if we do our part. So what is our part? The same mantras I have been repeating for 4 months.

We must pray, as individuals and as a community. We were discussing in this past Saturday's service how for the month after October 7 there were so many people who came to pray... and how many of them have disappeared again. History shows us that when we pray as a community it makes a difference. I invite you to return to services, and in so doing, to make a difference.

And we must act. We must let know our political candidates that if they want our votes and money, then they need to change the course that we are currently heading: a course that would, God forbid, lead to Israel's destruction. We must donate our time, energy, and finances to Israel and Jewish causes. Our tradition

teaches that charity is a magic key that unlocks miracles.

And right now... we need some miracles.

Abba, Ten Lanu Nes... Father, give us a miracle.

And let that miracle lead to long term safety and security for Israel and the Jewish people.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 18th, 2024

9th of Shvat, 5784

January 20th 2024 at 10:26 am PST

The Torah Again Reminds Us of the Truth and What to Do

Chevre

This week's Torah reading includes the last 3 plagues (including the death of the Egyptians) and the beginning of the exodus from Egypt. It is called "Bo", meaning "come!". And it is in this word that we can find guidance for the challenges facing Israel and the world.

God does not tell Moses to go to pharaoh, rather he says come. The implication is that Moses is coming with God to redeem the Jewish people from their slavery and the narrowness of Egypt. It is a teaching that even in our most dark moments, God is always with us and inviting us to join Him in the journey towards freedom and spiritual awakening.

Now more than ever, we must remember the teaching. although it seems as if the world is very dark and peace can never be achieved in the Middle East, this is a reminder that God is always with the Jewish people. We need not to "go" to the Arabs, but to realize that we are to "come" with God... who has the ability to

soften or harden any heart.

So let us all enter this Sabbath with the attitude of joining God and coming together towards a lasting peace. When we place our faith in God everything has always worked out historically, and we need too have that faith now in these dark and challenging times.

Chazak u'Baruch and Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 19th, 2024

10th of Shvat, 5784

January 21st 2024 at 6:00 am PST

We Will Never Forget, No Matter How Hard The Rest of the World Tries To

Chevre

As anticipated, it seems that Hamas is discussing peace alternatives with everyone other than Israel. France, Qatar, the U.S., Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Belgium have all made claims since Friday that they are each meeting individually with Hamas representatives to discuss a cease fire in exchange for hostages.

In each case the goal of Hamas is to put pressure on Israel to cease fire and remove troops from Gaza. At the same time as the IDF has found more large tunnels, this time in Khan Younis in South Gaza, where it looks that at least 20 hostages were kept in inhumane conditions that included little oxygen and intense humidity.

The world is discussing what Israel should do with Hamas... the very evil that perpetrated the crimes of Oct. 7. Rather than listening to what Israel needs, these foreign nations are sitting with Hamas and then pressuring Israel.

And within Israel there is an ever growing conflict as the nation needs to

determine what "victory" actually is. The return of hostages? The elimination of Hamas? The destruction of all tunnels in both Gaza and in the north, where there are also countless tunnels by Hezbollah?

While the world is determining "the day after" for Israel, we must remember that Israel first must win the war... and it is a war on many fronts. This weekend, it was made clear to Israeli families that reservists will most likely be called up again soon, this time in the north in the war with Hezbollah.

We all need to be cognizant not to plan "the day after" until we have accomplished the goal and mission... and hopefully, Israel will make a clear definition of that goal in the next few days.

Whatever the goals of this multi-front war, we must always remember what they did on Oct. 7. We must Never Forget, and must not allow anyone we know to forget the horrors and depravities that were perpetrated by Hamas; lest they get repeated God forbid. "Never forget" is not just a phrase, it is a promise that we will never forget the images, threats, depravities, rapes, kidnappings, and murders of young, old, innocent civilians. No matter the pressures of the world at large, we must all commit to never forget what they did.

Never.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 21st, 2024

11th of Shvat, 5784

January 21st 2024 at 7:45 pm PST

A "Peace" Proposal Designed to Destroy Israel

Chevre

It is vitally important that every American Jew understands what has been going

on over the last few days, and especially over the last 12 hours with regard to Israel and a supposed peace plan by the United States, Qatar, and Egypt.

The plan that these three “allies” of Israel proposed and are pressuring for is a blueprint for the destruction of the Jewish State. It is a vindication of Hamas for the evils they did on October 7, and an encouragement for groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, and the like to repeat the horrors of that day, including kidnaping civilians, again and again. The outline of this plan is pretty simple:

- 1: Israel would release Palestinian felons currently imprisoned in Israel.
- 2: Israel would retreat entirely out of Gaza.
- 3: Israel would leave Hamas as the governing body of Gaza.
- 4: Hamas will gradually release hostages.

In other words, Hamas’ actions of October 7 of kidnaping would be justified on every level; and Israel would make itself vulnerable for another October 7.

Netanyahu has responded that this is all unacceptable. His words of response were clear. “Hamas is demanding, in exchange for the release of our hostages, the end of the war, the withdrawal of our forces from Gaza, the release of the murders and rapists of the Nukhba and leaving Hamas in place. Were we to do this, our soldiers would have fallen in vain... and the next October 7 would only be a matter of time... we will not agree to this.”

It is sad that the United States would be part of putting forward such a deal, but not surprising given Sec. of State Blinken’s words and actions of the last few weeks. He seems unaware or in complete denial that this type of proposal would be a prelude for more attacks and horrors perpetrated on Israel. The entire proposal is oblivious to the truth that Hamas wants every Jew “obliterated”, and has vowed to pursue that fanatical goal relentlessly... both in speeches and in their very charter.

But the proposal by Qatar, Egypt, and the U.S. is a reflection of Arab desires as expressed in a January 11 study by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, that showed that 92% of 8000 Arabs from 16 countries expressed solidarity with Hamas, and 67% support what Hamas did on October 7. This proposal that the U.S. has signed in to caters to those who want a caliphate theocracy and are committed to the destruction of Israel.

Netanyahu was clear in his response. He also expressed his vision of a future: a future where Hamas is eliminated; Gaza demilitarized; and that Gaza never again poses a threat to the security of Israel. Apparently he shared that vision and commitment with President Biden on the phone the other day; but that did not stop the U.S. from putting their weight behind this proposal.

We must pray for peace. And we must also act. We must make it clear to our representatives that if they want our support. They must support Israel in her time of need.

To do anything less, as is suggested in this proposal, is invite the evil of Hamas to recover, re-arm, and repeat the horrors of October 7.

Am echad...we are one people. Let us stand with our brothers and sisters in Israel in the fulfillment of their mission now, and in creating a lasting peace in the future.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 21, 2024

12th of Shvat, 5784

January 22nd 2024 at 9:10 pm PST

War, Politics, and "Accepted" Jew Hatred

Chevre

While the war(s) intensify, politics and the machinations of politicians continue.

The **IDF** is being forced to be involved in more battles in both the south of Gaza and with Hezbollah in the north. Even more tunnels are being discovered, and **IDF** is now trying the psy-op of blasting Israel radio into the tunnels to both give comfort to hostages, and to induce doubt to Hamas.

Israel has supposedly offered a hostage exchange where Hamas would release hostages in exchange for a cease fire of two months, which Hamas supposedly rejected. This is not confirmed, but has been reported in multiple sources.

On a different front, urban dictionary has created a new word "israeled" and 'israeling", meaning:

"when a person tells you that your property is theirs (when it obviously isn't), and demands you just give this property to them, and if you refuse, they take it by force and the law will somehow be on the their (israeling) side"

Please go to www.UrbanDictionary.com. and thumbs down the definition as well as flag it as hate speech. Additionally, please forwars this information to everyone you know. This is disgusting Jew hating trope, and is the modern version of the ancient blood libel.

Prayer and action. Pray for our soldiers and for Israeli leaders to find wisdom and courage; and act by exposing the hate of urban dictionary

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 22, 2023

13th of Shvat, 5784

January 23rd 2024 at 3:13 pm PST

The Deadliest Day

Chevre

This past day has been the deadliest since the war began, as **24 IDF soldiers died**.... 21 in single surprise attack by Gazans. Baruch dayan emet.

At the same time, not only did the **IDF** find a huge group of new tunnels, but

inside one of the tunnels they found the largest terrorist weapons cache to date. And yes, it was in a residential area right between two schools.

The rumors are now swirling that there is talk going on about a one month cease fire in exchange for hostages... but the honest truth is that until the government releases an official statement, there is no way to know what is really being discussed.

May the families of the fallen soldiers be comforted among the mourners of Zion. May each of us always remember the events of Oct. 7 that brought us here. And may we always know that we are one people...who strengthen each other in our prayers, words, and actions.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 23, 2024

13th of Shvat, 5784

January 24th 2024 at 6:01 am PST

An Important Night for Israel, Jews, and the World

Chevre

Tonight is **Tu B'shvat**, the **New Year of the Trees**. It is vitally important to observe this holiday, by yourself if need be, or with our community at 7:00pm at our sanctuary in Westlake.

In the Talmudic tractate on Rosh HaShana, it begins by saying that there are 4 new years...one being **Tu B'hvat**. We will be having a **Tu B'Shvat Seder**, is a kabbalistic custom which explores the gifts of the trees along a Seder plate that includes fruits and nuts. It is a powerful experience, and a special evening, and I hope you join the community in participating this ancient holiday.

Trees are important in Judaism and Israel, which is the only country in the world

to enter the 21st century with more trees than it had in 1900. The image of the Tree of Life is both a mystical blueprint for the Universe; another name for the Torah; and a symbol that has developed as a way of understanding the Infinite.

I hope to see you tonight, **Wednesday, January 24th, at 700pm** at the temple, **910 Hampshire Rd., Suite I in Westlake** for our annual **Tu B'Shvat Seder**.

Chazak U'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 24, 2023

14th of Shvat, 5784

January 25th 2024 at 6:12 am PST

Updates on Battle, Polls, Demonstrations, and the Court

Chevre

This war is now 111 days old. As all Diaspora Jews are feeling weary, we must stay connected with what is going on in Israel and remember that the IDF soldiers and all of Israel is much more weary than we are...but they also recognize that Hamas must be destroyed and the mission completed.

As fighting is staying intense both in the North by Lebanon and in the South of Gaza, two interesting things happened outside the combat zones.

A poll of Israelis show that a majority support the current unified government, while simultaneously a majority is unhappy with the way the war cabinet is conducting the war. Most interesting from this poll is that a majority of Israelis are not in favor of trading all the Palestinian security prisoners currently in jail (terrorists) for the remaining 130 hostages.

At the same time, there was a spontaneous riot in Gaza against Hamas, with Gazans demonstrating against Hamas and for the release of all hostages so that the war might end quicker. This is the first public report of Gazans demonstrating

publicly against Hamas

It has been announced that the International Court will hand down an interim judgment on Friday regarding South Africa's case against Israel. No matter the decision, we should expect another rise in Jew hating incidents in the Diaspora.

Chazak U'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 25th, 2024

15th of Shvat, 5784

January 26th 2024 at 6:00 am PST

The Irony of Intl. Holocaust Remembrance Day

Chevre

Saturday is International Holocaust Remembrance Day, and we should all be aware of the ironies surrounding it this year; as well as preparing our consciences to fully experience the holiday this weekend.

The holiday was established by the United Nations in 2005 to honor the memory of the victims of the Holocaust. In the resolution itself, it claims two goals for the holiday: to remember, and to prevent another Holocaust from happening to the Jewish people; and to stop Holocaust deniers through educational programs worldwide so that everyone worldwide always remembers the horrors of the Holocaust.

What a difference a mere 19 years can make...

Almost 20 years ago, the U.N. fought to preserve the rights of Jews. Now, the U.N.'s judicial arm, the International Court of Justice in the Hague, is pronouncing judgment on the case South Africa has charged against Israel. The judgment is reported to be delivered today, the day before the U.N. vowed to never let the world forget. And for the first time in a decade, the Secretary

General of the U.N. is not going to the Park East Synagogue to remember the Holocaust.

So on the one hand, the U.N. has resolved for almost twenty years to remember the crime perpetrated on the Jews, while at the same time they are judging Israel and their Sec. General isn't even attending a memorial service. One has to wonder if the current U.N. is even aware that the day is to be dedicated to protecting Jews against hatred while they are anxiously waiting for the International Court to hand in their judgment.

The irony of the U.N. resolving to never forget the Holocaust while the United Nations simultaneously is currently promoting that we forget the horrors and depravities of Oct. 7 is truly ironic. This holiday needs to include the October 7 attack along with the other Jew hating actions from WWII that are memorialized.

So take a few minutes this weekend and remember the Holocaust and it's victims. And then take a few more minutes to remember what happened on Oct. 7 and to pray for Israel, her people, and her land.

Chazak u'Baruch - Let us always remember the evils we have fought against. and never forget the horrors of WWII nor the depravities of October 7.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 26, 2024

16th of Shvat, 5784

January 26th 2024 at 9:41 am PST

U.N. Court Does Not Call For Cease Fire

Chevre

The International Court of Justice at The Hague has determined not to call for a ceasefire at this time. They have told Israel to prevent genocide but are not

calling for an immediate ceasefire.

It is beyond shocking given the typical way the the United Nations treats Israel, but is again a proof that God will always watch out over us.

Shabbat Shalom and Am Yisrael Chai.

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 26, 2024

16th of Shvat, 5784

January 27th 2024 at 7:27 pm PST

U.N. Court Does Not Call For Cease Fire

Chevre

Peace negotiators from countries outside of Israel, including and especially the U.S., keep being "optimistic" about their peace plans. The latest plan from the U.S. involves a two month cease fire in exchange for a timed release of hostages. Clearly, these "negotiators" either haven't read or have chosen to ignore Hamas' promises both verbally and in their charter.

This is even worse for Israel than the last proposal, which would have been for a month. Netanyahu made a keen observation today, saying that the hostage protests domestically and worldwide are empowering Hamas and promoting them to raise their demands, even as the IDF is having more success in locating tunnels, and over 100 Hamas terrorists have been captured in the last few days.

On a different and optimistic front, 9 nations have now committed to cutting off funding to UNRWA following confirmations that this United Nations agency has been allowing itself to be used for Hamas military sites, as well as passing what should be "humanitarian aid" to Hamas, where it has been used for their terrorism and not aid. The nations include the US, Canada, Germany, Scotland, Finland, Britain, Australia, Netherlands, and Switzerland.

We must always be conscious of supporting Israel, her people, her soldiers, and her land through faith and action... and always work towards a long lasting peace for Israel. I just saw the video below, which touched me deeply as a prayer for a better tomorrow, and I hope lifts your spirits as well.

[One Day \(Shema Israel\) | \(שמע ישראל\) יום אחד](#)

May that day come soon and in our time.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 27th, 2024

18th of Shvat, 5784

January 27th 2024 at 7:31 pm PST

Faith + Action Will Lead to Peace... Some Day

Chevre

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Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 27th, 2024

18th of Shvat, 5784

January 28th 2024 at 12:56 pm PST

Fighting the Evil Inclination as the World Continues to Attack Us in the World

Chevre

I am constantly reminding Jews that we need to be vigilant, and always have our attention at these challenging times with what is going on in Israel and the world. Sometimes that is a difficult challenge for us Diaspora Jews, but we need to be aware that for the Jew haters, their passion and dedication to their hatred is limitless.

We see their fanatical devotion to hatred again today. When Israel was being brought up before the International Court of Justice, a number of reservists from the IDF came to The Hague to testify about the horrors and depravities that they saw being committed by Hamas. Those reservists, who are already back in Israel, are now being accused of war crimes at the ICJ. The reason? Because one of them correctly called Hamas "Amalekites" in a facebook post. We have yet to see if the ICJ chooses to judge on the accusation, but it shows how relentless the

Jew haters are. Kabbalistically, we believe that they are inspired in their hate by their "yetzer hara" ...their "evil inclination" ... and we are taught that the yetzer hara never rests.

And we cannot rest. After 114 days of fighting, Israel announced that they believe only 20-40% of Hamas terror tunnels have been damaged or put out of order, and that close 80% are still intact. That is the slow pace that Israel is taking in order to keep a semblance of relationships with the U.S.

To put this in perspective, we can compare the Gaza tunnels with the London subway system. The Gaza strip is 23% the size of London. The great London underground is approximately 250 miles long when everything is combined.

The Gaza tunnels are estimated by the IDF to be approximately 400 miles in length. This means that the tunnels in Gaza are 160% larger, with exits from the tunnels in homes, schools, kindergartens, hospitals, mosques, and U.N. facilities.

And so, we in the Diaspora must remain vigilant, and apply pressure to our politicians in every way possible to increase support to Israel.

The yetzer hara is relentless; and we must be just as passionate in countering it.

Never Forget. Never Again.

May we pray and act in such ways as to utterly defeat the yetzer hara, and always support Israel in every way in these challenging times.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 28th, 2024

18th of Shvat, 5784

January 29th 2024 at 6:10 am PST

Is the U.N. Starting to Experience Karma?

Chevre

While the International Court of Justice, the U.N.'s world court, is considering charging IDF reservists with "war crimes" and has judges that say there is "plausability" to South Africa's claims of genocide leveled at Israel; another U.N. agency may be about to shut down.

The UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East) has been supposedly sending aid to Gaza, but it has now been shown to have been actively supporting Hamas. UNRWA employees have been credibly shown to not just be sending money designated for humanitarian aid to Hamas, but allowing UNRWA facilities to house terrorists. As of today, they have even been shown to have taken part in the Oct. 7 massacre... including raping women, transporting dead IDF soldiers, and smuggling ammunitions.

As a result of these discoveries, more and more nations have pulled their funding from the UNRWA. Today, the European Union said it is investigating the organization, and the agency released a statement today that unless funding is resumed, the UNRWA will "not be able to continue its operations and practices across the region, including Gaza, beyond the end of February".

The U.N. attacks Israel in court, and now one of their larger agencies may have to close. It doesn't matter if we call it karma, God's protection of Israel, or just good luck...this means that a powerful arm of the U.N. may be shuttered.

The Torah teaches that those who bless us will be blessed; and those who curse us will be cursed. Maybe the U.N. should remember the truth of that biblical statement as their attacks against Israel are met with a loss of financial support.

It might not be politically correct for a Rabbi to hope for the dissolution of a U.N. agency. But that too is the truth, and may we soon see all agencies that are in fact actively attacking Israel and supporting Hamas be exposed and dissolved.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 29, 2024

19th of Shvat, 5784

January 30th 2024 at 2:02 pm PST

The Value of a Single Life to Israel

Chevre

At the same time that Minister Gallant today told the Israelis living in the north that the war there is about to escalate significantly; the news of the day continues to be about negotiations with Hamas.

As Israel continues to try to negotiate the release of the hostages, I am hearing more and more from people about how they wish Israel would stop dallying around and just carpet bomb Gaza. Or how they believe that most of the hostages are dead, and why are we even negotiating with these terrorists.

Israel is guided in all conflicts by a passage from the Talmud (Sanhedrin 37a):

"Whomever saves a single life is considered by Scripture to have saved the whole world. Because we are created in God's image."

This passage is the underlying principle for the actions of the war cabinet and the **IDF**, and the reason that this war seems to be going so slowly. It is especially applicable in this war against the true evils of Hamas.

If there is even a small chance of saving the life of one hostage, it is the religious obligation of Israel to do everything possible to try to save that one life. This is why Israel was willing to trade 240 Arab prisoners for 105 hostages; each of those 105 hostages is considered an entire "world". It is why Israel is now discussing trading hundreds more (Hamas is asking for thousands) for the remaining hostages.

The guidance of the Talmud is the reason that Israel, even without world pressure, has not carpet bombed Gaza. To do so would kill people that could possibly live and become peaceful neighbors of Israel. Again, even if only one innocent Gazan could be saved, it must be tried. For if saving one life is saving a

world, the opposite is also true: to destroy a life is to destroy a world.

This Talmudic principle is also why Israel always attempts to capture rather than kill Hamas soldiers. The second sentence states that the reason for this concept is that we were all created in God's image. Even the Hamas terrorists, who surrendered any semblance of humanity on October 7 and are the modern incarnations of Amalek, the embodiment of evil, were created in God's image. Despite the evil that they personify, each of those terrorists were created by God. Each of them were innocent in their moment of birth... even though they quickly were inculcated into a culture that worships death, destruction, and evil. Out of respect for how they were created, Israel tries whenever possible to avoid killing these terrorists who have corrupted their own souls.

In the coming days we are going to be hearing more and more proposals for a hostage negotiation, a cease fire; an end to the war, etc. When it seems that Israel is giving away too much, we need to remember that it is all based on this religious principle.

Netanyahu and the war cabinet are constantly being faced with difficult decisions. To save a single life is of paramount importance, but at what point does saving that life put many other lives in jeopardy? This is a primary question that each member of the war cabinet is wrestling with.

Before any of us judge their actions, we all need to remember the complexity of integrating a primary Jewish principle into the necessities of war against evil.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 30, 2024

20th of Shvat, 5784

January 31st 2024 at 9:42 am PST

Never Forget...

Chevre

It is easy to get tired of a war: our attention wanes; it doesn't seem like anything is happening; it doesn't seem to affect us...

But everything and every moment of this war does affect us... as individuals and as a Jewish people.

While the media show more and more discussions about "peace negotiations", we are in the midst of fighting 24 hours per day. We are fighting Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in the north continuously and constantly.

While we are hearing the media talk about how close a cease fire is; or how stubborn Netanyahu is; or how this all could be ended and hostages returned if Israel would just leave Hamas alone and entirely withdraw from Israel (the most popular plan worldwide, including from Blinken)... there is a reality that this war is still very intense. Today, another reservist, **Major Yiyzhar Hofman** was killed, raising the total to 224 deaths in this ground op in Gaza.

While we live in our happy bubbles, where our concerns are the cost of food at Sprouts or the traffic on the 101; another Israeli family lost a loved one. More parents lost their child, children lost a father. Another courageous and dedicated Jewish soldier died for our people. I didn't know him, nor have I known any of the other 223 who have died so far... but they are family to us all.

And this is why we must vigilantly stay conscious about the actualities of the war. While the media argue about what will happen the day after the war, we must all be aware that at every moment, there are **IDF** soldiers risking their lives for all Jews worldwide. While Qatar and the U.S. argue about what is best for Israel, we must remember that sirens are constantly sounding across the nation because of rockets fired at civilians. When we hear about peace meetings in Cairo, we need to remember exactly what happened on Oct. 7...the horrors and depravities that make it the worst day for the Jewish people since the height of the Holocaust

We must stay awake and never forget the massacres of Oct. 7, the evils of Hamas and the promises they have made verbally and even in their charter; the deaths of **224 IDF soldiers**; the rapes of hostages that are taking place daily; and

the absolute commitment of our enemies to attempt to "obliterate all Jews".

The Jewish people have always been tied to Israel, and Israel has always been tied to every Jew.

We must never forget what Hamas has done. But we must also never forget that the land of Israel and the Jewish people are unified and always will be.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 31, 2024

21st of Shvat, 5784

February 1st 2024 at 6:14 am PST

21 Years Ago Today: Remembering Israel's Heroes Past and Present

Chevre

Every member of the **IDF** is a "hero"... a person who chooses to live by their values; their love for Israel and Jews; their passions and beliefs. Each of them and their families are heroes who risk themselves every moment for all Jews around the world.

Today, as in every day since Oct. 7, some of those **IDF** heroes have fought to cleanse Gaza of the evil that is Hamas. In the south, they took out Hamas terrorists; and in the north, an Israeli fighter jet destroyed a Hamas long range rocket launcher. Every day these heroes are taking on the fight for the survival of Israel and our people. We need to always be grateful for them, and keep them in our prayers.

This is also the secular yahrzeit of another hero from Israel: Ilan Ramon. The son of a Holocaust survivor, he became a fighter pilot in the Israel Air Force and was the youngest pilot in Operation Opera, the strike against Iraq's unfinished nuclear reactor in 1981. He served in the 1982 Lebanon War, and ultimately

became a Colonel. Many of us remember him as the first Israeli astronaut: a man who felt he was representing all Jews in space and (although personally non-religious) ate kosher food and marked the Shabbat while in space. And we all remember that tragic day exactly 21 years ago today when Ramon and all of the crew of Space Shuttle Columbia died. Ask any Jew who was alive at the time and they can probably remember exactly where they were when the Columbia exploded.

We need to remember the heroes of the past like Ilan Ramon. And we need to remember all of the heroes of today who are risking everything as they combat the evil of Hamas. Not just to glorify them, but to use them as examples of what each of us can accomplish.

The heroes of the past and present remind us that each of us can achieve great things. Chazal teaches that God only puts dreams into our hearts that we can achieve. We don't need to be astronauts or soldiers; but by standing up for Israel and Judaism in the secular world, we are heroes. When we teach our children Jewish values and a commitment to making the world a better place, we are heroes. When we pray and act; when we speak and write; each time we express our love for Judaism in the midst of a Jew hating world, we are heroes.

May we all be heroes in our own ways, and come together as Jews to improve the world... for that is something truly heroic.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 1, 2024

22nd of Shvat, 5784

February 2nd 2024 at 6:53 am PST

Rumors Aren't Facts; and the Serenity Prayer is Right

Chevre

Over the last few days, American media has been filled with "anonymous leaks" about an upcoming peace deal. Ranging from 35 days to two months of a truce; and exchanging all hostages or just some; and discussions about Israel removing itself entirely out of Gaza are just some of the "reported terms".

We need to understand that the utilization of media as a negotiation tool is part of the process of Qatar, France, the U.S. and others who are all creating their own plans and their own agendas. These reports may or may not have any factual base, and we cannot let them influence our opinion of Israeli leadership or divide us.

What we do know is that the fighting continues in Gaza. We know that Israeli officials have notified northern cities to be prepared for a war in the north that would cut off power and water. We know that some Iranian leaders have been killed in an Israeli strike in Syria; and we know that President Biden has used an unprecedented executive order to economically sanction Israeli citizens who participate in any violence in the West Bank, despite the reality that the majority of violent actions are self defense... an act condemned by the vast majority of Jewish institutions worldwide as one of "anti-semitism", "pandering", and "anti-Israel".

We all need to be specific about which battles we want to fight in life; and it does us no good to argue for or against rumors and "leaks". Rather we each need to react to actual news; we each must choose what aspects of life (and this war) we want to focus on; and we need to recognize that we all have limits as to what we can do about anything. Like the classic Serenity Prayer, we must have the wisdom to know what we can affect and what we cannot.

We may not be able to affect the war or the peace directly; but we can all support Israeli causes. We all have the responsibility to be advocates for Israel among the people we know. We are each blessed to educate others in the historical realities of the myth of "Palestine" as well as teach about the insidious evil that is at the core of Hamas.

May we all be conscious enough to ignore rumors, explore truths; and act with passion and focus in ways to support Israel and all of the Jewish nation worldwide.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 2, 2024

23rd of Shvat, 5784

February 4th 2024 at 6:00 am PST

Where is Help for Israel Now?

Chevre

Pressure is increasing in the entire Middle East, with Houthis promising retaliation against the US and UK; rockets being fired in the north; and Hamas reclaiming power in Gaza City, where the IDF withdrew a month ago. And all of the conflicts are and will be blamed in Israel and the Jews. Israel's allies seem to have become fewer and fewer, even among Jews, many of whom may be "Jewish in Name Only", and who are chanting for a "free palestine" and/or a cease fire.

So where can we go to keep our spirits encouraged, our hopes sustained?

Today is Day 121 in this war to destroy the true evil that is Hamas and its supporters. For Day 121, we can take a moment and look at the first verses of Psalm 121... a Psalm that is so inspiring and powerful, yet almost always mistranslated in English

"I lift my eyes to the mountains, from where does my help come
My help comes from the Lord
Who creates the heavens and the earth"

Who "creates", not "created". God is not an absent landlord, but is intimately involved in everything... especially guarding over His partner Israel. As the Psalm says in a later verse, "The Guardian of Israel neither sleeps nor slumbers. God is at your right hand, your coming and your going, now and forever"

As the challenges seem to just be getting larger, let us remember these words of King David; and may we know in perfect faith that God will again redeem the Jewish people, as he has done against all our enemies for over 3000 years.

This is a video from the beginning of the war of IDF soldiers chanting Psalm 121 as they were getting preparing to go into Gaza. May we all find courage and solace in their voices; and may we give them support and prayers as they protect all the Jewish people.

[Berry Sakharof sings Shir Lama'alot with hundreds of IDF combat soldiers](#)

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 4th, 2024

25th of Shvat, 5784

February 5th 2024 at 6:00 am PST

War in the North = More Prayers in Our Hearts

Chevre

Minister Gallant has said that the "noses of Israel's warplanes are pointing north". As fighting continues in Gaza, some reservist units are being pulled to go home, with the realization that many reservists will be back up in the north shortly. The **IDF** today deployed three troop divisions to the north, and admitted to hitting over 250 Hezbollah cells in the recent skirmishes.

The spokesman for the **IDF** made it clear that while Israel is not seeking a war with Hezbollah/Lebanon/Syria, if provoked, it will respond quickly and fully.

This could mean a war in the north and south; terrorists in the east (in the West Bank); and Iran sponsored attacks by the Houthis from the deeper south of the Sea of Reeds.

It is in times like these, which our ancestors also experienced in the past; that we need to place our faith in God, who has always taken care of the Jewish people despite the odds against us. I ask that each person reading this take at least 2 minutes per day and either read from a prayerbook, or from the Book of Psalms. Focus your intention ("kavannah") on the Land of Israel, the People of Israel; and the Soldiers of Israel that they should all stay safe and protected.

In our prayer services, we add "You cause the wind to blow and the rain to fall" to the daily Amidah Prayer during the time between the holidays of Simchat Torah and Passover. If you live in California and are reading this; I believe that you are exempt from adding that phrase during the rest of the month of Shvat... we have already had plenty of wind and rain. It would be better to add another line of prayer supporting Israel as part of our daily liturgy.

May we continue to support Israel and see her safely pass through the current challenges; and may we see more and more Diaspora Jews supporting Israel in every way possible.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 5th, 2024

26th of Shvat, 5784

February 6th 2024 at 6:00 am PST

Is the Space Between U.S. and Israel Growing?

Chevre

While Netanyahu is promising IDF soldiers that we will complete the mission and destroy Hamas, Sec of State Blinken is again traveling around the Middle East to broker his version of what peace should like for Israel. The distance between what Israel is stating as goals and what Biden/Blinken continue to propose seems to grow greater every day.

As disturbing are the "leaks" that the U.S. is sharing with media. Politico has shared that President Biden has called P.M. Netanyahu a "bad f****ng guy" as Netanyahu is not helping Biden in his goals. With the sanctions that Biden unilaterally placed on Israeli settlers, it seems that the two countries are heading to different goals. This is clearer again tonight as a Biden official "leaked" that the U.S. is looking to create a temporary cease fire that will morph into a permanent truce...even if Hamas stays in power. Hamas staying in any form of power has been expressed consistently by Israel as a no-starter for any dialogue; but this "leak" serves to put more pressure on Israel to succumb to Biden/Blinken proposals or potentially lose U.S. support.

If we watch the "leaks" in American media outlets, we will be able to see where the administration is really heading with regard to Israel... but it doesn't look promising as of right now.

We must always remember in detail what happened on Oct. 7; and the stated promises of Hamas to repeat that horrific event. We must also remember that the political allies of this world will come and go, but our partnership with God is eternal. May we all be blessed to experience that Divine love personally, and to know that it is God's love that will always us through the dark times.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 5th, 2024

26th of Shvat, 5784

February 6th 2024 at 7:59 pm PST

Rumors and Rockets

Chevre

The US Sec. Of State Blinken is continuing to use the media to pressure Israel into accepting a cease fire, although both the Israeli government and people have repeatedly said that there will be no permanent truce until Hamas is defeated, destroyed, and removed from power in Gaza. Hamas has repeatedly

said that they will not release hostages unless Israel agrees to leave Gaza and not have a pause, but rather Hamas demands that it is a permanent truce.

In other words, while the U.S., Qatar, and Egypt keep announcing that an agreement for a cease fire for the return of hostages is just about fully negotiated... it would seem that Israel and Hamas are in very different places. Blinken arrives again in Israel today to try to push his agenda.

Rumors and gossip are always detrimental in personal relationships, and are called "lashon hara" (the evil tongue) in Hebrew, and considered one of the worst practices we can do. Similarly, these rumors that are being pushed through "leaks" to media are never helpful in these complex times of war.

What is not a rumor is that Israel has launched a few targeted air strikes against Iran-backed terrorist positions in the City of Homs in Syria; and that the IDF is continuing its mission in Gaza, where it is repeatedly being met with Hamas terrorists. The death toll to Israel is now 226 since the ground attacks on Gaza began.

What is also a factual truth is that President Milei of Argentina is visiting Israel, and has declared that he is moving the Argentine Embassy to Jerusalem. He additionally claimed to be working towards Argentina officially labeling Hamas a terrorist organization.

Let us hope that more leaders like President Milei rise to the world stage, and that Israel finds more support rather than the vitriol it often receives.

May the Holy One and His Presence keep the land, the nation, and the people of Israel safe and protected.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 6th, 2024

28th of Shvat, 5784

February 7th 2024 at 6:00 am PST

Hamas' Proposed Cease Fire

Chevre

Hamas has presented their proposal to Egypt, which was facilitated by Qatari and Egyptian mediators, and backed by Blinken. The proposed terms as released to Reuters are as follows:

---Three 45 day stages, totaling 4 1/2 months of cease fire to end the war entirely

---1st 45 Days: Release of women, children, elderly, sick hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners currently serving prison sentences in Israel, many of them life sentences.

---2nd 45 Days: Male hostages released

---3rd 45 Days: Remains of dead released

Other terms, reported as of 10:30am Israel Time:

1500 Palestinian convicts would be released, 500 of whom Hamas would choose from those serving life sentences. 500 trucks per day of food and aid would immediately be allowed into Gaza. With the release of the remains of hostages, all war would be over between Hamas and Israel. Israeli forces would totally withdraw from Gaza, and Gaza reconstruction would begin.

This is the proposal by Hamas, which Sec. Of State Blinken is pressuring Israel to accept.

Now we will start to see if the promise said on October 7 of "Never Forget" is a commitment or empty words; and if Israel will agree to Hamas being in Gaza in any way.

And we must remember to be strong and allow ourselves to be guided and blessed by God... Chazak u'Baruch (that is what the phrase literally means)

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 7, 2024

28th of Shvat, 5784

February 7th 2024 at 12:25 pm PST

We MUST Unite Behind Israel

Chevre

Prime Minister Netanyahu responded tonight to the Hamas proposal. To be clear, Hamas demanded the following in exchange for releasing the hostages over a four and a half month period:

---Israel would withdraw entirely from Gaza

---Israel would release 1500 terrorists from its prisons over the time period

---Gaza would self determine government (meaning Hamas or Palestinian Authority)

---500 trucks of daily "aid" would be let into Gaza

In his speech, which broadcast in Israel on Wednesday night, Netanyahu responded with a resounding "NO". He said that victory is within reach, that Hamas must be entirely defeated for Israel and the region to be safe; and that military pressure is the only way to get the hostages released.

The world, and especially the United States, has already started to condemn Netanyahu and put even more pressure on him to take this proposal from Hamas, Qatar, Egypt, and the U.S.. Sec of State Blinken has told Netanyahu that he will "think about the thousands of children who were killed in Gaza" for the rest of his life. Family members of hostages who are desperate for anything that might bring their loved one home, are being trotted out by world media so that they can cry and say that we should trade anything to get their family members released... the same thing any of us would do if, God forbid, we had a loved one kidnapped. The Palestinian Authority is pushing Biden and Blinken to formally recognize a Palestinian state. Blinken is already approaching other members of the Israeli Parliament and offering them U.S. support if they try to remove Netanyahu from office. And although the vast majority of Israeli and IDF soldiers want to "finish the mission"; the world media is portraying Israel as if it is divided, as if it wants Netanyahu removed, and that it wants peace with Hamas. These are blatant lies, and I encourage you to read this piece by Jonathan Tobin, Editor in Chief of Jewish News Syndicate, which gives a lot of detail about what is actually happening: <https://www.jns.org/biden-is-playing-politics-on-the-gaza->

[war-not-bibi/](#)

Many Jews do not agree with Netanyahu and the war cabinet. Many people don't like Bibi personally. Some so dislike him that they will disagree with anything he says automatically. But Israel, and all Jews, are in a fight for our very survival against enemies that have openly and proudly said and demonstrated that they want every Jew dead, and Israel destroyed.

So it doesn't matter how we feel about Netanyahu,. Right now, in this crucial moment, we must support Israel's decision to reject Hamas' proposal entirely. For the sake of our lives and the lives of our children, we must fully support Israel's right to fight this enemy on behalf of all of us. We must let those in Washington on BOTH sides of the aisle know that we support Israel and her decision to reject Hamas and their attempts to re-arm themselves and repeat the horrors of Oct. 7.

The immediate reaction of the Biden administration says volumes. The Biden campaign has already sent a large team today to Michigan to placate the Moslem communities there, as Michigan is a vital state for Biden in the upcoming election. As Jews, we must make it clear to Biden, Trump, Schiff, Garvey, and every politician in every race that the Jewish vote is tied to each candidate's support of Israel making their own decisions. Biden has shown his concern today about the Moslem American community. It is our obligation to show these politicians that if they want our votes and financial support...they MUST stand with us in supporting Israel's decision to finish the mission of defeating Hamas. Republican, Democrat, or Independent... every Jew must now, in this moment; stand united with Israel.

There has been a version of "Am Yisrael Chai" that has become successful over the last months in Israel and worldwide. Some of the lyrics need to stay in our consciousness and dictate our actions in these difficult times.

Am Yisrael Chai, the people of Israel will live
If we don't forget to always be United
The people of Israel will live
Because the Eternal Nation never fears
And none of us are ever alone
The Holy One, Blessed is He, watches over us; He protects us

Because we have no other land
Am Yisrael Chai

(Here is the entire song with English translation:
[Eyal Golan - Am Yisrael Chai - | עם ישראל חי - אייל גולן](#))

Please support Israel in every way you can, and I implore you to reach out to all politicians and let them know that if they want our support, they must support Israel fully. Now.

Because we have no other land

Am Yisrael Chai, and now is the time for not just faith, but action

Chazak u"Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 7, 2024

28th of Shvat, 5784

February 8th 2024 at 7:07 am PST

Israel Again Demonstrates Compassion to Enemies

Chevre

Israel again demonstrated that it is the most compassionate and ethical nation in the world when it comes to dealing with those who are declared enemies.

Senior Israeli security officials met with their Palestinian Authority counterparts to discuss how to bring economic relief to the West Bank prior to and during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, which begins this year in Sunday evening, March 10. The Israelis suggested having less checkpoints in the West Bank; reducing the number of arrest raids; and even allowing some West Bank workers to go back to working in Israel, which has been prohibited since Oct. 7.

They are offering to do these things, which potentially endanger more Israeli lives, because they don't want Muslims living in the area to be under hardship during their holy month.

Think about that for a moment, and what it says about Israel. Despite the reality that there are daily attacks from terrorists in that area, the head of the Shin-Bet, among other security officials, is willing to loosen up restrictions so that those Muslims who are not terrorists are better able to observe their holiday. Without any pressure from Qatar, Egypt, or the U.S.; Israel reached out to its neighbors with compassion and a workable plan.

Once again, the actions of Israeli officials are living examples of some of the deepest tenets of Judaism. We are taught to always be kind to the stranger in our midst, for we were once strangers (when we were in Egypt in biblical times before the Exodus). In spite of the obvious dangers, Israelis are taking care of the strangers who reside among us.

As the world condemns Israel for defending herself; the actions of these security officials are exemplary as good human beings and as good Jews.

May we all look to actions like these to create peace in our hearts and in the world.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 8, 2024

29th of Shvat, 5784

February 9th 2024 at 6:23 am PST

Sometimes Words Speak for Themselves

Chevre

Israeli officials have made it clear that while they are open to negotiations

regarding the release of hostages, the demands of Hamas are "delusional". So they are committed to continuing to apply military pressure on Hamas until/if there is potential for actual dialogue.

"Delusional"

Hezbollah fired over 30 more rockets at the Upper Galilee from one of their bases in Lebanon. They are claiming it is "retaliation" for the killing of two of their leaders. Those two Hezbollah leaders were killed in a drone strike in "retaliation" for the hundreds of rockets they have been orchestrating against Israel over the last four months.

"Retaliation"

And President Joe Biden publicly and verbally abandoned the Israeli war cabinet tonight in his speech to the nation. Reading from prepared notes after a reporter asked him about Israel, he said that he felt Israel's response to Hamas is "over the top". In conjunction with his Secretary of State Blinken, he is weakening Israel in the court of world opinion; as well as showing how he really doesn't understand what Hamas is. It makes many of us wonder how he would respond if a group of Mexican cartel members attacked San Diego, kidnapped American citizens, and filmed themselves killing and performing depraved horrors on Americans. If Americans in San Diego were beheaded by garden hoes on video; if American women were videotaped being raped on the corpses of their boyfriends; if 1200 Americans were killed by a Mexican cartel... would the U.S. and President Biden show even a small percentage of the restraint that Israel has shown. Or would Biden and his team act even more passionately to destroy that cartel than Israel is acting towards Hamas?

"Over the top"

Words are so powerful, and their power unlimited. They set standards; change feelings; and both condemn and inspire.

Delusional. Retaliation. Over-the-Top.

Sometimes the best way to understand what is happening in the world is to just focus on the words that the leaders are using.

Let us pray that the language changes. Hope. Faith. Unconditional Support. These are the words we need to hear repeated over and over again. My prayer is that the language we have been hearing and that has been castigating Israel over and over these last days, ultimately transforms into the language and practices of optimism; faith; safety, and peace.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 9, 2024

30th of Shvat, 5784

February 10th 2024 at 6:45 pm PST

Be Prepared

Chevre

When enough sparks are seen, it is a pretty good guess that a fire will be coming.

Netanyahu has publicly stated that he feels a strong ground operation in southern Gaza would need to be finished before Ramadan, which is March 10. This is a sign that Israel may be about to start the process of clearing out that area, which houses much of Hamas leadership and infrastructure. It also has over 2 million people, so to clean out Hamas would undoubtedly have collateral damage.

The IDF has discovered proof of Hamas bases being under UNRWA offices in Gaza. The United Nations is trying to claim that they had no knowledge of this, but it is pretty evident that at least the office staff knew they were harboring Hamas. It is so clear that Knesset Speaker Amir Ohana cancelled his scheduled meeting with U.N. Sec. General Guterres, who has repeatedly accused Israel of violating international law in its war against Hamas.

Simultaneously, it would seem that the Biden administration is abandoning

Israel. In his Thursday speech, President Biden said that he feels Israel's response to Oct. 7 has been "over the top". Additionally, Deputy National Security Advisor Jonathan Finer (yes, he is Jewish) spoke to a group of Muslim activists in Michigan and said, "I do not have any confidence in this current government in Israel" the signs are there that if/when Israel goes into southern Gaza, the world, including the U.S. will protest.

So be prepared that Jew hatred may increase even more. One way to be prepared to is reach out to every candidate via email and demand that they make a clear statement of support for whatever government is duly elected in Israel. This is not about Bibi, but about the survival of the nation.

We are taught that the Hebrew month of Adar, which we begin tonight, is a time to be happy... a time where our joy is meant to increase. As difficult as it is, we must focus on the joys in our life. Through the expression of joy we bring more light into the world... and ultimately, this is a powerful way to defeat darkness.

Psalm 100 says that the work of God is found in joy. May we embrace these words of King David as we traverse through the pain and darkness.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 10, 2024

1st of Adar I, 5784

February 11th 2024 at 10:52 am PST

What is Rafah & and Why it is so Important

Chevre

The world is putting great pressure on Israel to not go into Rafah, in the southern part of Gaza. For those unfamiliar with Rafah, it is a city in the southern Gaza strip, and the site of the border crossing between Gaza and Egypt. Normally a city of a few hundred thousand, it has grown to between 1.4 and 2 million

people (depending on which source) as people were evacuated from the north of Gaza in the last few months.

It is a vital city in this war against Hamas. As Israel cleared out the north of Gaza, Hamas terrorists, and possibly Israeli hostages, moved to Rafah. As the IDF has been making progress into the outskirts of Rafah, they have found even more intricate tunnels and underground bases of Hamas. These are not "tunnels" the way most of us think of tunnels... they are well developed architectural marvels that are deep underground and include full bathrooms; jails cells, tiled walls and floors, and are often large enough to drive military vehicles through. These "tunnels" have been developed over many years, and are the byproduct of billions of dollars of aid that was to go for food, infrastructure, and buildings for Gazans, but instead were used to build terrorist bases underground.

Israel believes that many of Hamas' leaders are being harbored in Rafah, having either been there at the start of the war or herded there as the IDF battled in the north. Netanyahu and the military leaders of IDF are clear that the clearing of Rafah is the key to destroying Hamas.

Israel needs to clean up Rafah; and Hamas is holding up there as its last major stronghold. So naturally, the world is trying to stop Israel from a strong ground operation there.

The U.S. has been clear through Blinken, Biden, and now Finer that they will not support Israel going into Rafah, and even threatening to cut off all aid to Israel if the IDF mounts an offensive there. Egypt, which has consistently refused to open its own borders to Gazans, is threatening to break the Camp David Accords (almost 50 years old and a foundation of peace in the region) if the IDF goes into Rafah and Gazan refugees rush the Egyptian border.

The reality is that Egypt will do almost anything to keep the fanatics of Hamas out of their own country; as will Jordan.

The Shin Bet and Mossad however have agreed today that they will go to peace talks in Cairo if Hamas agrees that it will be about hostage release only, and that they understand that Israel will not be withdrawing nor allowing Hamas to stay in power. As Hamas leadership gets more and more scared, they may agree to start talks with that, but we must always remember that the Hamas charter says

that they will only sit down in peace negotiations as a form of subterfuge to obtain their ultimate goal of controlling the entire region as an Islamic theocracy.

Biden, who is scheduled to speak with Netanyahu today for the first time since his "Israel is over the top" comment on Thursday, has supposedly told Israel that the war must be over in 45 days or the U.S. will support charging Israel with war crimes. Netanyahu has publicly said that any conflict in Rafah should be finished before Ramadan, on March 10. Israel knows that Rafah is vitally important, and that if they leave Rafah alone, Hamas will re-arm. And they know that if they attack Rafah, Hamas will use human shields, and countless "civilians" will be injured or die.

So Israel is in the tough spot of protecting themselves; or having collateral damage that will cause even more hate to be thrown at them by the world... and even possibly lose U.S. financial aid as Biden concerns himself with the upcoming election.

And it is all revolving around Rafah, a city with a history of thousands of years (it is mentioned in an inscription of Pharaoh Set in 1303 B.C.E.), that has become the current home and base of Hamas.

We all need to pray for Israel's success in clearing out Hamas from this ancient city without being completely rejected by the world in doing it; and act by letting everyone we know that Rafah must be cleansed of the poison that is Hamas.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 11th, 2024

2nd of Adar I, 5784

February 11th 2024 at 6:31 pm PST

It's Starting in Rafah...

Chevre

Netanyahu and Biden spoke today, where the US President used forceful language that Israel should not go into Rafah without a "credible plan to protect civilians". Another White House official said that "a precondition to any Rafah operation would be moving the population there out of harm's way", and " We have stated our concerns about how that could even be feasible".

Rafah is key to fully defeating Hamas. Today (Sunday night in Israel) had Israel launching targeted air strikes against "significant targeted areas" in the Shaboura area of Rafah. Already the world is attacking Israel; with Egypt threatening to break the Camp David Accords, the US expressing discontent, and the Palestinian Red Crescent calling the attacks "violent".

The rhetoric will rapidly increase over the next days. The media will undoubtedly attack Israel.

We need to remember what Hamas is, and the evil that they choose to inflict upon the world. We need to remember that they were elected repeatedly by over 90% of Gazans. And we must never forget the depravities and horrors they committed on Oct. 7, and how much of the world celebrated their actions.

...and we must unconditionally support Israel now... in her time of need.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 11, 2024

3rd of Adar I, 5784

February 11th 2024 at 6:58 pm PST

2 Hostages Rescued!

Chevre

Thanks to God and the IDF, 2 hostages have just been reported rescued

Fernando Simon Marman (60) and Louis Har (70) have been reported to be rescued and in good health now back in Israel

Baruch HaShem, Blessed is the One who redeems Israel

Chazak U'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 11, 2024

3rd of Adar, 5784

February 11th 2024 at 7:32 pm PST

Details About Hostage Rescue

Chevre

We have all been experiencing so much sadness, that I think it is important when we take a moment to rejoice in the terrific news that 2 hostages were rescued. Here are the details:

- 2 hostages **Louis Har (70)** and **Fernando Marman (60)** were rescued tonight in an operation from Rafah
- Their condition is determined to be good, and they have been transferred to Sheba Hospital
- Shayetet 13, Shin Bet, and other forces participated in the operation
- This was a hidden apartment in Rafah: "an operation that has been worked on for a long time, and until now the conditions were not there to carry it out"

- The hostages were kept in a hidden apartment on the second floor of the building
- The forces entered the building while the surrounding apartments were full of armed terrorists. The Israeli Air Force stopped an attempt to attack the rescuers leaving the scene.
- An hour later: the rescue operation was over

For any still questioning, this is more proof of how important the operation in Rafah is.

Blessed is the Holy Ome who redeems Israel from generation to generation.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 11th, 2024

3rd of Adar, 5784

February 12th 2024 at 10:35 am PST

The World Attacks the Rescues

Chevre

Yesterday we learned of the miraculous rescue of two hostages through a daring coordinated operation. Today, the world is reacting; and rather than being joyous, they are consistently showing how their chants to "free the hostages" are not about hostages at all, but about helping Hamas. Here are some of the reactions:

---Hamas has released public statements of "shock" at the "massacre...carried out against the Palestinian people". They are labeling it a violation of international law, a war crime, a massacre, and "the continuation of the people's genocide and massacre".

---The International Criminal Court's Chief Prosecutor, Karim Khan, is initiating an "urgent investigation" into Israel's actions.

---UN official Volker Turk, who is the UN's high commissioner for human rights, has said that a further operation into Ramah "risks further atrocity crimes".

---European Union chief Joseph Borrell has said that the U.S. should withdraw aid from Israel.

---Biden is welcoming Jordan's King Abdullah to the White House today; as reports have come out that Biden has taken to calling Netanyahu an "as**ole" in his private meetings with others.

These reactions, which entirely deny the evil of Hamas' kidnapping civilians in the first place, again demonstrate the words of Mark Twain over a century ago:

"The white man hates the black man; the black man hates the yellow man; the yellow man hates the red man... and everybody hates the Jew."

Rather than rejoicing at the miracle of the rescue, in an operation that rivals the Entebbe mission decades ago, the world chooses to support Hamas' claims as an "innocent victim". Any "rage" over Hamas' Oct. 7 actions has been mostly replaced with a forgetting of that horrific day, and an embracing of blaming Israel.

We must all remember how the world's calls for hostage releases are in actuality calls to give Hamas a respite so that they can regroup and rearm. We need to be honest: the majority of the world would prefer for Israel to be a memory rather than a thriving nation. We must always remember to Never Forget what was done on October 7.

And we must remember that we are never alone. If yesterday proves anything, it is that the Redeemer of Israel for thousands of years will continue to redeem us. Our faith and our actions must combine as they did yesterday, and we must choose to believe in perfect faith that God is our active partner.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 12, 2024

3rd of Adar, 5784

February 13th 2024 at 5:43 pm PST

Israelis Leave Cairo

Chevre

While U.S. and European media keep reporting that a deal with Israel and Hamas is almost complete, a clearer picture can be seen in the actions of the Israeli delegation, who have left Egypt saying that there was no breakthrough.

Israeli representatives, including from Shin Bet and Mossad, left with no new breakthroughs. They came "to listen only" and to meet with representatives from the US, Qatar, and Egypt; but apparently Hamas is still making what they are calling "delusional" demands of a permanent cease fire; removal of all IDF from Gaza; and the release of convicted murderers and terrorists from Israeli prisons.

The media attention is all to put even more pressure on Israel to be bullied into accepting a deal that would be excessively dangerous to Israel... but would make life easier for Biden in this election year.

It is the responsibility of every Diaspora Jew to unconditionally support Israel in these talks. We must remember that Hamas has specifically said that they want to repeat the horrors of October 7th, and will continue to do so until Israel is destroyed and no longer exists, God forbid. Hamas is feeling the pressure as Israel's military is destroying their infrastructure in Rafah, and they are doing anything they can to stop Israel from completely dismantling them

Am Yisrael Chai, and Am Echad. The people of Israel will live, and We Are One people... but those of us in the diaspora must always be conscious of our unity with Israel, her people, and her land... and never be distracted by a western media that has a different agenda than the survival of Israel.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 13, 2024

4th of Adar, 5784

February 14th 2024 at 6:07 am PST

Safed and the North Have Been Attacked

Chevre

Since 11:30pm PST tonight, there have been repeated rocket attacks in the north. The holy city of Safed has been hit, and as of 12:30am this morning, there is one death, and 7 wounded, who have been transported to the city's Ziv Medical Center.

Safed, overlooking the holy Galilee (Kinneret) is the home of Lurianic Kabbalah, and the cemetery there is the resting place of some of the greatest Jewish souls of history, including R. Isaac Luria, R. Yosef Karo, and my friend and teacher of blessed memory, R. Shlomo "Schwartzie" Schwartz. It is also the current home of my friend and teacher of 30 years, Rabbi Avraham Greenbaum, considered one of the great kabbalists of our generation.

May the Holy One and His Presence protect the souls of Safed, and of all of Israel, and keep her people safe.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 14, 2024

5th of Adar, 5784

February 14th 2024 at 11:53 pm PST

Every Jew Needs to Decide... (This May be the Most Important Email of the Last Four Months)

Chevre

I know this is a long email, but it may be the most important one I have written since the start of the war.

I have said and written for a number of years that in my lifetime or my children's... every Jew in America would need to determine if they are a Jew living in America, or an American who happens to be Jewish. And that whatever we may think, we would need to realize that much of America would view us as "the outsider"... as Jews who can be used as pawns without long term value or commitment. History has repeatedly shown us how much the world hates our people; and how quickly they are willing to abandon us.

And we see it again. Today. Now.

We all recognize the dangers of having a Palestinian state that is composed of non-contiguous territories, as in the West Bank and Gaza. A state defined as such is just a ticking bomb waiting for a Palestine defined as "from the river to the sea", and the destruction of Israel based on that definition. We all recognize the depravities and horrors that were done on October 7, and the promises of Hamas, Hezbollah, and the P.A. to repeat those horrors at the earliest possible time.

Every human being who saw what happened on Oct. 7 knows it was the personification of pure evil. If it had happened to any other nation in the world; the entire world would have supported any retaliatory actions without any concern. Whether it was the bombing of Dresden or the retaliations for 9/11; history shows that no other nation has been so forced to limit their response as Israel has been limited by the world in responding to Hamas.

And despite these truths, which everyone can accept: the evils of Hamas; the guaranteed failure of a peace with a non-contiguous Palestine; and the placing of burdens on Israel that are onerous and dangerous... today we have seen the complete abandonment of Israel and the plan for its destruction by the Biden administration.

It was announced today/Thursday (our late Wednesday night) that the United States has led a group including Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and "Arab partners" in creating a "firm timeline" for a Palestinian State. They have "demanded" an "immediate humanitarian cease fire"; and are drawing plans for an "interim Palestinian government". They have made it clear that the first step to forcing this two state solution is an immediate 6 week cease fire.

In other words, these western partners led by the United States are joining with Arab partners in what would be the eventual destruction of the State of Israel, God forbid. They are making plans that Israel's enemies have already said are the initial steps to a Palestine as defined from the river to the sea... eradicating the State of Israel as we know it.

The United States under this administration has now made it undeniably clear that they side with the enemies of Israel. Their actions define their goals: abandon Israel in the attempt to get the "progressives" and Muslim communities in America to support them in the upcoming elections.

We need to be honest... if for no other reason than for our own survival: America has abandoned Israel with impunity. The current leadership has identified that we are Jews before we are Americans, and as such, are expendable. They have determined that Israel's very existence is ultimately unimportant in comparison to seeking the votes of Jew haters; despite the fact that Israel is the only democracy in the region, and one of the greatest allies to the U.S. in the world.

So what can and should we do? As American Jews (or Jewish Americans), is there a path for us to take that leads to our preservation, and the preservation of the State of Israel?

There is, but it requires commitment and passion. The commitment that we each felt on October 8 as we were reeling from the devastation of the day before. The unbridled passion and promise to support Israel. To never forget, and never again to let this happen to the Jewish people.

We must fully commit to supporting Israel unconditionally. We must commit to fighting in every way possible for her survival... for her survival is the survival of every one of us. We must support her with our words, actions, finances, and prayers. We must defend her at every opportunity against the slander of the Jew haters. We must remember Am Ehad... all Jews are one nation.

And we must band together and support Jewish communities at home. I know that in addition to the members of our community here in Southern California, we have many people reading this email outside of California and even outside the country. Wherever you are, attach yourself to a Jewish community in your

area. Support it financially, but more importantly, support it with your participation. Go to services, classes, and events. Reach out and get to know your Rabbi (if you're here locally, I am always available for a coffee to get to know another Jew better). Encourage other Jews in your area to become active participants in the community.

A single straw is easily broken, but when many straws band together, their strength is magnified exponentially. Israel is fighting for her long term survival... and so are the Jewish people.

Commitment. Passion. Prayer. Words. Actions. These are the components that we must integrate in order to survive these challenging times.

And there is one more component: remembrance. We must remember that we have faced challenges for thousands of years, and God has ALWAYS taken care of us. We must remember that God is our partner; and if we are true to that partnership, we can be guaranteed that God will hold up His end of the partnership as well.

Am Yisrael Chai, the People of Israel Live. And despite the abandonment of historical allies; despite the pressures and hatred of the world; and despite how dark it may seem, we can be assured that with God's help, we will continue to survive and even thrive from now to the coming of the Messiah, may He come in our time.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 15, 2024

6th of Adar, 5784

February 15th 2024 at 6:04 pm PST

Hate Abounds From the U.N. to Elementary Schools & Who Wants to Go to Israel?

Chevre

Each day seems to bring more evidence of Jew hatred to the surface. The only good news about that is the realization that the hatred has been there and hidden, and now we can see more and more visibly who the anti-Semites are and how they operate.

News has come out that Syre Elementary School in Washington State has been teaching children as young as 7 years old to chant "Free Palestine" and "from the river to the sea", as well as having them hold "mock anti-Israel protests". Stand With Us and The Center for Combatting Antisemitism have filed legal actions against the school, demanding an investigation and administrative action for a discriminatory anti-Israel lesson plan for second grade classes.

On the opposite side of the age spectrum, Martin Griffiths, the Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator for the United Nations has announced that Hamas is not a terrorist group, but a "political movement". While Israel Foreign Minister Israel Katz among others has taken him to task for this outrageous statement, which is reflected in Griffiths' desire to keep aiding Hamas, everyone else at the U.N. has been totally silent...giving their tacit approval of this outrageous statement.

This kind of news may seem unimportant, but it has a direct affect in Israel. The lies of worldwide pro-Hamas/anti-Israel publicity have significantly hurt Israel. Although immigration to Israel has increased (many Jews worldwide recognize that it is our "home" no matter where we live), the tourism industry in Israel has been decimated. January of last year saw 257,500 tourists, whereas this January had only 58,600, a decrease of 77%. Tourism is an important cog in the Israeli economy and desperately needed for Israel to survive.

If you are interested in having a temple community trip to Israel after Passover, please email [Orlando](mailto:Orlando@NerSimcha.org) at Events@NerSimcha.org. If enough people desire to go, it could be a great learning opportunity and spiritual experience that could help Israel in her time of need.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 15, 2024

6th of Adar, 5784

February 16th 2024 at 9:12 am PST

Today is an Ancient Jewish Holiday...Especially Important This Year

Chevre

The Jewish calendar is filled with holidays that are little known outside the very observant Jewish world, yet these dates often have deep significance. Today is one of those days: the holiday of Zayin Adar, the supposed anniversary of both the birth and death of Moses.

A kind of “weird” holiday that doesn’t seem important. But this year, it’s practices may make it one of the most important days in our time.

There are two great legends regarding Moses’ death. The first is that no other living creature died on that day; and the second is that no one knows where he is buried. These two understandings have led to the practices of observance of the holiday. Since no other creature died, we traditionally honor the caretakers of the dead today. And because no one knows where Moses was buried, Zayin Adar has been designated in modern Israel as a day of remembrance for those fallen soldiers whose bodies were never recovered nor identified.

Today, this year and from now on, I believe we need to add a remembrance for not only for all those who have died in Israel on October 7; but for all hostages whose whereabouts remain unknown.

October 7 was the most horrific day since the Holocaust. So many people were massacred; so many depravities performed on Israeli innocents. We will never know for certain what happened to some victims of that terrible day, some will never be buried properly, and all of them suffered shocking deaths of violence and torture. They need to be remembered today. Like the 588 fallen soldiers’ names on Mount Herzl in the Garden of the Missing Soldiers, we need to honor the souls of those who suffered and died on October 7.

If we are brutally honest, it is doubtful that all the hostages will ever return home. With God’s help, some will return home alive, and we will at least the

bodies of some of those who have died will be retrieved. And some will be lost forever: possibly dead or possibly worse.

These civilians should never have experienced any of these horrors, and these hostages need to be in our consciousness and prayers.

There is no better time than now, today. This ancient Jewish holiday needs to now incorporate their modern suffering into its observance.

Moses went through a journey of forty years of guiding a nation of lost souls to their redemption in the land promised to them. Sustained entirely by faith in the midst of a wilderness and coming from the imprisonment of Egyptian slavery, the ancient Hebrews came through their darkness and ultimately into a land of freedom. We must pray that these hostages too are redeemed from their imprisonment and once again are returned to Israel and freedom.

This is the day to attach our consciousness to theirs. This holiday of Zayin Adar is the time that we must all fervently pray for the release and rescue of the hostages; and remember the souls who died on October 7.

May their memory be a blessing, and may the hostages come home safely and speedily.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 16, 2024

7th of Adar, 5784



February 18th 2024 at 9:31 am PST

Israelis are Unanimous

Chevre

The American politicians have been pushing hard for a distinct Palestinian two-state solution. The media is filled with interviews or speeches by Biden, Blinken, Finer, et all about how America is committed to unilaterally creating a Palestinian state. The Israelis have now officially responded

In an unanimous vote (which is rare), the Israeli cabinet rejected "international dictates" seeking to oust Palestinian statehood. The Israelis are clear: any discussion of statehood is a reward to all terrorists... effectively approving Oct. 7 as a means to achieve goals. They recognize the evil that is Hamas, and the commitment of Hamas, Hezbollah, and the P.A. to destroy Israel, not have peace.

The cabinet also made a few other points crystal clear. Unless the hostages are all returned, this war will continue through the holy Muslim holiday of Ramadan. One of the more "liberal" members of the Cabinet, Minister Sa'Ar of Gantz's National Unity Party said creating a timeline for a Palestinian state "would be like

the sacrifice of Czechoslovakia in 1938" ... when Czechoslovakia was given to the Nazis as appeasement, and actually ended up being an encouragement for Hitler to attack more of Europe.

It is a rare occasion when Israelis agree on anything. The fact that a forced 2 state solution was rejected unanimously tells every Diaspora Jew how the Israelis feel since October 7.

May the people and leaders of Israel stay strong; and may we all receive the blessing of God's wisdom and the protection of His partnership with us.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 18, 2024

9th of Adar, 5784

February 18th 2024 at 6:56 pm PST

Our Prayers and Songs Matter as War Continues and Expands

Chevre

It doesn't take a psychic to read the leaves of what is coming if the hostages are not released by Hamas in the next two weeks...

War cabinet minister Gantz expressly said today that if the hostages are not released before Ramadan (March 10), the war will escalate, including going fully into Rafah. Netanyahu and other ministers are strategizing how much access will be granted to Muslims to the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem during Ramadan. Defense Minister Gallant announced today that Hamas leadership in other countries is looking to replace Sinwar in Gaza; and that Hamas troops are without leaders and that "there is no one to talk to among leadership on the ground".

Translation to these simultaneous statements: Israel is going to continue to finish the mission during Islam's holy month of Ramadan if hostages are not

returned.

...and we can be certain that although it is apparently ok for Hamas to attack us on the holiday of Simchat Torah as they did in Oct. 7; or for them to attack on Yom Kippur as they did in 1973...the Jew haters of the UN and world media will accuse Israel of evil war crimes if Israel doesn't desist all military operations for their month of Ramadan.

And today, Israel made it clear that even if they have to go it alone; they will finish this mission even if that means fighting during Ramadan.

If that occurs; we may be blessed that the other Arab nations will respect Israel (and let Israel eliminate Hamas, which all modern Arab countries would actually like) and stay on the sidelines. Or the modern Arab nations may feel obligated to support the terrorists and Israel could, God forbid, be facing many enemies at once. Either could happen.

And so, as Diaspora Jews, we must constantly pray that the Holy One who watches over everything watches especially over Israel, and keeps her, her land, and her people safe and protected.

But in Judaism, prayers that are without feelings are empty. We need to really feel our prayers in our hearts in order for them to be meaningful... for us and for God

So I offer to you these two videos to help each of us connect with the feelings of supporting Israel, the Jewish people, and the world. The first is an amazing performance of 12,000 people singing for God to watch over everything and bring us peace with Al Kol Eleh. The second is hundreds of IDF soldiers singing "Am Yisrael Cbai". As these soldiers passionately reiterate,

"The people of Israel live
In the ups, the downs, the hardest times
The Holy One, blessed is He protects us, so none can defeat us
Because we have no other land.
God protect us, watch over our children
Because we have not lost faith!
Am Yisrael Chai"

Koolulam With Shlomi Shabbat | Al Kol Eleh - Naomi Shemer | 70th Independence Day

The IDF Soldiers Keep Their Spirits HIGH. Eyal Golan - Am Yisrael Chai

Am Yisrael Chai... we are one people who will always live.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 18, 2024

10th of Adar, 5784

February 19th 2024 at 9:03 am PST

Sirens in the North

Chevre

At approximately 8:30am PST, sirens started going off in the north of Israel warning of incoming aircraft.

As we remember the heroism, wisdom, and success of Presidents Washington and Lincoln today; please remember to pray for Israel's success in defeating her enemies and for the safety of her people.

Both Lincoln and Washington felt alone in their fights. While they knew they were fighting for what is right and righteous, each of them expressed the pain they felt in many letters and notes. But they persisted because they knew they were not only doing the right thing (despite what much of their worlds felt), but they knew the hand of God was in their shoulders. Both men looked to the Bible, and especially to the story of the Exodus for guidance and faith.

That Exodus is OUR STORY! Like Washington and Lincoln, we must choose faith that God will always take care of us, no matter how dark it may seem in the moment.

Please say a prayer for the safety of the people in northern Israel; the entire country; the IDF and IAF; and all who support Israel in these challenging times

And may we all always be strong and be blessed

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 19, 2024

10th of Adar, 5784

February 20th 2024 at 7:53 am PST

UN Security Council Vote

Chevre

The UN Security Council just voted on an Algerian proposal to demand an immediate ceasefire in Israel. The vote was 13 for, 1 abstention, and 1 against. The one nay was a veto from the United States.

While this is terrific on the one hand, it portends many dangers. The fact that 13 nations are willing to support Hamas et al shows us all how the world really views Jews and Israel.

The US delegate also gave a lengthy speech detailing why she vetoed it. She made it clear that the U.S. has already sponsored a proposal for a temporary cease fire that should be voted on "as soon as practicable", which includes releasing of hostages as a condition.

The entire dialogue from each speaker was the same: support palestinians; condemn Israel for reacting to the horrors of Oct 7 in such a way that has made life difficult for palestinians; and de facto allow the process of hostage taking to become a powerful tool in the hands of terrorists.

The writing is in the wall: Israel will probably have to finish the mission in Rafah

alone and against the desires of the world.

But we are never alone. God is always with us; and we one people. As long we remain united under the Presence of the Shechinah together; Am Yisrael Chai

We must choose not to let the words of officials in the U.N. affect our faith nor our resolve. We must stay strong and united with our brothers and sisters in Israel; and with all Jews in the world. We have survived unique challenges for thousands of years, and with God's help, we will survive this one as well

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 20, 2024

11th of Adar, 5784

February 21st 2024 at 7:26 am PST

We are At War in All Fronts

Chevre

By noon on Wednesday Israel time, there have been multiple operations by Israel in Lebanon and Syria in attempts to defend ourselves and weaken Hezbollah and its continued attacks on communities in the north of Israel.

Syria's state run news agency has reported that Israeli planes launched a targeted missile attack and destroyed an apartment building in Damascus. We are still waiting to know who or what was being targeted, but two people have been reported killed.

Simultaneously (literally within minutes of each other) it has been reported that Israel launched a targeted airstrike in southern Lebanon, approximately 6 miles from the border with Israel.

This is all being done at the same time that Israeli officials have said that if the hostages are not returned before Ramadan on March 10, Israel will be going into Rafah to eliminate the last major strongholds of Hamas there.

We can all be assured, especially given the rhetoric at the United Nations on Tuesday, that much of the world will unite against Israel in the near future as a result of the combination of these events.

But we must choose faith and to remain strong in our support of Israel, which for over four months has been attacked on all sides: the borders; the U.N.; and through media. We have thousands of years to justify our faith; and to know that God has always been there support Israel and the Jewish people... and He will always keep His covenant with us.

In this time of the world attacking Israel... attackng her with bombs, murders, rapes, kidnappings, violence, and the words of those who hate us. I am reminded of the words of Golda Meir:

"The world hates a Jew who hits back. The world loves us only when we are to be pitied. If we have a choice between being dead and pitied, and being alive with a bad image, we would rather be alive and have the bad image."

With God's help, may we soon see the time when we are alive and loved by the world for all we have done and continue to do.

Whether in Israel or California, we must always remember that we are one people. This song, Am Echad means "One Nation"... a nation that will always live. It reminds us that "Our hope is not lost, To be free in our land. Shema Yisrael, we are all One Nation:

[תּוֹךְ אֶחָד - One Nation](#)

Kulanu Am Echad... We are all one people.

If there is anything you need in these challenging times; if you need support or comfort in this time of pain; if you need to remember that we will survive and thrive with God's help; or if it's just too overwhelming and you simply need to connect... email or call me. Now more than ever in our lifetimes, we need to be there for each other.

Am Echad... We are One Nation. And Am Yisrael Chai...the people of Israel will

always live.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 21, 2024

12th of Adar, 5784

February 22nd 2024 at 8:28 am PST

Some Israelis Can Go Home

Chevre

The IDF announced today that Israelis who live near Gaza and were displaced on October 7 can return to their homes if they are more than 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) from the border. Although not totally safe yet, the IDF said that there may be some rockets, but that people could return if they are beyond the 4km line.

While some Israelis go back to their houses, United Airlines is inviting the world back to Israel. United had suspended all flights to Israel after October 7, but has said that they will resume their flights to the Holy Land next month, starting daily Newark to Tel Aviv flights by March 6.

These are all hopeful signs, but do not think this war is over even for a moment. Battles and rocket exchanges are increasing in the north; terrorist activities are increasing in the West Bank, and the IDF has reported that some fighting has started back up in Gaza City, as well as the preparations to go into Rafah by March if the hostages are not released. The world pressure is increasing for Israel to stop fighting, for a state of palestine to be unilaterally created by the U.S. and others, and attacks are increasing on Israel on all fronts. A rocket attack on the city of Eilat was thwarted today as the Iran backed Houthis attempted to attack the city in the Red Sea.

So let us keep our prayers and our actions focused on Israel; the safety of her people and land; the protection of her armed forces; and for the safe return of the hostages.

B'shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 22, 2024

13th of Adar, 5784

February 23rd 2024 at 5:53 am PST

Netanyahu Proposes a Different Plan

Chevre

Prime Minister has been clear that we should be discussing about the "day after" until the time comes when the war is won, B"H.

But the US and others keep pressuring Israel, and have already leaked that it is their intent to unilaterally establish a Palestinian state.

So Bibi has been forced to discuss his intent, even though we are still far from the victory that is the goal of this mission.

Netanyahu began discussions with the war cabinet about the "day after", in which he proposed to them the idea of Gaza being administered by pockets of local officials who are not related to Hamas, Muslim Brotherhood, and the Palestinian Authority.

Each of these organizations is committed to the destruction of Israel; it is in their charters and they caused the horrors of October 7, and have promised to do it again if they have the opportunity. So a plan has been laid out to have Gaza administered by Gazans, not by the hate driven organizations of the P.A., Hamas, et al

May the One who ordains peace in the Universe guide us to a speedy victory over evil; and continue guiding us into a long term peace with our neighbors.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 23, 2024
14th of Adar, 5784

February 23rd 2024 at 4:45 pm PST

The "Day After" Plan Proposed Today

Chevre

Prime Minister Netanyahu has proposed a plan to his war cabinet that is reflective of Israel's values and goals, despite being immediately rejected by Hamas and the Palestinian Authority.

The plan calls for the utter defeat of Hamas, but posits what can happen afterwards. It stresses demilitarization and deradicalization. While the IDF would retain a small presence in Gaza to make sure Hamas does not regain power; Gaza would be administered by local authorities who are not tied to Hamas or the P.A. The West Bank would be a separate issue than Gaza, and it could ultimately lead to an independent Gaza controlled by locals who are committed to peace rather than war, specifically defined as "local representatives who are not affiliated with terrorist countries or groups and are not financially supported by them".

Biden and Blinken have already rejected the idea, stating that a two state solution is the only alternative. The Palestinian Authority has expressed outrage as it takes away their power; and since the plan also prohibits UNRWA from being in Gaza (given that it has repeatedly demonstrated that it is a front for Hamas terrorists) to be replaced with other international aid groups, there will undoubtedly be protests from the U.N..

This plan is reflective of the desires of the vast majority of Israeli citizens, who are unwilling to ever let another day of horror like October 7 happen. While the majority of Israelis favored a two state solution before October, that idea is now rejected by (according to polls) over 80% of Israelis.

Let us pray that Hamas is destroyed and Gaza can become a paradise of peace as a neighbor of Israel

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 23, 2024

14th of Adar, 5784

February 24th 2024 at 11:47 pm PST

Should We Trust a Deal Negotiated for Israel by the Financiers of Hamas?

Chevre

There is optimism in Paris and Jerusalem as the Israeli delegation returned from discussions with representatives of Qatar, Egypt, and the US about having a 6 week cease fire in exchange for 35-40 hostages being released by Hamas. The deal would undoubtedly also be similar to the last release of hostages, and would involve releasing hundreds of Hamas terrorists from Israeli prisons, although no actual details have been released yet as Hamas was not even part of the discussions...but an anonymous Israeli official said that Hamas has "dropped some of its demands".

Prime Minister Netanyahu, who along with most of Israel recognizes that the only real pressure that affects Hamas leaders is fear of Israel's military...especially an operation in Rafah where we believe there are still some Hamas leaders hiding, has called for a meeting next week with the war cabinet to finalize plans for the Rafah mission.

At the same time, the Jerusalem Post is reporting that not only has Qatar been funding Hamas (which has been known for a long time), but as recently as 2023, Hamas terrorists were being trained in Qatar at their Police College in Al-Rayyan. Six classes of Hamas terrorists have graduated from there that we know of. Given Hamas' status as a terrorist group, Rich Goldberg, a former member of the National Security Council said today that "this is certainly further evidence to support a designation of Qatar as a state sponsor of terrorism". The Post quoted Yigal Carmen, President of The Middle East Media Research Institute as saying, "Qatar is Hamas, and Hamas is Qatar". Jerusalem Deputy Mayor, Fleur Hassan-Nahoun told the Post that, "Qatar hosts Hamas leaders and facilitates its financing. We know Hamas was trained by the Islamic republic of Iran and so this

new revelation about Qatar is hardly surprising. The free world should show zero tolerance for terrorist funders and sympathizers."

It is deeply concerning to many that the U.S. is constantly and continually pressuring for Israel to accept a deal proposed by Qatar, especially with this most recent news.

But we are Jews... and so we pray for a lasting peace...and choose to have "emunah shlemah"... "perfect faith" that it will come with God's help and guidance.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 24, 2024

16th of Adar, 5784

February 25th 2024 at 10:58 pm PST

Is Israel Bluffing?

Chevre

The question that must be going through the minds of Hamas leaders must be if Israel is going to do what they are saying, or if world pressure can force them to make a hostage deal.

Netanyahu has made it clear that Israel is preparing to go into Rafah, where he says that once the Rafah operation begins, it will only be weeks before there will be total victory in Gaza. Gallant is making it clear that even if there is a temporary truce for hostages, the IDF will continue and increase its strikes in Hezbollah.

Only a week ago, Hamas was clear that the IDF would have to be totally removed from Gaza, a permanent cease fire promised, Hamas left in charge, and hundreds of imprisoned Hamas terrorists released from Israeli prisons before any hostages would be released. This was a US/Qatar/Egypt plan that the White House said was close to being finalized. But Bibi called it delusional, and kept preparing to

enter Rafah, even into Ramadan.

And now, reports are coming out that there may be a temporary cease fire without most of those Hamas demands. What changed? It has become clearer and clearer that Bibi, the war cabinet, and the IDF will go into Rafah no matter what Biden says... and as that has become clearer, Hamas has suddenly been more open to letting go of their demands. The last ten days has shown what Israel has been saying for months: it is only through the real pressure of military actions that there is a chance of getting hostages back.

But is Israel bluffing? Will they take on Rafah without US support?

This is what is going through the minds of Hamas leadership, as well as if they can exert more pressure on Israel in other ways to not continue with military action.

The next few days will show Israel's true intent, but given that today they started releasing plans to let northern Gaza citizens currently in the south be evacuated back up to the north, it would appear that Rafah is the next big operation.

There is a poker game going on here... and we will see if there is a bluff by Israel and if it will be called by Hamas; or if Israel is making its plans with every intent of cleaning up Hamas once and for all.

Either way, may we soon and speedily see the release of the hostages, the destruction of Hamas, and the beginnings of a long lasting peace in the Middle East.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 25, 2024

17th of Adar, 5784

February 27th 2024 at 12:10 am PST

Who is Telling the Truth?

Chevre

Rather than giving a commentary, I think it's worth each person drawing their own conclusions from the conflicting news below...

President Biden has said he expects a truce between Israel and Hamas to be finished by this weekend, or "maybe Monday"

There have been reports from multiple players in the discussions for a hostage release/cease fire agreement who have said that Hamas is still sticking with their demands that there is a permanent cease fire and removal of all Israeli forces in Gaza before they will release any hostages; and that Hamas is uninterested in what was proposed to them over this past weekend.

Netanyahu and the majority of Israelis have no intention of letting another event happen like October 7, God forbid. While the hostages are a priority, most of the country is more concerned about Israel's long term safety and survival. Israel estimates that there are 130 hostages, some of whom are not alive.

In a tangential move that will be used for negotiation purposes, the majority of the officials of the Palestinian Authority resigned today in an attempt to make it look as if the P.A. is going through a reform. In reality, nothing is changing as Fatah, the faction that supports and aligns itself with Hamas and other extremists, is still in power; as is P.A. President Abbas. The P.A. has still not condemned the horrors of October 7.

What do you think is really happening, and what do you think is going to happen?

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 27, 2024

18th of Adar, 5784

February 27th 2024 at 7:56 am PST

Biden's Words on Israel

Chevre

Late last night, in an interview with Seth Meyers, Joe Biden made clear his agenda for Israel. He said that "the conservative government" of Israel is the problem; that he had "agreements with the Israelis that they would not engage in activities during Ramadan"; and talked about how the world has always supported Israel, but that they will lose that support of the world if they keep acting the way they are under this "conservative government".

He also called himself "a Zionist" in the same breath.

While he is saying this on domestic television, Israel is making statements that unless an appropriate deal is made, they will not pause during Ramadan. Most Israelis and thoughtful Jews worldwide recognize the inequality of the world demanding that Israel give Hamas a pause during Ramadan, when the original Oct. 7 attack was on the Jewish holiday of Simchat Torah (and there is the history of the other horrible war in Israel having been started when Israel was attacked on Yom Kippur in 1973). As for the Israel losing goodwill from the world, the question arises for most Israelis as to "what good will"? As discussed in an email months ago, the United Nations has placed more resolutions against Israel for decades than they have ALL other countries combined. The world's outrage after October 7 has been replaced by castigation of Israel. Biden's comment about world support of Israel is delusional and the opposite of what has been true for decades.

And Meyers' words demonstrate his own anti-Semitism (no, Meyers is not Jewish) as he repeatedly focused on "the daily images" of the horrors in Gaza, but entirely ignoring the depraved images of Oct. 7 that he, like so many others, have already forgotten.

Both Hamas and Israel said that Biden's comments about a cease fire being reached are premature; with a Hamas official saying to Reuters that "there are still big gaps".

...and Hezbollah continues to fire dozens of rockets last night; and sirens have been going off throughout the last six hours in the north.

...and we must pray and act. Pray with our full passion for Israel as well as all

Jews worldwide; and act in every moment to support Israel and constantly remind people of the truths of this war.

And never let anyone forget the evils of October 7th by Hamas: the modern incarnation of Amalek that must be destroyed to prevent those horrors from ever being repeated, God forbid.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 27, 2024

18th of Adar, 5784

February 27th 2024 at 11:50 pm PST

The War Continues in Israel, and Felt Here in Santa Barbara

Chevre

By 9am on Wednesday morning (Israel time), there had already been two barrages of rockets from Lebanon. It is a full fledged war in everything but name in the north.

And there are issues here at home, in our own California town of Santa Barbara California was known for decades as being “laid back” and accepting, and nowhere more than in the sleepy town of Santa Barbara, the home of Univ. of California, Santa Barbara. The home of “epic” surfing, it inspired Bruce Brown to make the film “Endless Summer”, and has a history of being accepting to everyone.

Now, it is accepting of everyone except Jews. And the UCSB administration seems to be just fine with that Jew hatred.

The Multicultural Center at UCSB is supposed to be a place for students of different cultures to get to know each other. Students and faculty can learn about each other’s cultures, traditions, beliefs, and practices. A place to learn about the diversity of humanity, and teach appreciation for those who are different. But that purpose doesn’t apply to Jews, who are now not even allowed

in the Center.

There is a large sign prominently placed at the Center which now says, "Zionists Are Not Welcome. And Stay Away From Our Kitchen Too!". On University property (paid for by state and federal taxes), made with materials paid for by the University, and worst of all, condoned by the University is a sign expressing the hatred Jews have experienced throughout history. "No Jews Allowed" is a sign that has haunted civilized societies for ages, but no Jew ever thought we would see that hate in 21st century America.

And yes, there is no question that this is Jew hatred. Anti-Zionism is just the latest form of anti-Semitism to darken the world. While it is possible to disagree with Israeli governmental decisions, to be against the existence of the only Jewish nation in the world (there are over 50 Moslem nations and over 120 Christian) is simply another way to express hatred for Jews themselves. To want the destruction of a country that is a mere one quarter of one percent of the size of the rest of the Middle East region is to express hate towards every Jew, whether they live in Israel or abroad.

Lord Jonathan Sacks, the former Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom, made it a point in the last years of his life to repeatedly teach how and why "anti-Zionism" is actually "anti-Semitism"; and how the conflicts in the Middle East against Israel will be the defining battle of our time: a battle between a culture that worships life versus one that worships death. We have seen the truth of his statement in the last five months as Israel has been attacked with horrific depravities on October 7; with attacks in the media and in the United Nations ever since; and with the absolute abandonment of the United States in the last weeks. We have seen a world in shock at the horrors perpetuated by Hamas turn to a world that supports Hamas and calls them "victims". We all saw the videos of what Hamas did to civilians in the most despicable example of animalistic behavior since the Holocaust. We must not forget those images: murder, dismemberment, beheadings of babies, rape, torture, and more. But in their Jew hating passion, the "anti-Zionists" would have us forget about Israelis being beheaded by Hamas with a garden hoe; forget about the murders of children and the elderly which Hamas proudly videotaped. They would have us not think about the female hostages who have been repeatedly raped for almost five months.

The UCSB Multicultural Center would rather we don't think about the reality that each of those women who have been raped five and six times per day as hostages are probably pregnant right now. Apparently, UCSB doesn't really care about those women's rights. Because after all, they are Jews... they are Zionists.

The intense Jew hatred at UCSB since October 7 is well known to the administration of the university, and they cannot claim plausible deniability. The campus Chabad Rabbi has repeatedly reported acts of hate on the formerly idyllic campus. Besides hate graffiti being painted on the Chabad House driveway, the last months have seen UCSB become a haven for hate. Bags of rocks with images of "Jews with oversized noses" were distributed around campus. Similar materials were left at dorm rooms, apartments, and houses of Jewish students.

Henry Yang, the Chancellor of UCSB has been made aware of this hatred in his campus, but has done nothing to address it. He was sent emails by concerned parents about this latest hate at the Multicultural Center, but as of now has still done nothing. Yang is aware of the targeted hate towards UCSB Student President, Tessa Veksler, the first observant Jew elected as UCSB by the students, who in the last week has had over a dozen placards of anti-Jew hate placed around her office.

But Yang, and the University, have remained silent.

There was a time when UCSB was a school that was the epitome of a diverse campus that embraced respecting differences. But that was when students were concerned with riding waves and getting good grades. Now, with the tacit approval of Chancellor Yang and the administration, the school is more focused on allowing (and encouraging) Jew hatred than with educating its students about the historical realities of the Middle East, the horrors of October 7, and the evils embedded in the very charter documents of Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Palestinian Authority.

As I've written in multiple emails, the Hamas Charter (the Covenant of 1988) specifically calls for the obliteration of all Jews in Article 7. The Palestinian Authority has yet to condemn October 7 in even the slightest way. And now, UCSB has joined other colleges like Harvard and Columbia in embracing Jew hatred under the guise of "anti-Zionism". And like the heads of Harvard, MIT,

and Penn., Yang too needs to be held responsible for the hate he has continued to allow against Jews on his campus.

This is a battle that we can all help fight by writing or calling UCSB, or the UC Regents. Private donors made a difference at Harvard, and Jews here in Southern California need to make it clear to Chancellor Yang that Jewish students have value and the campus must be made safe for Jews.

Chancellor Yang's email is henry.yang@ucsb.edu and his phone number is [805-893-2231](tel:805-893-2231). If you have been wondering how you can make a difference, reaching out to him is one small but vital way.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 27, 2024

19th of Adar, 5784

February 28th 2024 at 9:12 pm PST

What is Ramadan & Why is it Important This Year

Chevre

You have probably heard a lot in the news about how there should be no operation in Rafah during the Islamic holiday of Ramadan, which begins this year on March 10 (ironic given that they attacked us on our holy day of Simchat Torah). Ismail Haniyeh, considered the political leader of Hamas (who lives in Qatar and has a net worth of over 2 Billion dollars!) called for all Arabs to attack Israel during Ramadan, and to siege and blockade the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, and have continual mass riots there. While Hamas is calling for more war during this holiday, they are simultaneously saying that Israel cannot have military actions during this time; and Biden officials today said that they are considering airdropping aid into Gaza during the holiday.

So what is Ramadan?

Ramadan is a month long holiday commemorating Mohammed's first vision in

610 C.E., in which he supposedly was visited by the angel Gabriel (named Jibril in Arabic) in a cave near Mecca; and was given a revelation that ultimately became the Koran.

Moslem law dictates that they must fast from dawn until sunset each day for the month. There are special pre-dawn and post-sunset meals; and theologically, Muslims are to give charity, pray extensively, and to study and read the Koran. Because the Islamic calendar is lunar, the holiday takes place at different times each year, during the 9th month of their calendar.

But it also has a history of wars during this "holy month". In fact, the Yom Kippur War in 1973 was started during Ramadan. Nowhere, in any Islamic law or text is war forbidden during Ramadan; although war is forbidden in the Koran during other months (the 1st, 7th, 11th, and 12th).

In fact...Ramadan seems to be very much about war for Muslims. Beside the Yom Kippur War, there is an ancient history (of which Islam is proud) of Muslims going to war during Ramadan. Some examples include:

---The Battle of Badr, a victory led by Mohammed himself in the second Ramadan

---The conquest of Mecca, 6 years after Badr

---The war for Andalusia in 711 C.E.

---The Battle of Ain Jalit against the Mongols

---The Battle of Hattin during the Crusades

... and that's just in the first 200 years of Islamic history!

As you hear people clamoring that Israel cannot have military operations in Rafah during Ramadan, remember (and share) that not only is war not forbidden by Islam during Ramadan, history shows that it is actually encouraged. Ramadan is not like Yom Kippur, which they attacked us on and during which war is forbidden. It is not a holiday of peace like Christmas, which prompted the unique Christmas Truce of 1914, which was a one day cease fire from both sides during World War I so that all could honor the holiday.

Ramadan is a holiday with a history of Moslems initiating wars... and there is no theological reason for Israel to halt its actions because of this holiday that is historically bathed in blood.

If peace is so important to Hamas during Ramadan, then why don't they just release all the hostages before March 10 and let the people of Gaza celebrate the holiday?

Consider and share this history of Ramadan with anyone who uses what they think the theology of Ramadan is about in order to restrain Israel.

... and instead, remember and point out what was done on October 7, the Jewish holiday of Simchat Torah. A day dedicated to the renewal and joy of the Torah was transformed by Hamas into a day of depraved horrors.

Never forget that day and what came after...

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

February 28, 2024

20th of Adar, 5784

March 1st 2024 at 12:16 am PST

The Perpetuation of Lies...

Chevre

As you may have heard at some point today, dozens of people died in Gaza while storming aid trucks, Baruch dayan emet.

Within an hour, CBS was reporting that the IDF had killed over 100 Gazans who were just trying to get food. This was based entirely on the report from Hamas. Within a few hours, politicians were condemning Israel on the Congress floor for massacring innocent Gazans; France's Macron was saying that the aid convoys were "targeted by Israeli soldiers"; and Algeria proposed that the UN Security Council condemn and blame Israel for targetinf civilians and the "himanitarian aid".

The challenge is that the entire description propogated by Macron, the U.N., U.S.

politicians, and media outlets has been verified as a Hamas lie...and it was verified as false long before any of the reactions listed above.

So what actually happened? According to reports on the ground and confirmed by drone footage, hundreds of people stampeded the aid trucks; and there are questions as to whether even that is true or if they were motivated by Hamas to stampede and swarm the convoy. Israeli authorities tried to create safety and stop the riot. Footage from Israeli drones show what happened, that hundreds turned into thousands of people attacking the convoy, and that Israel tried to disperse the crowd. Israelis did not kill anyone, although apparently dozens of people did die from being stampeded on. Footage shows that the Israelis fired into the air, and so far, the footage shows that not one death happened because of Israel... which is still investigating the event.

But despite what the footage actually shows, media, the UN, and much of the world are using these deaths of Gazans by other Gazans as an excuse to blame Israel; condemn her; and Columbian President Petro even called it "genocide reminiscent of the Holocaust".

And the lies are being used to justify even more pressure that Israel should immediately have a cease fire and withdraw the IDF from Gaza. These lies are being said with a specific purpose: to put Israel in the position of either being even more hated by the world, or choosing to continue the mission to make sure that a repeat of October 7 (which Hamas has pledged to repeat "even a million times") never happens again.

I believe there are two statements we need to remember as Israel is attacked in this way.

Golda Meir famously said, "If we have to have a choice between being dead and pitied, and being alive with a bad image, we'd rather be alive and have the bad image."

The other statement was said to me by my good friend Bob Kilpatrick. Bob is a Christian minister and musician who has come to our temple's services and classes over the years, and some of you know him well. Bob said that he felt sorry. He felt sorry for Israel's enemies as God is always on Israel's side. His beautiful faith in the partnership of Israel with God is something that I dearly

wish all Jews had. History has shown us that God will always remember His covenant; and will do so now as well.

Lenin said that a "lie told often enough becomes the truth"; and Churchill is responsible for reminding us that "a lie travels halfway around the world before the truth has time to get its pants on".

When we hear of what seems intuitively wrong about Israel, pause to explore and find out the truth before saying anything against Israel. I'm not suggesting that Israel's behavior is perfect, but we also need to remember that it has constantly been referred to as the most ethical armed forces in the history of the world by military analysts.

Slander against a person is difficult to stop; and we all need to remember the intensity of the campaign of slander that is being waged against Israel on a daily basis.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 1, 2024

21st of Adar, 5784

March 1st 2024 at 7:00 am PST

Shabbat Shalom!

Chevre

With all the challenges of the past days, weeks, and months; I think we all need to remember a few things:

---Shabbat is a time for renewal and rejuvenation

---The soldiers in the **IDF** are the brothers and sisters of each and every one of us. They are fighting not just for **Israel**, but for all of us. While over 200 have now died in this war, we need to remember that over 10,000 have been seriously injured physically, and that doesn't count the many more who are emotionally and psychologically traumatized

---Those soldiers in **Israel** appreciate the support of Diaspora Jews more than many of us may realize

So to help enter into this Sabbath, here is a video from a group of **IDF soldiers** made for all of us



I hope to see you tonight at 7:30pm at services in our sanctuary; and may we all be blessed with a Sabbath of healing and joy

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 1, 2024

21st of Adar, 5784

March 2nd 2024 at 7:30 pm PST

Is a Truce Upcoming?

Chevre

On Sunday, mediators from the US, Egypt, and Qatar are expected to reconvene in Cairo to try to structure a hostage release/temporary truce deal. The obvious challenge is that it is not even clear yet if Israel or Hamas representatives will be there.

The other challenges to any sort of deal are the following:

- Israel is demanding a list of all hostages who are still alive before sitting down with anyone
- Israel is unwilling to agree to permanent truce. All polls demonstrate that over 80% of Israelis are not willing to do anything like that until all the hostages are released and Hamas is entirely destroyed.
- Hamas is insistent on only being willing to agree to a permanent truce, not a temporary one. This is especially ironic given that they have broken every truce they have made; that their charter calls for the "obliteration" of every Jew as well as prohibits any sort of peace negotiation except as a means to lull their infidel enemies to sleep so that Hamas can be victorious against them; and that the Hamas leadership, most of which are in Qatar, have repeatedly vowed that they will continue to attack Israel and vowed to repeat the events of October 7.
- Hamas is also insistent that they remain in power in Gaza, either by themselves or in conjunction with the Palestinian Authority, which has yet to even condemn October 7

Those are the large challenges, but there are many more including how many Arab terrorists would need to be released from Israeli prisons in exchange for Israeli hostages; how the hostages would be released (all at once, over the course of 4 months, etc); and how Hamas demands that they get unrestricted "aid", which we know from experience leads to their creation of tunnels, etc.

The U.S. keeps saying that there is a deal in place, although neither Hamas nor Israel has said anything remotely similar to that. For no apparent reason given that Ramadan is actually a time of war for Moslems, the mediators of the US, Qatar, and Egypt keep insisting that Israel cannot be allowed to fight during Ramadan. If you listen to people in the U.S., it would seem that a deal is very close to being struck. If you listen to people in Israel or through Arabic news sources, it would seem that we are very far away from that.

Something important to remember: a truce with Hamas is a tacit approval of what they did on October 7. Hamas leadership is very clear that what they have always wanted is to drive a wedge between Israel and the world, especially the U.S. They knew that Israel would react to October 7; knew that Israel's military would be victorious; but have been clear in their own speeches including this past week that their goal has always been to play the victim role and shift world opinion so far against Israel that Israel would be forced to let Hamas survive.

This has been their repeatedly stated goal. Their definition of a Hamas victory is to have damaged Israel's relationships worldwide, and to retain being in power so that they can do many more events like October 7. These are the goals that their leadership has repeated, and we should take them at their word.

We must always pray and act. Pray for a lasting peace, and act to make that happen. For that peace to ever happen, Hamas must be destroyed, for they are committed to the long term plan of the eradication of every Jew (not just the ones in Israel), as well as every non-extremist Muslim. One of the actions that you can do is to support political candidates who are both committed to supporting Israel and to stopping support of Islamic terror groups and their sponsors.

Am Echad...we are one people. We need to keep that in mind every day. Our brothers and sisters in Israel are hearing sirens every day, running to bomb shelters, and being threatened in every moment by the enemies of Israel. It is so easy to forget about what they are all going through while we live in our comfortable bubbles in Southern California...but we cannot allow ourselves to become disconnected to their pains and hopes; their fears and prayers. It is imperative that we keep Israel and the plight of her people in our consciousness every moment.

May we always be aware of the deep spiritual relationship that ties together the Jewish people; and know that God will always keep true the phrase Am Yisrael Chai...the people of Israel live

Chazak U'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 2, 2024

23rd of Adar, 5784

March 3rd 2024 at 10:53 am PST

In Seeking a Future, We Cannot Let Ourselves Forget the Truth

Chevre

On October 11th, I sent out an email to the community predicting that the world would rapidly forget the depraved horrors of October 7th, and replace them with images of Hamas as victims who should be pitied. I encouraged everyone to never forget the atrocities that were committed by Hamas... atrocities that they videotaped in pride: the raping and dismemberment of women; the beheadings of babies; the beheading of a man with a garden hoe; the many murders and kidnappings. I reminded us that while the world would probably start talking about all the Gazans who hate Hamas and are victims; Hamas was repeatedly elected as the leadership of Gaza by over 90% in every election since 2005, and the streets of Gaza were filled with tens of thousands of Gazans dancing on October 7... Gazans who were supposedly "not supportive of Hamas", yet were publicly celebrating the horrors of Hamas.

I made a detailed case of why we must view Hamas as a modern incarnation of Amalek, whom we are commanded to destroy completely. As importantly as anything, I begged that each one of us to not get lost in anger or vengeance, and to realize that like Amalek, we must utterly destroy Hamas... but that we should never take joy in that task, lest we lose our own humanity.

I received countless emails and phone calls after that email. Most were telling me that I was too kind, that we should never mourn any of the Gazans we need to kill, and that we should carpet bomb all of Gaza quickly. People were enraged and wanted vengeance; and I had long talks encouraging them not to get lost in a quest for vengeance. There were even some people who walked out of services because I preached that we cannot allow ourselves to feel joy in what must be done to Hamas.

But that was 5 months ago.

Now, we have had 5 months of the world media bombarding us about the

"victims of Gaza", the need for more aid to those "poor victims", and how abusive the IDF is for going into the residential areas of cities in Gaza. We are hearing repeated calls, including from Jews, that we should just stop the war before Ramadan out of respect for their holiday, despite the facts that they attacked on a Jewish holiday, and that Ramadan is actually an Islamic holiday of war. We are being blasted on all sides that Israel is to blame, and that Hamas and the people of Gaza just want peace. The world, United Nations, and even the U.S. are, as I predicted, focused on the "victims" of Gaza, not the horrors that they committed and have vowed to commit again. The world is blaming Israel, Netanyahu, and Jews everywhere for Hamas false flag operations such as bombing hospitals, stopping humanitarian aid, and killing civilians rather than looking at the evidence that it has been Hamas who actually do those things to their own people. More and more, the conversations I have with people are about "the day after", the "victims" in Gaza, the "evils" of Netanyahu who wants to "continue the war in Gaza just so he can stay in power"; and how Israel's response to Oct. 7 has been too severe. I am repeatedly told people's opinions about how Israel must stop it's originally stated mission, do whatever is necessary to get the hostages back (even agree to a permanent truce), and if Netanyahu agrees to all that, then we will have peace... which is really all the people of Gaza want.

If the people living in Gaza wanted peace, Hamas would not have been elected into power for almost 25 years. If they wanted peace, they would not have taken billions of dollars of aid and spent it making tunnels, rockets, and military facilities underground, they would have fed the people and created an infrastructure. Besides Hamas, if the people of Gaza wanted peace, they wouldn't have allowed Hamas to build those tunnels under their homes, schools, and hospitals... and then protected those tunnel entrances.

We must remain clear: 90% of the people living in Gaza are complicit with Hamas. It is sad, but true: the vast majority of those living in Gaza support the goal of destroying Israel. Hamas must be destroyed. Period. No one disagreed with that statement on October 8... and nothing has changed five months later.

And we must cry about having to do this act. We must allow ourselves to feel the pain of what must be done, and to mourn for all the souls that die... even the souls of the enemy who has vowed to destroy us, for they too were once innocent babies who chose to become evil.

Shortly after the war started I was interviewed on a Gen Z podcast called 180Shift about the attack and war. My feelings today are the same as they were 5 months ago:



We must finish the mission and entirely destroy Hamas, or there will be more events like Oct. 7. We must not succumb to the bludgeoning of the media and pressure of the world, but must remember the depravities done by Hamas, and their vows to repeat the day, God forbid. We must not surrender to our compassions for Gazans now in the same way that we should not have surrendered to our inherent rage at them five months ago.

We must vividly remember the past so that we can build an integrated and honest future of long term peace. We must keep ever present in our consciousness the horrors perpetrated by Hamas, the celebrations by the people of Gaza, and their promises to repeat the day. We must treat them like the Amaleks that they are, and destroy them completely and entirely. To do anything

less is a tacit approval of their depravities, kidnappings, and horrors as "reasonable" tactics in war. To blame Israel for anything in this war is to justify the actions of Hamas, who have made it clear that they don't care about civilians, holidays, or depravities, and even celebrate the horrors of war.

We must finish this mission and utterly destroy Hamas, or by their own words they will repeat the kidnappings, murders, and rapes. And while we destroy them, we must also mourn them so as not to our own humanity... but destroy them we must.

Evil does exist in the world, and Hamas, like Amalek before them, is evil. No matter how the media tries to portray them otherwise, they are pure evil. To paraphrase an old folk saying, "the greatest trick true evil has ever done is convincing people that it is a victim".

May we all remain as fully committed as we were on Oct. 8 to the destruction of Hamas, and may we always protect ourselves from being influenced by a media that seeks to portray evil as a victim.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 3, 2024

23rd of Adar, 5784

March 3rd 2024 at 9:00 pm PST

Truce? What truce?

Chevre

Qatar officials have let Israeli officials know that Hamas is unwilling to even provide a list of hostages that are still alive...a mandatory requirement for Israel. As a result, no Israeli representatives are heading to Cairo for negotiations as of right now, and there is no scheduled cease fire.

Israel is increasing strikes in Gaza in the last few hours, and it appears as if they are preparing to enter Rafah.

Minister Gallant made it clear that they "Israel will not end the war until Hamas is completely dismantled in Gaza".

At the same time, Sephardi Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef said that IDF soldiers in Gaza should celebrate the upcoming holiday of Purim; which commemorates the miraculous deliverance of the Jewish people from the Persian Empire in the 4th century BCE. When all the odds were against us then, God delivered us, and He will do so again in our time

Our temple will be having a pre-Purim celebration for Shabbat services in Friday night, March 15. There will be a costume contest (Musical Director Mat Gurman has promised to wear a kilt!), and a lot of fun with guest cantor Danny Rubenstein... so save the date and come celebrate Shabbat and the redemption that comes with Purim.

(And if you haven't bought tickets for the Hamentaschen Hurl fundraiser on March 17, you can buy them at <https://www.nersimcha.org/hamentaschen-hurl> and you may win one of the many prizes of art, vacations, and more)

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 3, 2024

24th of Adar, 5784

March 4th 2024 at 11:39 am PST

Status Quo; Pain, and Hope

Chevre

While we continue to watch the world (including the US) demand an immediate cease fire from Israel; while we read about the strides towards peace that are being made in discussions between the US, Qatar, and Egypt; while the media continues to say that a permanent truce will be forthcoming... the reality is that neither Israel nor Hamas are involved in those negotiations. Hamas refuses to talk until Israel commits to permanently leaving Gaza; and Israel wants a list of

what hostages are actually still alive...which Hamas will not provide. Preparations are being made for going into Rafah to remove the last known Gaza battalions; and the world keeps yelling that this is disrespectful to Islam to fight during their holiday month of Ramadan (despite the fact that Ramadan is a month of war, and they have attacked us on both Yom Kippur and Simchat Torah)

In other words... everything seems to be consistent. Hezbollah is attacking in the north, and Israel responds to each attack. The IDF is fighting in Gaza, and preparing for Rafah. And the world is making demands on Israel that would lead to the destruction of the nation, God forbid.

And if we are honest, it is hard to keep faith and hope as we see the world's hate for Jews. But faith and hope are choices...and we must choose them so as not to get lost in pain or depression.

So here is a little piece of history to give us hope today.

Today is the 24th day of Adar, a day that is the anniversary of some sad events in Jewish history. It is an anniversary of some Jewish massacres: 1147 by the Crusaders in Germany; 1243 again in Germany; the first organized Arab assault in Israel in 1886, when the Arabs surprise attacked the Jewish settlement of Petach Tikvah; and the 1918 massacre of Jews in Gluchor by Ukrainian mobs.

An anniversary day of horrible events, so where is the hope?

In the least likely of places. 19th century Russia.

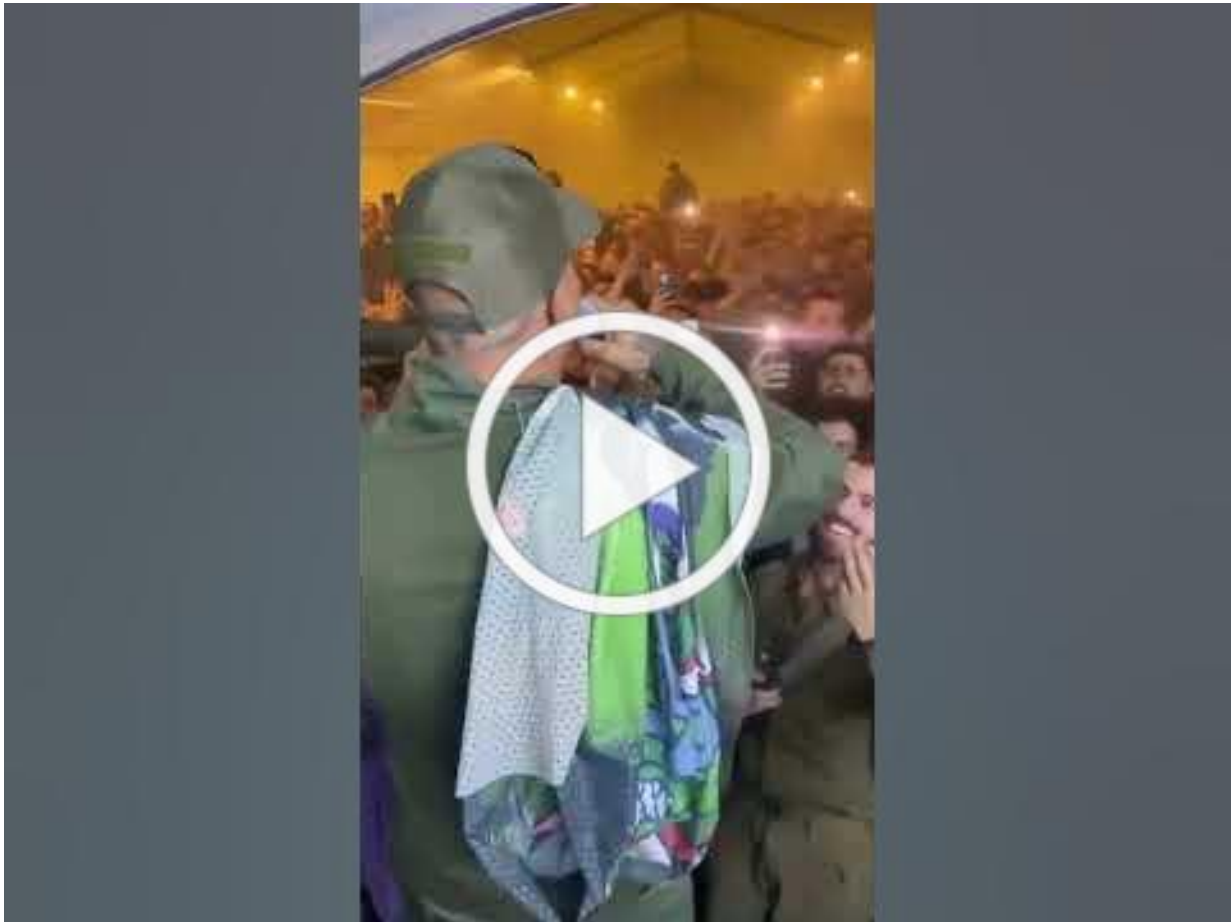
On this day in 1817, the Emperor of Russia, Alexander 1, declared that the blood libel is false. The blood libel refers to the idea that Jews are responsible for other people's deaths. Starting in 1144 in Norwich, England with the accusation that Jews use a child's blood to make matza; the blood libel is the perpetual lie that mutates for Jew haters... not just about the matza. The blaming of Jews for the deaths of Europeans for the Black Plague, the accusations that it is because of Jews that so many died in WWII, and the often repeated lies that Jews developed the Covid virus (yes, that was a popular myth of the last few years) are all manifestations of "blood libel".

But in 1817, during a time when anti-Semitism was institutionalized in much of the world; and in Russia, a traditional breeding ground for Jew hatred... a miracle happened. A Russian Emperor who had no direct connection with the Jewish people publicly declared that the blood libel was false: that blood is not used by Jews. No historian can say why Alexander made this decree, but it saved countless Jewish lives and was one of the first pro-Jewish pieces of law in Europe.

God can and does use anyone as his messenger, including a Russian Emperor. We need to remember this as we look around and see all the hate directed towards our people and Israel. When we least expect it, and from the most unlikely sources, God has and always will sustain the Jewish people.

History has proven this to be true. Our faith and hope are not blind, but are based in history and can be achieved today by simply remembering the many times God has saved us. As we teach on Passover, God will always redeem us from the Pharaoh of each generation. He has in the past, and we can be assured that he will now as well.

And to help us all keep that faith, here is a very short video of IDF soldiers singing their belief that the people of Israel live! That "The Holy One will Watch over us and protect our children"



Let us all keep that joyous faith and hope, and know that God can use anyone to help us, even a Russian Emperor

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 4, 2024

24th of Adar, 5784

March 5th 2024 at 12:14 am PST

The UN is Nothing if Not Consistent

Chevre

The United Nations had a report given by a UN team that just returned from a visit to Israel. They determined that there is conclusive evidence that Israeli women were raped, attacked, beaten, and killed on October 7 by Hamas.

But while that may seem like a slight victory, the report continued to attack Israel for "allegations" of "degrading Palestinians". The U.N showed again that even when they can't avoid dealing with the evils of Hamas, they find it necessary to make things up and accuse Israel.

The European Union has decided to reinstate the funding of UNRWA, the U.N. agency that is to have many Hamas and/or Hamas sympathizers, some of whom have been proven were involved in Oct. 7. Even after substantial proof that UNRWA fronts for Hamas, the E.U. will continue funding it.

Mark Twain famously said "The white man hates the black man; the black man hates the yellow man; the yellow man hates the red man: and everybody hates the Jews." We need only look towards the U.N., which has passed more resolutions against Israel than all other countries combined, and can't even condemn Hamas without also attacking Israel. We need only to look at the Jew-hating in Europe and the EU financial support of Hamas through UNRWA, and we see the prevalent Jew hatred.

But when we look at history, we see that in the same way we have survived the many enemies throughout the centuries, we will outlive these haters of all that is good... God will always provide for us.

May we always be open to receiving God's blessings; and to having faith in ourselves and in God's grace.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 5, 2024

25th of Adar, 5784

March 5th 2024 at 11:32 pm PST

The World vs. Israel

Chevre

In less than a week, the Islamic holiday of Ramadan will begin. As discussed

before, this is historically a holiday of war going all the way back to the Islamic prophet Mohammed initiating wars during this Islamic month.

The world would have us believe that Ramadan is a holy month of peace, similar to the holiday of Christmas or Easter. It is not...it is a time of war.

But in their ignorance, the world demands that Israel drop all arms during the holiday.

The world preaches that Israel is an "apartheid nation" that ignores the rights of its Moslem citizenry. They clamor to yell for Netanyahu's head, calling him an islamophobe and war monger.

But in their ignorance, the world ignores that the Al-Aqsa mosque is open for Moslems, yet forbidden for others... and Netanyahu and Israel have supported that and respect Islam for over 50 years regarding the Temple Mount. And while many of his cabinet advisors have suggested entirely closing the mosque during Ramadan; Netanyahu announced today that Israel will keep up the standards of past years in allowing Moslems to come worship.

The world believes that Israel is an aggressor and "colonialist"

But in their ignorance of history, they world ignores the fact that there has been a continuous Jewish presence in Israel for over 3000 years (and they ignore that there has never in history been a "palestine"). In their ignorance of current events, the world turns a blind eye to the countless rockets that have been launched into the north of Israel. They close their eyes to the many terrorist attacks that happen in a daily basis in Israel.

The world claims to support women's rights. They claim that Israel is the great perpetrator of persecution.

And again, the world's ignorance is shown as they refuse to see that women are empowered in Israel, but would be forced to live under Sharia law in any other Muslim region, including their proposed Palestine.

The world says that Israel is responsible for the horrific attacks by Hamas on Oct. 7. The world says that Gazans have been suffering and Oct. 7 was a legitimate

action and wasn't really that bad.

But Israel has shown the world the false nature of these claims. Israel has shown miles of terror tunnels; and countless hours of footage produced by Hamas that show atrocity after atrocity being committed proudly by Hamas.

Israel has duly elected government officials and an elected Prime Minister; and yet the United States had meetings with an Israeli government official who is not representing Israel... but whom they want to take Netanyahu's place.

Rabbi Hillel said, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? If not now, when?"

The world has demonstrated they will not be "for Israel". We must all manifest Hillel's statement and be for the Jewish people and Israel... for no one else will be. We must be aware of the world, including those in Gaza. If we ignore all others, we again fail in Hillel's instruction.

And if not now, when? The time has come when ALL Jews must put aside their politics, and come together in unconditionally supporting Israel.

The world demonstrates day after day how little they care about us. Let us care about each other. Now and always.

Am Echad... One People. We must hold on to that truth and never let the phrase ever become just empty words.

Chazak U'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 5, 2024

26th of Adar, 5784

March 6th 2024 at 11:16 am PST

Specific Targets and Saving Lives

Chevre

The IDF and Shin Bet keep moving forward with targeted strikes in Gaza. At about 10am PST, a strike took out another Hamas commander, Aladini, who was a major player in planning Oct. 7, and was the commander of the Gaza central area since 2008.

While the world accuses us of randomly killing civilians, there is no army in the history of the world that is so careful about lives, and targets so specifically. This is not because of world opinion or pressure, but because of Jewish values.

Judaism place the utmost value on each single life. We are taught that since God created humanity out of a single human being, to save a single life is equivalent to saving an entire world. And since Israel doesn't want to ever destroy potential worlds, Israel is and has always been extremely careful to do everything possible to avoid needless deaths. This is also part of the reason that Israel has consistently demonstrated that they would trade land for lasting peace: we want to avoid killing anyone if at all possible.

May the time not be distant when we have lasting peace with our neighbors, and when we can spend our energy saving lives, and worlds

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 6, 2024

26th of Adar, 5784

March 7th 2024 at 6:00 am PST

Today Marks the Complete Fall and Failure of the ADL - And Yes, This Directly Affects Israel

Chevre

I recognize that this is a long email, but the decline of one of the great Jewish organizations of the 20th century deserves details.

I have written numerous articles over the past five years about the decline and fall of the Anti Defamation League. The ADL was one of the charities that I, and

my parents and grandparents before me, always gave charity to. It was the organization that defended Jews when no one else would.

The decline began when the ADL broke off from its sponsoring organization Bnai Brith in 2009. Bnai Brith had been the ethical anchor for the organization since its inception in 1913. Since that 2009 break, under Abe Foxman, and then subsequently under the leadership of Jonathan Greenblatt, the ADL has fallen away from championing Jews and become a defacto political action organization for "progressive" political causes: no longer being about Jews, but changing its motto from "stopping the defamation of the Jewish people: to its current tagline of "Fighting Hate For Good".

Since its break from Bnai Brith, the ADL has partnered with pro-Palestinian organization CAIR; honored anti-Semite Al Sharpton; partnered with and helped raise funds for BLM (including publishing a 2020 document specifically stating that BLM is not anti-semitic and any statements saying that it is are "misinformation"); developed a "hit list" of politicians and public figures that it actively sought to destroy; promoted abortion without limits and transgender agendas; and even raised money and fought against anti-BDS legislation. For almost 100 years they neither endorsed nor condemned any political candidates, keeping above the political fray. The ADL took care of Jewish concerns, and was truly non-partisan... but during the last years of Abe Foxman's leadership that changed. Under Greenblatt it became an organization about politics first, fundraising second (the ADL has yearly revenue of over 100 million dollars, and Greenblatt has a salary 1.2 million plus benefits), followed in a distant third by Jews and then Israel.

Two recent examples of the ADL changes can be found 4 months ago, and again today... and both have to do with Israel. On November 5, as most of us remember, Paul Kessler died as a result of a conflict at a pro-Palestinian rally. Three hours after his death, I was on the phone with the Chief of Police, who was telling me the details, and asking me to encourage people to wait for them to do their investigation. They couldn't identify if it was manslaughter, an accident, who had attacked him, etc.; and the Chief was asking that people stay calm while the investigation proceeded so as not to make the city into a bonfire. At the exact same time I was on the phone with the Chief, I received an email from Greenblatt and the ADL saying that "a Jewish man was murdered in Westlake" and using the tragedy as a fundraising tool for the ADL. The ADL didn't know or

care about the actual facts, never helped with any of the local fallout in our community, and only wanted to turn a tragedy into funds for their coffers (similar emails were sent out by the ADL in October, using the horrors of Hamas as a fundraising tool for the ADL). The ADL wasn't concerned with our local Jewish community, the Kessler family, the realities of the conflict being about Israel and the war, or anything other than how the ADL could benefit from this tragedy.

On Wednesday, the ADL hammered in the final nail of the coffin of a Jewish organization, and proudly identified themselves as purely political... and unconcerned with Israel, the desires of the Israeli people, or half of the Jews in America.

The ADL is in the midst of their large conference in New York this week, and on Wednesday, Emeritus Director Abe Foxman spoke. While he did say a few things about the importance of Israel and the rise of American anti-Semitism, the majority of his talk sounded like a stump speech for President Biden. He blamed American anti-Semitism on President Trump. He blamed any challenges between the US and Israel on Netanyahu. And he could not praise Biden enough, saying "we were very lucky to have Joe Biden as President of the United States", and that "Biden had a moral compass and stood up in a magnificent way".

Whether we agree or disagree with Foxman's sentiments is inconsequential, the point is that this kind of support for one political side and degradation of another side is antithetical to both Jewish tradition and the history of the ADL. Moreover Foxman, like Greenblatt, have identified conservatives, who are roughly half of this nation, as enemies of the ADL, and by extension, enemies of all Jews.

How can the ADL ever help all Jews if they have already identified half of them as "enemies"? If there is a national crisis in the future for all American Jews, how can the ADL ever hope to work well with public officials if it becomes a conservative government that the ADL previously identified as enemies?

And what is the ADL doing interjecting itself into Israeli politics and commenting on its leadership? How does doing that help Judaism, American Jews, or Israel?

There was a time when the ADL transcended politics in favor of supporting Jews and Judaism. Now with its new motto, consistent actions of the last decade, and

sealed with Foxman's speech, this once prestigious defender of all Jews' rights has become nothing more than another political action committee for only one half of the Jewish population.

Perhaps we should say Kaddish for the death of a once great Jewish organization that used to be an ally of all Jews, no matter their political affiliations in either the US or Israel. But there is also a lesson for all of us from the ADL's behavior:

Whether we agree or disagree with any decision or action of the Israeli government, we must never disparage Israel. For when we do, the Jew haters of the world point to that action and use it against Israel and all Jews. We must emulate what the ADL used to be, and focus on fighting anti-Semitism specifically... for if we don't, no one will. And we must do what the new ADL has refused to do: we must accept and embrace Jews of all political beliefs, especially those we disagree with...and remember that our ultimate political guide is not the Democratic or Republican party platforms, but the Torah.

May we soon see another pro-Jewish organization in the public arena that is not attached to a political party, but attached to protecting the Jewish people, Judaism, and Israel.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 6, 2024

27th of Adar, 5784

March 8th 2024 at 8:09 am PST

What is War, and How Are We to Wage It?

Chevre

There is an entire portion in the Torah that begins "when you go to war" (Ki Teitzei, Deut. 21:10)... not "if", but "when" We are given specific rules about what we can and cannot do throughout the Torah, Talmud, and later texts. But in today's world, the lines of "war" are not as clear. We're clearly in the midst of war, but with whom? How should we act? These are not easy questions, and

worth looking at as we are beginning our sixth month of war in Israel.

Some things are clear. We are to destroy Amalek completely. If we experience perpetrators on the weak, sick, old, young... we can define that perpetration (both externally as a physical enemy and internally as addiction) as Amalek; and it must not be negotiated with, but utterly destroyed. Given the events of Oct. 7, it is clear that Hamas is a modern Amalek and must be destroyed. That example is pretty self-evident.

When at war, we are to be compassionate as well with enemies who are not Amaleks. The Torah teaches how we are to treat people other than Amalek, and the underlying concept is that our goal in war is not victory per se, but lasting peace.

This is one of the reasons that many of us were hesitant to believe that any IDF soldiers fired in civilians last week who were trying to aid from convoy trucks in Gaza. Our suspicions have now been totally confirmed thanks to footage from multiple drones. The IDF never fired at any person heading to the trucks. Footage shows that the only shots fired by Israel were at people who were attacking the soldiers: not heading towards the convoy at all, but violently charging the soldiers. Again, the reports of Hamas were lies, and proven to be so by now released drone footage.

What about Hezbollah? Like Hamas, they have vowed to destroy Israel and obliterate all Jews in the worldwide caliphate they seek to create. They send rockets almost daily into northern Israel, and displaced almost 100,000 Israelis from their homes. But despite their verbal vows, they have not enacted "Amalek-type" behavior as Hamas did on Oct. 7. They attack haphazardly, but not with the conscious intent of specifically targeting children and the weak. Based on the conflict in the north, it is the hope that a miracle can happen, and that a lasting peace can be created without needing their complete destruction. Unlike Hamas, they have not crossed the Rubicon, and it is still the hope and prayer that a lasting peace can be structured with them.

While the news was filled today with the State of the Union speech, there was also a small bit of news that radically affects Israel, and potentially the US/Israel relationship. Although any student of history or geo-politics realizes that a "two state solution" is a philosophical and practical impossibility, the President made

it clear in his speech that this is his intention. He even went as far to say that the US will be building a port in Gaza. But to build a port or base in a foreign country without permission is actually considered an act of war. By that accepted definition, Biden declared an intention of a war act against Israel... Gaza is recognized as part of Israel even by the UN, so wouldn't building a port or base there without Israel's permission be an act of war? And is it the intention of the U.S. to build and man a port on foreign soil? And for how long? These are questions that many Israelis and international political scientists have been discussing since President Biden made the announcement of his intended port today.

But the greatest war is always our individual war with our own "yetzer hara"...our personal "evil inclination". We must do what must be done, but we must never take joy in it. We must destroy Hamas, but feel the sadness of having to kill anyone...even the Hamas terrorists who have surrendered their own souls in their quest for a caliphate. And at the same time, we need to remember that the yetzer hara can be manifest just as easily as a desire for mercy when there should be none. Amalek must be destroyed, even though doing that is painful.

We must remember that our greatest ally in any war; both with an external enemy or with our inner yetzer hara, is always God. He brings us to victory over external enemies as well as the ally that allows us to rid ourselves of things like addictions, evil behavior, or any problem in our lives both individually and collectively.

As these wars continue, may we all find within them the opportunity to deepen our relationship with God and each other.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 8, 2024

28th of Adar, 5784

March 9th 2024 at 10:45 pm PST

Be Prepared

Chevre

Israel has attacked a tower in Rafah (after first giving them notice) in what seems to be the beginnings of going into Rafah to remove Hamas strongholds. Given that Hamas has made it clear that they have never had any real interest in even giving Israel information about hostages... even so much as documenting who is still alive, it is doubtful that there will be even a short cease fire in the immediate future. And Israel has said that it would be going into Rafah to remove remaining Hamas bases by March 10, so there is every expectation that unless something changes in the next 24 hours, they will be doing so.

This will undoubtedly generate more pro-Hamas demonstrations as well as increased anti-Semitism worldwide. As Ramadan, an historical month of war for Moslems (going all the way back to Mohammed himself) begins on Sunday evening, violence in the forms of demonstrations, as well as random acts of Jew hatred will probably intensify over the coming month.

This is not being said to inspire fear in anyone, God forbid; for as Rebbe Nachman taught, "All the world is a narrow bridge, and above all is to not be afraid." But I do suggest that if/when the attacks increase in Rafah, everyone please be aware of your surroundings; and stay away from any location that is having a pro-Palestinian event.

As most of you know, we have armed security at every Temple Ner Simcha event, so temple events are actually one of the safest places any of us can be.

If you encounter any confrontations, please just leave the location and call the authorities. You can also call me on my cel phone at any time of the day or night if needed: **310 980-5189**.

As Jews, we have encountered many worse situations, and still we are here. But we need to remember that there are two things that have always kept us safe. Heartfelt prayer is powerful, and I enjoin everyone to open your hearts and have honest dialogue with God. Pray for the safe return of whatever hostages may still be alive. Pray for the safety of Israel, her people, and her land. And pray for a lasting peace in our time.

Besides prayer, we have survived because of "kahal"... "community". Rabbi Hillel

taught "Do not separate yourself from the community," Connect with friends, family, and the temple community to find strength and comfort. We have been living under the shadow of war and hate for over 5 months, and we all need to make it a point to open our hearts and spirits with each other.

And always remember Am Yisrael Chai... the people of Israel live. To help remind us all of that, here is a brief video of IDF soldiers singing Rebbe Nachman's words that we should never be afraid:



Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 9, 2024

30th of Adar, 5784

March 10th 2024 at 1:55 am PST

Assorted News About Israel

Chevre

While war is intensifying on all fronts in Israel, other news is also happening in the Holy Land that we should all be aware of. These little pieces shape the consciousness of our brothers and sisters in Israel, and are each part of a larger picture in this fight for our survival.

---Canada and Sweden have recommitted funding the UNRWA, despite the massive amounts of proof that this agency has been actively helping Hamas, and some UNRWA staff were involved in planning and executing Oct. 7

---The Prime Minister of Spain has said that he is recommending to the Spanish Parliament that they officially recognize a Palestinian state. Doing so, God forbid, will take this war to a significantly more intense level, and damage Israel in many major ways.

---Mossad has confirmed that Hamas has been stockpiling all "humanitarian aid" for their leaders for Ramadan; letting their people starve while they prepare for a longer siege

---Chief Sephardic Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef has warned that many ultra-Orthodox will leave Israel if they are compelled to serve in the army. His comments were clear, and reflect his theology (also the traditional theology of Jews for centuries when they are at war), that these observant Jews are the foundation of the war effort. He said, "All these secular people don't understand that without kollels and yeshivas, the army would not be successful. The soldiers only succeed thanks to those learning Torah."

---Turkish President Erdogan publicly announced that Turkey "firmly backs" Hamas.

Not shockingly, we see the world turn against Jews at every opportunity. We need to all be conscious of this, both with regard to Israel and here in our own neighborhoods.

I have said for many years that the time was coming when we would each have to determine if we are Americans who happen to be Jewish, or Jews who live in America. And that however we might define ourselves, we would need to recognize that the majority of non Jews would view us as outsiders...as Jews living in America.

I pray that I am wrong in that statement, and that we can continue to be integrated into a society that treasures the value of the Jewish people.

Am Echad....we are all one people. May we always remember that truth, especially in challenging times.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 10, 2024

30th of Adar, 5784

March 11th 2024 at 6:00 am PDT

And The Winner Is... Hamas & Red Ribbons

Chevre

For those of you who don't yet know, the Academy Awards showed exactly how much the world hates Jews. The Academy showed itself to be composed of Jew haters, self hating Jews, and those too cowardly to stand up against the crowd and stand for Israel.

The highlight for the anti-Semites was when the winners of the best documentary, represented by Jonathan Glazer, spoke for his partners and said, "we stand here as men who refute our Jewishness in a holocaust being hijacked by an occupation". Clearly, they refuted being Jewish long ago, and are painfully unaware of the irony of the statement: had they been in one of the areas attacked by Hamas, they would now all be dead or hostages. And Glazer seems oblivious to the fact that close to 90% of Gazans still support the horrors of October 7 and the charter of Hamas, which calls for the "obliteration" of all Jews, as well as anyone who doesn't support their fanatical brand of Islam. But hey, it's the Oscars, and a time for film people to show their narcissism and ignorance.

In 1975, Vanessa Redgrave used her acceptance speech to promote Palestine, and was loudly booed by the audience. This year, the crowd erupted with applause as Glazer condemned Israel and drew a moral equivalency between Israel and Hamas. Oblivious to the irony that these celebrities couldn't get to the Dolby Theater because of pro-Hamas supporters, hundreds of actors and filmmakers wore ribbons with red hands in a show of support for Hamas. The history of the ribbon with a red hand is undoubtedly lost on these actors.

In 2000, two Israelis accidentally entered Ramallah, and were arrested by Palestinian authorities. A group broke into the police station, lynched the Israelis, and then put their bloody hands up on the window to show the crowd below. Since then, that symbol has been used for glorify the murder of Jews worldwide.

Hundreds of ribbons with red hands were worn at the Oscars. And apparently, there was not one yellow ribbon of support for the 134 hostages. Not one public supporter of people who have been kidnapped for over five months, brutalized, repeatedly raped (and if they are younger women, probably now pregnant), or dead. Moreover, most of the films nominated are prohibited by Sharia law; and the clothing, sexual choices, and values of these actors would result in their beheadings in a Hamas controlled world. Israel is the only country in the region where they are welcomed, and the only country they condemn.

Maybe these actors think that if they were kidnapped by Hamas, they could just ask for another take and film it again.

There is a statement I recently heard that is appropriate for Mr. Glazer, who has “refuted “ his Jewishness: “Those who say they are ashamed to be Jewish should take comfort in knowing that we, too, are ashamed they are Jewish.”

And so the world watched the Oscars, and Hamas proudly looked on as Hollywood denigrated Israel and showed support for the modern incarnation of Amalek... giving Hamas even more confidence that if they just hold on without surrendering to Israel, the world will create and support a state of Palestine that is devoted the destruction of Israel and every Jew.

The founders of the film business: Mayer, Zukor, the Warner brothers et al must be turning over in their graves.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michsel Barclay

March 11, 2024

Rosh Chodesh Adar II, 5784

March 11th 2024 at 7:03 pm PDT

Today

Chevre

As the war continues, and Hezbollah and Israel exchange rockets (thank God ours are landing and theirs are not), it is worth looking at today in our history

Today is the anniversary of the the striking of the 9th plague of darkness upon the Egyptians in 1476 BCE. The darkness was so thick that "no man saw his fellow and no man could move from his place". (Ex. 10:23) It was all encompassing... but we must remember that it was also the preface for the upcoming redemption of the Jewish people with Passover and the exodus.

We too are all now faced with what seems like an all encompassing darkness. It seems the world has abandoned us in favor of supporting the evil of Hamas. Even the Academy Awards embraced the darkness of supporting Hamas with red hand ribbons, a symbol from 2000 that symbolizes the lynching of two Israelis in Ramallah almost 24 years ago. As has happened all too often in the world's history, people have acted like sheep following a shepherd committed to evil. But like our ancestors almost 3500 years ago, we shall soon see the light of redemption for the Jewish people.

I know how hard it is to have faith... to believe that this darkness will pass and Israel and the Jewish people will be safe. But history has shown us repeatedly that this is exactly what will happen. On the other side of the wilderness is the promised land; and from this darkness we must consciously choose faith... from the paralysis of darkness God, in combination with our own actions, will bring us to peace and success.

Part of the action that we must do is to stay together as a community. So...

I am personally inviting each of you to come celebrate Shabbat this Friday, March 15 at 730pm (yes, it will also be on youtube, but that wont be nearly as much fun). This is a VERY special Shabbat for our community. Why?

In honor of the upcoming holiday of Purim, we will be having a COSTUME SHABBAT! Come in your favorite costume (yes there will be prizes for best

costume) and celebrate the Sabbath, and as a special bonus...

Musical Director Mat Gurman will be wearing his Scottish kilt! He has been threatening for months to wear it to services, and it will finally happen this Friday

So have faith that the darkness will pass; connect with others who are going through the same feelings as the war continues... and celebrate Shabbat with Mat and his kilt!

...and always have faith and action.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 11, 2024

1st of Adar, 5784

March 13th 2024 at 12:47 am PDT

War and Leaks

Chevre

The IDF released information today that they have hit more than 4500 Hezbollah military targets since the start of the war, including over 100 on Tuesday. The Iran backed terror group has been attacking Israel on an almost daily basis since Oct. 8. And yet, the world doesn't consider this a "war".

Leaked rumors abound that Qatar and Egypt have told Hamas to go back to negotiating for hostage releases, and threatening that if not, Qatar will exile the billionaire Hamas leaders that are in Qatar. At the same time, a "very senior" official has accused the U.S. of trying to supplant the current Israeli government and put a government into Israel that would be more responsive to US demands, including pressuring Israel to cease fire.

In multiple conversations today/tonight with Israelis, it seems that our brothers and sisters there are concerned that external world pressure may prevent the

war cabinet from making sure the mission is finished. This comes at the same time that Biden is making veiled threats to Israel that he might decide to stop giving military aid to Israel; and as a US intelligence report warned that Israel may have to deal with Hamas for "years to come"

A lasting Hamas is an invitation for another Oct 7, God forbid. It is why the mission since Oct 7 has been and remains clear.

It is sad how many American Jews have placed the war behind them because of their own weariness. We cannot let that happen, and must always remember the pain that we all experienced and felt when we heard of the depravities of Oct. 7. We all live in a bubble here, but must always be cognizant of the war, with our people fighting for our very survival.

And make no mistake, this is a war for Israel's survival: against the enemies who attacked on Oct 7 as well as the world's non military attacks on Israel.

And it is our job and blessing as Diaspora Jews to constantly defend and support Israel from here.... with our money, time, efforts, and counteracting the constant barrage of anti-Israel propaganda that is dispersed here in America. If nothing else, when someone says a fallcy about Israel, each of us can at least take the time to help them learn about the history and the realities in the Holy Land.

I challenge everyong to do something good for Israel today: make a finansial donation to an Israeli cause; expose an anti-Semitic lie; or at the very least, say an extra prayer for Israel, her land, and her people today.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 13, 2024

3rd of Adar, 5784

March 14th 2024 at 2:00 am PDT

Rafah, Help, and a Personal Apology

Chevre

It seems clear that Israel will be going harder into Rafah given that the US is now saying that it "may support a limited op", and just days ago they were clear that any IDF op would be a red line. Sec. of State Blinken however said that the highest priority in a Rafah op for Israel must be "protecting Rafah citizens". While that is important to Israel, our highest priority is to complete the mission with as few injuries or, God forbid, more deaths to IDF soldiers.

I'm going to take a few words to talk about here at home, and I ask that you read it fully until the end, as this includes a personal confession. We have a special pre-Purim costume party Shabbat this Friday, so come in costume to services. And on this Sunday, March 17, we have our annual Hamentaschen Hurl fundraiser for the temple.

If you don't know, this is an annual fundraiser where everyone purchases squares on a large grid on a field, and if the hamentaschen lands on your square you win a prize, such as a vacation, art, or jewelry (one of the big prizes is a Tag Heuer ladies watch). You don't need to be present to win, but you do need to register at: NerSimcha.org/Hamentaschen-Hurl

I am asking you personally to buy some squares, \$20 per square or 6 for \$100. Most of you know that our synagogue has no dues or mandatory costs for any program, including High Holidays, Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, etc. But you may not realize exactly what that means...

Temple finances are often challenging around spring time, but usually I am able to reach out to people personally and different congregants step up and get us through to the High Holidays.

But this year, I have been past my personal limits. I apologize to each and all of you, but between the war and raising money for soldiers and hospitals; and keeping up to date daily, making calls, and writing, as well as being a father to teenagers, I have extended myself too far (so my wife tells me). I have not been reaching out to people to help the finances of the synagogue.

I am truly sorry that I haven't been able to help this year as much as in the past.

So I am asking each of you for the personal favor of helping out the temple by supporting this fundraiser on Sunday. If everyone reading this bought a package

of 6 tickets, we would have our budget to get to High Holidays, and I know many of you cannot afford even that \$100 in these economic times. But if you can help, I ask that you do. Although we will never charge dues, etc. as long as I am the Rabbi; we do have a lot of costs including rent, insurance, utilities, all the High Holidays at the Canyon Club costs, and 7 staff. I hope you can help make up for what I did not accomplish financially for the temple over the last 6 months by going to: NerSimcha.org/Hamentaschen-Hurl

Our synagogue has always survived and grown through a combination of faith and action. Israel has always survived and thrived through that same powerful combination.

And with God's help, Israel and the people of Israel will always survive and be sustained through our faith and action together.

Am Yisrael Chai

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 14, 2024

4th of Adar, 5784

March 15, 2024 at 12:12 am PST

Today's Israel News is in America

Chevre

Thursday's news in Israel was filled with news from the United States that is sad and scary for both Israel and American Jews.

Senator Chuck Schumer gave a speech on the Senate floor that was condemned by both Republicans and Democrats. In this speech he called for new elections in Israel, after saying that Netanyahu no longer serves Israel best.

This is offensive on so many levels that both sides of the aisle came down on Schumer, and even the White House tried to distance itself, saying the remarks were Schumer's and not the President's. Besides being a call for foreign election interference, it was a thinly veiled threat designed to get Israelis to abandon Bibi. In his speech, he also pushed for a 2 state solution; ignored much of the evils of Hamas, and promoted himself as the most important Jew in Washington.

His speech is sad, especially since for much of his career he advertised that he would always be the guardian of Israel ("shomer" means guardian). But once the anti-Semitic wing started getting more influence in the New York Democratic Party a few years ago, Schumer left supporting Israel in favor of pandering to the party, and has never looked back, as evidenced by his words today.

As the Senator has demonstrated, it is easy to lose our values in the midst of the chaos of trying to reach and hold on to our "goals" (which can easily become false idols) of success, wealth, power, etc. In many ways, this is part of the teaching of the upcoming holiday of Purim.

On Purim we remember how easy it is to lose our deeper values and get lost. To become "drunk"... on power, money, alcohol, or anything that takes us away from who we really are. In the overstimulated world where every moment is filled with sensory input, it is all too easy to lose ourselves and become part of the drunken noise of the world.

And we can't let that happen, especially in the middle of a war against an evil so deep that it could perform the horrors of October 7.

So as we approach Purim, please take a few minutes each day to be quiet within yourself...disconnected from the phones or electronics...from the news or your business... This is what can help protect each of our souls, and prevent us from losing ourselves in the noise of the world.

As we approach Purim, while also in the midst of a war and abandoned by the world, including the United States; I pray we all take the time to keep ourselves centered, awake, and consciously, fully, and unconditionally

committed to the support of Israel, Jews, Judaism, and God.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 15, 2024

5th of Adar II, 5784

December 18th 2024 at 2:33 pm PST

Rifts Widen in a Dangerous Time

Chevre

Next Saturday night, Jews around the world begin the celebration of Purim (it continues throughout the next day around the world, and the day after in Israel); which includes all sorts of ritualistic practices as we publicly read the biblical Book of Esther. But today is St. Patrick's Day, and it is a good opportunity to look at these two cultures and these holidays that are filled with both fun as well as deeper, hidden meanings.

Purim is based on the story of Esther, Mordecai, Haman, and the court of Ahashuerus, the king of the Persian empire in the 5th century B.C.E. The evil minister Haman seeks to destroy the Jewish people, who are saved by God through the efforts of Mordecai and Esther. We celebrate the holiday by reading the entire Scroll of Esther, dressing in costumes, playing with groggers (loud noise makers that spin from the bottom), and most notably, getting so drunk that we cannot tell the difference between the phrase "blessed be Mordecai" and "cursed be Haman".

St. Patrick's Day commemorates Saint Patrick, a fifth century Christian missionary and bishop, known as "the Apostle of Ireland". Credited with converting much of the Irish pagan population to Christianity, he was never officially canonized as he lived prior to the current laws of the Catholic Church, but is venerated as a Saint in the Catholic, Anglican, Eastern Orthodox, and

Lutheran Churches. Captured by pirates, he was taken from his home in Britain and sold into slavery in Ireland. He escaped slavery only to return to Ireland and convert thousands of pagans there to Christianity.

So what are the Jewish connections with this man and the holiday honoring him?

Let's start with the food (don't we always?). It has become traditional to eat corned beef and cabbage on this holiday. The cabbage makes sense as it was the cheapest vegetable the new Irish immigrants could afford. But the corned beef is actually because of kosher butchers. In Ireland, most people ate salted pork, but bacon was too expensive in America. On the Lower East Side of New York, where many Irish immigrants came to and Jewish immigrants already resided, the new Irish Americans found a meat from the front of the cow called brisket. The kosher butchers catered to a poor Jewish population, and the Irish found that this brisket, when salted and slow cooked with potatoes, made a delicious and filling meal. Thanks to the kosher butchers of the 19th century, thousands of pubs today serve this famous "Irish" dish.

There are many similarities and overlapping between the Jewish and Irish cultures. Both spoken languages of Gaelic and Yiddish were supplanted by English, and both traditional languages have become almost lost. Irish folk music and klezmer are nearly identical musically (they have different rhythms), and the great Irish singer Susan McKeown has recorded with the Grammy winning band The Klezmatics, whose violinist Lisa Gutkin started her career as an Irish fiddler. William Annyes, a Jew, was a mayor in Cork County way back in 1555 (although Dublin did not have a Jewish mayor until Robert Briscoe in 1956). There are so many parallels between the cultures that Thomas Cahill, the former Director of Religious Publishing at Doubleday, credits the development of Western civilization to these two cultures. (I highly recommend both his books "How the Irish Saved Civilization" and "The Gifts of the Jews: How a Tribe of Desert Nomads Changed the Way Everyone Thinks and Feels".)

While it is typical to get drunk on St. Patrick's Day, it is not a religious obligation nor does it have the same meaning as the drunkenness of Purim. Scholars agree that the first example of this behavior was probably at a St. Patrick's Day parade in Boston in 1737, which was duplicated in New York 25 years later. As Patrick died on March 17, this memorial to him occurs in the middle of Lent, when Catholics are forbidden from imbibing alcohol. This "feast" day celebrating

Patrick became a one day reprieve from the austerity of Lent, and like Mardi Gras and Fat Tuesday became a day of excess in contradiction to the Lent prohibitions.

While Purim celebrates the miracle of deliverance from Haman's proposed slaughtering of the Jews, St. Patrick's Day commemorates the miracles attributed to Patrick. The great miracle he accomplished was turning pagans towards a worship of God and Jesus. But he is also credited with driving all snakes off the island of Ireland. (Most scholars agree that there were probably no snakes in Ireland by Patrick's time, but folk myths still give him the credit.) Both holidays revolve around people being saved: the Irish from paganism (and possibly snakes), and the Jews from institutionalized slaughter.

It is insightful to recognize how both Purim and St. Patrick's Day incorporate simple symbols to convey deeper teachings. The excess of Purim is to remind us that anyone can become excessive at any time, and we should always be cautious and conscious of that truth. It is partly because of this that we are taught in Midrash Mishlei (pre-11th century) that "all holidays will be annulled in the world to come except Purim". Even after the Messiah comes, it will be possible to be excessive. St. Patrick's Day's drunkenness is also a reminder in the middle of the Lenten season to be conscious of stepping outside the appropriate boundaries. By embracing the opposite, the reveling on March 17 reminds Catholics that they need to be more solemn during Lent, and appreciate the sacrifices their savior made. In both holidays, we embrace our "shadow" (to use Jung's terminology) in order to appreciate better what is right and righteous.

Both holidays also hide teachings in plain sight through the use of symbols. The three leafed shamrock was used by Patrick to teach the Irish about the Holy Trinity. The three separate leaves are part of the same single leaf, and the shamrock was and still is a useful tool to understand the theology of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in a simple way. Similarly, the loud grogger noisemakers hold a hidden teaching. The miracle of Purim only occurs after the people fast and pray: it is our effort that sparks God to save us. The grogger's handle is on the bottom. It is a reminder that the effort must come from below in order for God above to deliver us. (This is in contradiction to the dreidel of Hanukkah, a toy which is spun from the top as the miracle of Hanukkah was prompted not through our efforts but through God's grace.)

But at the root of both holidays is the teaching that God has and always will bless us with miracles. Even when things seem dark and hopeless, God can and will always redeem us from evil. Even in the darkness of external attacks from the evils of Hamas, and the internal attacks from U.S. politicians who are more concerned with getting votes in Michigan than with defending righteousness; the examples of St. Patrick and Purim remind us to choose faith in God, and know that faith and action will lead to success against all evil.

There is a modern Purim story that illustrates this lesson. Joseph Stalin had murdered 20 million of his own people, and after the war in 1947 took his hatred for Jews to a more aggressive stance. He started targeting Jewish leaders and had plans to kill the 2-4 million Jews left in Russia. In 2003 documents were discovered that proved Stalin had commissioned four concentration camps to be built in Siberia and the Arctic north for the Jews. The expulsion would take place on March 6, just a few days after Purim which was March 1 of that year.

On Purim, Rabbi Yitzhak Zilber read the Scroll of Esther with the other Jews with him in Siberia. Another prisoner present attacked the Rabbi. "Where is your God now?", he asked. "Hitler finished six million of us and here they are about to be done with another three. Do you not see the trains and barracks that have already been built for this purpose?" Rabbi Zilber responded, "True, our situation is difficult, but don't be so quick to eulogize us. Haman also sent orders to 127 provinces. God will yet help. Stalin is a mere mortal...no one can know what will be with him in a half hour."

That night, just thirty minutes after Rabbi Zilber's spoke his words, Joseph Stalin collapsed in a stroke, which led to his death on March 5. The Russian Jews had been saved from a Haman who wished to destroy them.

This is the real essence of both holidays of Purim and St. Patrick's Day. God has saved the lives and souls of the faithful for thousands of years. 2500 years ago in ancient Persia He saved Jewish lives, 1500 years ago in Ireland he saved pagan souls, and again over 75 years ago he saved the Russian Jews.

And God will save both Israel and our nation from the threats of evil without and within.

As we look at the many challenges facing the world today from the war in Israel

to economic to political to social to the threats of nuclear war, God forbid, we need to remind ourselves that “everything is in the hands of heaven except the awe of heaven” (Talmud, Berachot 33b). God has saved us, and always will.

So have a green beer (or juice drink if you don't imbibe alcohol) with an Irishman and a Jew (or even somebody who just likes Notre Dame football), and share the stories of Patrick and Purim together. Make the noise of a grogger and contemplate the beauty of a shamrock. And in doing so, may we all embrace the blessings of God, act right and righteously, and deepen our faith in knowing that as God has redeemed our ancestors, He will again redeem this world in our time.

Happy Purim, St. Patrick's Day, and may we all be blessed to receive God's blessings of good health, prosperity, wisdom, joy, love, and peace.

Chag Sameach!

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 17, 2024.

7th of Adar, 5784

March 19th 2024 at 12:22 am PDT

Sometimes Simple Statements Say it All, and Loving Two Nations

Chevre

As Diaspora Jews, we have a simultaneous responsibility to love and support both Israel and the United States. That includes respect for the leadership of both countries; and since both nations are democracies (well, the U.S. is actually a "republic"), we have the blessings of being able to both criticize the leadership of either country while still loving and believing in both nations. As a Rabbi, I will never say anything publicly against anything in Israel for concern that it will be used by anti-Semites (which has happened often to me, especially recently). But as an American, I treasure the fact that I can comment on policies or positions by domestic political leaders and still love America and be grateful for the nation in

which we all live.

...and sometimes, I feel it's best just to share information and allow people to develop their own interpretations of the events.

In the last week, Sen. Chuck Schumer has made his opinions about the Israeli government clear, as well as intentions as to how Israel should deal with Gaza.

In the last 24 hours, President Biden has made it clear in a conversation with Netanyahu that has been publicly released by Jake Sullivan, that Biden is ruling out any US support for an Israeli ground offensive in Rafah, despite having indicated for months that he would support such an action under specific conditions.

It has also been announced that Sec of State Blinken is heading to Saudi Arabia and Egypt to push for a cease fire truce and to "increase humanitarian aid to the Palestinian territory". The State Dept. has made it clear that he is going to try to force Biden administration philosophy on Israel.

I leave each of you to determine the meaning of these actions. I only remind you to think of the following: if, God forbid, Mexico drug cartel members came into San Diego and killed 1200 civilians and took 200 as hostages... how do you think the U.S. would respond? How would the world respond to that American response?

Now, think of the restraint Israel has shown; and think of how you would like Israel to act

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 19, 2024

9th of Adar, 5784

March 19, 2024 at 11:04 pm PST

How the US is Trying to Affect the War Effort

Chevre

The IDF has yet to go aggressively into Rafah, but despite the fact that it is not very well covered in US media, they continue to root out Hamas at every opportunity; including eliminating one of the top Hamas leaders in an air strike last night in the central area of Gaza strip.

But there is news around the world that also affects Israel. As discussed, the US has slowed down supplying munition aid to Israel; and today Canada representatives said that under Trudeau's instruction, all arms exports are being stopped to Israel. At the same time, Senator Schumer doubled down on trying to influence (coerce) Israel, not only reiterating the statements of his recent speech, but saying that he had thought about calling for Netanyahu's resignation. So rather than calling for it and trying to pressure Israel from the Senate floor, where he might have been censured, Schumer called for it in a public speech that is filling Israeli media

Actions and words here affect Israel, both negative ones like Schumer's, and each of our positive ones in support of the Holy Land

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 19, 2024

10th of Adar, 5784

March 20, 2024 at 12:11 pm PST

How American Lack of Support is Hurting Israel

Chevre

In the last twelve hours, we can see exactly how damaging the work of the anti-Israel branch of our government really can be to Israel and Jews.

Sen. Schumer had denied Bibi's request to meet with Senate Democrats, and is unwilling to even let him speak with the caucus. Blinken is pursuing peace talks without direct Israeli involvement. And Netanyahu just announced that it will take some time before the IDF can go into Rafah to eliminate the last of the Hamas battalions. Bibi's statement is a direct result not only of the pressure of Schumer's actions and statements, but of the US now holding back sending the arms that were committed by Congress to Israel.

As American Jews we all need to have faith and act...and we can all act by making it clear that every candidate at all levels of government are supportive of Israel. We can do it in a variety of ways, from personal conversations to letting campaigns know that our financial contributions are dependent on their support of Israel

...and we must continue to have faith. Always. And always in combination with action

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 20, 2024

10th of Adar, 5784

March 20th 2024 at 11:54 pm PDT

Am Echad/One People at 8:30am on Thursday 3/21

Chevre

At 8:30am PST on March 21, 2024; Jews at the Western Wall have asked that all Jews everywhere say the Shema together in unified prayers for the hostages, Israel, and the Jewish people. If you would like to watch the ceremony simultaneously at the Wall, you can go to [Aish.com/GlobalUnity](https://www.aish.com/GlobalUnity)

This worldwide prayer of unification if the Jewish people coincides with the Fast

of Esther. As we recite on Purim from Megillat Esther, the Jews were scheduled to be killed, and before Queen Esther would go to her husband the king, the people fasted. It is a custom from Midrashic times that whenever Jews are in serious danger, we should fast and pray on this day.

...and so Jews around the world will be praying the same prayers at the same time...and I hope we will all join together in this time of need for the Jewish people. (The text of the prayer is at the bottom of this email.)

And in so doing, renew our Divine strength and blessings; and be part of the redemption of the Jewish people worldwide

To help you feel your connection to the unified people of Israel, here is a reminder that we are all Am Echad...One People



Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 21, 2024
11th of Adar, 5784

Listen, Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.

Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom for ever and all time.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. These words which I command you today shall be on your heart. Teach them repeatedly to your children, speaking of them when you sit at home and when you travel on the way, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be an emblem between your eyes. Write them on the doorposts of your house and gates.

If you indeed heed My commandments with which I charge you today, to love the Lord your God and worship Him with all your heart and with all your soul, I will give rain in your land in its season, the early and the late rain; and you shall gather in your grain, wine and oil. I will give grass in your field for your cattle, and you shall eat and be satisfied. Be careful lest your heart be tempted and you go astray and worship other gods, bowing down to them. Then the Lord's anger will flare against you and He will close the heavens so that there will be no rain. The land will not yield its crops, and you will perish swiftly from the good land that the Lord is giving you. Therefore, set these, My words, on your heart and soul. Bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be an emblem between your eyes. Teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit at home and when you travel on the way, when you lie down and when you rise. Write them on the doorposts of your house and gates, so that you and your children may live long in the land that the Lord swore to your ancestors to give them, for as long as the heavens are above the earth.

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the Israelites and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments for all generations. They shall attach to the tassel at each corner a thread of blue. This shall be your tassel, and you shall see it and remember all of the Lord's commandments and keep them, not straying after your heart and after your eyes, following your own sinful desires. Thus you will be reminded to keep all My commandments, and be holy to your Go. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God. I am the Lord your God.'

(Translation by R. Jonathan Sacks z"l)

March 22nd 2024 at 12:45 am PDT

The World Continues On Its Path, Led by the U.S.

Chevre

In the last twelve hours, we can see exactly how damaging the work of the anti-Israel branch of our government really can be to Israel and Jews.

Sen. Schumer had denied Bibi's request to meet with Senate Democrats, and is unwilling to even let him speak with the caucus. Blinken is pursuing peace talks without direct Israeli involvement. And Netanyahu just announced that it will take some time before the IDF can go into Rafah to eliminate the last of the Hamas battalions. Bibi's statement is a direct result not only of the pressure of Schumer's actions and statements, but of the US now holding back sending the arms that were committed by Congress to Israel.

As American Jews we all need to have faith and act...and we can all act by making it clear that every candidate at all levels of government are supportive of Israel. We can do it in a variety of ways, from personal conversations to letting campaigns know that our financial contributions are dependent on their support of Israel

...and we must continue to have faith. Always. And always in combination with action

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 20, 2024

10th of Adar, 5784

March 24th 2024 at 12:18 am PDT

Haman Will Always Be Defeated!

Chevre

Happy Purim! We must remember this holiday not just right now, but must carry with us the teachings throughout the year and always.

Hezbollah has launched over 50 rockets at us in the last few hours. The UN Sec General Guterres, one of the worst Jew haters to be in any office since Israel was created, has been in Gaza to announce to the world that Israel is preventing UN aid to get into Gaza without inspection, and call it a "moral outrage" that aid cannot get in "unfettered". In Iran, the shrine of Mordecai's Tomb has been marred with palestinian flags. Israel is attacked in a multiplicity of ways, and Jews around the world are reviled and being blamed for everything negative in the world.

But we have Purim, a time for joy.

Purim reminds us about the power of faith and action, in combination with the special ingredient of charity. It is customary to give charity for Purim, and to share gifts of sweets with each other. And the story of Purim is just what we all need right now.

When the Jews are about to be killed in ancient Shushan, they fast and pray, and the miracle of Purim occurs: the evil Haman and his 10 sons are impaled, Mordecai becomes minister, and the Jewish people are saved.

Haman is the physical descendant of Amalek, in the same way that Hamas is the spiritual descendant. One of the obvious ethical questions of the story is why Haman's 10 sons, whom seem innocent, must die along with their pro-actively evil father. As difficult as it is for all of us to wrestle with, it is accepted that in a defensive war against evil, innocents will die.

I don't know that I need to make the analogy, an ancient teaching, any more clear...

Purim is a recognition of the unique partnership that Israel has with God. A

partnership that includes Divine protection as long as we follow His guidelines as found in Torah.

Hamans have come and gone throughout history, and while they are gone, we still survive B"H. And we will survive these modern Hamans as well... God will continue to honor the ancient covenant. But we must choose to drown out our own inner Hamans of fear and a desire for vengeance. We must destroy Hamas, but never rejoice in what happens.

May this Purim bring us a destruction of Haman in all forms, and may we the destruction of Haman usher in a time of lasting peace with Israel and the Jewish world.

Happy Purim!

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael.Barclay

March 24, 2024

14th of Adar, 5784

March 25th 2024 at 1:59 am PDT

The War Close to Home

Chevre

More rockets have been fired by Hezbollah: over 500 Hamas terrorists were armed and attacking while hiding behind patients have been captured or eliminated; and the Knesset is arguing among themselves. In other words, it seems like a repeat if so many days in the last months. While some of the world is waiting for an incursion into Rafah to destroy Hamas battalions, others are protesting that Israel should effectively build Hamas back up again rather than have a full on siege that would force Hamas to leave power.

But the war is seen here in California as well, with Gov. Gavin releasing an open letter of support for Moslems and against islamophobia. You can view the entire

letter here:

Governor Newsom's Open Letter to California's Muslim, Palestinian American, and Arab American Communities

As you can see, Newsom is pandering to the pro Hamas/Gaza/palestinian contingent in preparation for an open Democratic selection for Presidential candidate in case Biden either retires or is forced to not run for reelection. He accepts that the Jewish vote would never leave him, and so writes open support of palestinians with impunity. A form letter to Newsom detailing why his palestinian support is inappropriate can be found here

<https://tinyurl.com/EndJewHatredNewsom>

But you can also write your own letter in condemnation of Newsom's blatant and consistent anti-Israel attitudes.

...and always remember that Israel is the front line in a war not only against the Jews, but against all of Western Culture.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 25, 2024

15th of Adar, 5784

March 26th 2024 at 12:28 am PDT

When Will the World Get Honest About Hamas?

Chevre

Earlier today, the UN Security Council adopted a non binding resolution calling for an immediate cease fire. The world seems to again support Hamas...

And as a result, two inherently conflicting realities were expressed in the past few hours.

Hamas officially said that they will only have a cease fire subject to their original terms (you remember...the ones that didn't guarantee hostages, kept Hamas in power, and demanded the IDF leave Gaza among other things)... and at the same time, Hamas leader Haniyah, who lives in Qatar, is heading to Tehran today.

Those simple actions of Hamas say volumes about who they are and what they really want.

And Sec. of State Blinken told Minister Gallant today that the US is "opposed to a major operation in Rafah". In other words, Blinken wants to stop Israel from finishing the mission, and taking care of the four existing Hamas battalions in Rafah

Please think about this for a moment. Hamas is feeling empowered and is acting in an expected way, both with digging in their heels and reaching out more clearly to Iran. And Blinken continues to try to prevent Israel from destroying Hamas.

As American Jews, we need to be aware of all these types of things...and we need to constantly keep Israel, her land, her people, and her hostages in the forefront of our consciousness.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 26, 2024

16th of Adar, 5784

March 27th 2024 at 12:38 am PDT

We Must Always Be Aware of Israel

Chevre

For much of the world, they want to consider Oct 7 in the distant past, and for Israel to just let it go... for Israel to be more concerned with taking care of her

enemies than surviving.

We cannot let this happen...or the words "Never Again" from just a few decades ago become meaningless.

Rockets are being fired daily by Hezbollah; sending Israelis to shelters, destroying property and homes, and attempting to kill Israeli citizens. Terrorist attacks are common in the Palestinian Authority controlled areas, and we hear about attacks in the West Bank almost daily as well. There are still Hamas battalions in Rafah, but the US government is still trying to force Israel to do what the US administration wants: a cease fire in Gaza so that this doesn't affect the upcoming elections so significantly. Defense Secretary Austin made it very clear today that "casualties are too high and humanitarian aid is too low".

If God forbid an attack like Oct 7 happened at one our border towns; Austin would be pounding the war drums for an immediate destruction of the enemy...but he has the audacity to "direct" Israel to have a cease fire.

It has been 173 days, and we cannot let ourselves to ever forget the evil that is Hamas. We cannot let ourselves lose track that this is a modern Amalek, and must be destroyed entirely.

And we cannot allow anyone else to forget either.

Never Again is Now

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 27, 2024

17th of Adar, 5784

March 27th 2024 at 11:32 pm PDT

The War and a Great Loss

Chevre

Hezbollah continues to launch daily rocket attacks in the north, with sirens blaring in the last hour in towns close to the Lebanon border, including Girnot HaGalil and Goren. Small terror attacks involving knives, cars, personal guns, and more have been constant in the West Bank, with gunfire attacks on vehicles by the town of Al-Auja in the West Bank, also within the last hour.

And Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal reiterated Hamas' policy today that Hamas will not release any hostage until Israel ends the war and withdraws all its troops, lifts all blockades, and allow Gazans to keep Hamas as their chosen leadership.

...and the lack of full support of Israel is causing even the most staunch supporters of the administration to question American intent. Former Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz had an interview with JNS, in which he stated that although he is a lifetime Democratic Party supporter, he has a "red line...of President Biden cutting off ammunition and arms to Israel", and that this behavior would prohibit him from supporting the Democrats.

We also need to remember today's loss of a great Jew and a great American: Joe Lieberman. The first Jewish candidate for Vice President, this 4-time Senator from Connecticut exemplifies what is now missing from both sides of the aisle: a desire to work together to benefit the entire nation. He was a courageous leader who was an independent thinker committed to the country always growing and coming together...realizing that our diversity could become our greatest strength or our greatest weakness, depending on how we choose to interact with each other. His wit and wisdom will be missed, and may his family be comforted among the mourners of Zion.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 27, 2024

18th of Adar, 5784

March 29th 2024 at 12:30 am PDT

Prayer + Action or Prayer vs. Action?

Chevre

I have always tried to remind people of the importance of combining both prayer and action; and have stressed the importance of this combination especially since the war started. It is the "winning" combination that has always guaranteed the Jewish people's success, as well as the State of Israel. It is this combination that has resulted in the most shocking and powerful successes throughout our history...from Joshua through the Judges, King David to the Maccabees. Ours is a way of being spiritual warriors.

From a classically Jewish perspective, this is why Israel has survived. As in the time of the Judges of old, the IDF has been an army devoted to spirituality. Rabbi Avraham Isaac Kook (known as Rav Kook) was the first Chief Rabbi of the British Mandate of Palestine; and successfully integrated more secular Zionists with more religiously observant Zionists. He made both sides recognize the value of each other, and successfully integrated both prayer/faith and action into Israeli society and even the military.

Today in Israel, the High Court determined that they will allow the religious exemption from IDF service to expire, and that the observant religious Jews will be drafted to serve in the military. They have made this decision based on two reasons. A: this traditionally anti-observant court has repeatedly gone after the ultra-Orthodox, who spend their days in prayer and study. B: this court is very anti-Netanyahu, and they know this decision could hurt him politically by weakening his coalition.

But as a Jewish historian, I am extremely concerned with how this decision could affect our current war effort, as well as any in the future.

Prayer and action. Both are needed. The spirit needs the body to manifest its goals; and the body needs the spirit to reach its potential. This court decision could remove the spiritual protection and connection that is and has always been the real source of Israel's victories.

We must always remember that our victories are the direct result of our historically unique relationship with God. Our protection is not the Iron Dome or weapons... our ultimate protection is Ribbono shel Olam, the Holy One, Blessed be He; who protects us. (Sometimes by blessing us with a tool like the Iron

Dome)

We need to have spiritual warriors in the field; and we need spiritual warriors in the temples and at the Wall praying. They are as much a part of our success as are the IDF soldiers on the front line.

While I understand the resentment that has built up against the observant Jews for their not physically serving in the military; I also understand that the prayers are making a difference. To deny the importance of the prayer warriors in Israel's success is to deny our fundamental commitment as Jews to the premise that "all things are in the hand of God, except being in awe of God." Our history has taught us that we are most successful when we combine spiritual warriorship with physical military might.

The court's decision weakens the spiritual warriorship of Israel. It radically invalidates and transforms the partnership of prayer and action; and removes the spiritual support system needed for true success.

I hope you will join me in praying that the Orthodox in Israel are allowed to not be drafted, that they continue to perform their necessary part and pray for the military success of the IDF, and that the powerful combination of prayer and action result in a speedy and full victory.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

March 29, 2024

19th of Adar, 5784

April 1st 2024 at 8:23 am PDT

Updates and an Apology

Chevre

First, please allow me to apologize for having less emails in the last few days. I have been out of town with my family for my sons' spring break (which is

continuing this week).

We are almost at 6 months of war...and it is all too easy to be war weary and put the struggles of Israel out of consciousness. But we must be conscious and vigilant. Israel is still being attacked on many fronts by evil that vows to continue to attack until there would be, God forbid, no more Israel.

Please always remember...in every moment: This is a war for the survival of the nation, and for the survival of every Jew in the world. We must always keep the stakes in mind, and never forget the depravities of Oct 7 and beyond.

A naval base in Eilat was hit and one building significantly damaged this morning, with no injuries reported. The attack was from a drone... a drone launched from the Iran backed Islamic Resistance of Iraq military group. This is following other aerial objects that have been launched from Iraq and Syria at Eilat over the last few days.

The IDF has arrested or killed hundreds of terrorist operatives in the Shifa hospital. Hamas terrorists who have been interrogated are suggesting that the organization is having internal difficulties. Military pressure makes some Hamas leaders want to give back hostages and surrender, while other Hamas leaders believe that their road to success is through achieving so much world pressure on Israel by playing the "victim".

There are all sorts of theories in Israel about what is happening politically in the country: the influence by the Biden administration in their attempt to change the leadership there (something that has been vocalized by Sen Schumer, who was supported in his statements by the White House); the sudden issues around Netanyahu's health; the protests that are reported in western media that Israelis say are extremely well funded, organized, and not organic at all; and the infighting in the political parties. What is clear is that while close to 90% of the Israeli populace is still unified in the mission to completely destroy Hamas and to reject a two-state solution, there are international political forces at play that are working against that goal...and that the politicians of Israel are succumbing to international pressure in conjunction with their own desires for personal political power.

...and we still have a war to win, while the world works against that goal

Judaism teaches that our faith must be in God and not in men, and it is easy to see why when we look at the many facets of Israeli politics, and how our international allies of decades can so easily betray Israel in the face of true evil.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 1, 2024

22nd of Adar, 5784

April 2nd 2024 at 7:52 am PDT

What is the new Al Jazeera Law?

Chevre

Freedom of speech is essential to maintaining a democratic society, but at what point should it be limited? We have all heard the limit of not being allowed to yell "fire" in a crowded theater, but how does that principle work in practice, and why is it important today in Israel? Can riots be incited under the principle of free speech? What about propaganda or psy-ops?

The Israeli parliament passed what is being call "the Al Jazeera Law" by a vote of 71-10. This new law gives the government temporary powers to shut down foreign news services if they are deemed to be harming national security.

At first glance this may seem like a dangerous proposition that will shut down free speech in a democracy. But it is not, and is exactly the opposite.

The law does not give the government any power to shut down domestic press in Israel. Any Israeli organization still has all rights and privileges. Any foreign news organization still has full rights and privileges unless it is harming national security.

Effectively, its primary purpose is to stop Al Jazeera from continuing to harm Israeli civilians by broadcasting psy-ops; from harming Israel's security and IDF

soldiers by revealing sensitive information; and to stop Al Jazeera from inciting terrorism domestically and internationally during this time of war. The passing of this law will help stop the tremendous damage that Al Jazeera, which is recognized as a Hamas mouthpiece funded by Qatar, is doing to the war effort.

Al Jazeera is not a news service, and was never created to be one. Founded in 1996, it is a tool of Islamic fundamentalism to recruit supporters worldwide; damage Israel in the eyes of the world; and sow hatred against Israel and the United States both within those countries and internationally by any and all means possible. Hillary Clinton, when she was Secretary of State during the "Arab Spring" said, "Al Jazeera had been the leader in that it has literally been changing people's minds and attitudes. And like it or hate it, it has been really effective".

It is because of the anti-Israel propaganda of Al Jazeera that young people have rioted calling for a state of Palestine that eliminates Israel; that has led the LGBT community to support Hamas and a state of Palestine, which under their proposed Sharia law would behead them for their sexual choices; and it is Al Jazeera that has created the false narrative that Israel, by defending herself in this war, is actually the aggressor and a perpetrator of genocide.

Al Jazeera has been the most effective tool that the Islamic fundamentalists have had. The Parliament has been discussing shutting it down in Israel for years, but has allowed it to function because Qatar was also funding construction projects like schools in Gaza (which we have seen were actually terror tunnels), and Israel hoped that construction would generate peace. With the clarity that has come over the last months about the realities of Qatar's funding, this law was passed to shut down Al Jazeera and prevent more of its damage against Israel.

The White House has already reacted that this is a violation of a free press, and we should expect more of that rhetoric in the hours and days to come. But the reality is that had Al Jazeera been shut down years ago, the anti-Israel sentiment on college campuses would not exist today. The intense Jew hatred found on social media through hate mongers like Nick Fuentes and Alex Jones would have an insignificantly small audience. Israel would not be so hated in the UN, and this war might not even have started. The world is a "crowded theater", Al Jazeera has been yelling "fire" in that theater for years, and now we are seeing the results of

their screaming their propaganda to the world.

If you still are unclear about the important value of this law, consider the following: 87% of Parliament members voted for this law. This is a landslide, and says everything about its importance in these war times.

Although Washington will no doubt express "shock" at the law and attack Israel, and use it as another reason to attack Netanyahu (Biden is bringing over Lapid for talks in the US this week), this is potentially one of the best laws created to help Israel in both the short and long term.

A critical domestic press is important, but an outside propaganda arm is dangerous. May this new law help Israel become safer and stronger in these difficult times.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 2, 2024

23rd of Adar, 5784

April 3rd 2024 at 6:16 am PDT

What is War?

Chevre

This is an excruciatingly painful email to write, but we all need to get much more honest about this war, and what the stakes are.

Judaism has a lot of laws around how to wage a war. One of the most important is that our goal in war is not "victory", but a long lasting peace. The exception to that rule is in the case of Amalek, at which point the goal is to destroy Amalek completely. But what about the very nature of war itself?

War is ugly. It is supposed to be. It should be so ugly that human beings do everything possible to avoid it. If war does sadly become necessary, then it

should be as brief as possible in order to achieve a lasting peace.

Why is this something to remember in these difficult times, especially given recent events of the last few days?

The IDF mistakenly identified some aid trucks as enemies, and seven humanitarian workers were accidentally killed, may their memories be a blessing. But there is a bigger issue that needs to be addressed...

Hamas has performed some of the most evil acts ever perpetrated in history on October 7 and subsequently. They initiated this war. They committed crimes so heinous that they are nearly unspeakable. They tortured, murdered and raped, and then celebrated those evils. And they directed their attacks specifically at civilians, and took hostages with the specific intent of using them to prolong the war and prevent Israel from retaliating fully. So why is Israel even allowing "aid" to go to these perpetrators of evil? Why are these terrorists being so supported by Biden et al? As painful as it is to consider, is allowing any "aid" into Gaza even remotely justifiable?

Although it may not at first glance seem compassionate, the simple answer is no. Sending aid to the people of Gaza is not justifiable, is not even compassionate in the long run, and is unprecedented in human history. In all of recorded history, there is no example of one military force allowing aid to come to their enemy in the midst of conflict. Never. Except for now, when Israel is expected by the world to let the war be prolonged by making it less ugly and sending aid into Gaza.

This is not a comfortable thing to say, but when aid is allowed, the war is lengthened and exponentially more suffering occurs in the long run. Blockades and sieges are a part of the ugliness of war: the idea being that circumstances become so ugly that the war is ended. By allowing aid to come into Gaza, this war is being extended and Hamas is being sustained rather than destroyed. And that support is creating a reality that should scare every Jew on the planet...

Israel is starting to lose this war.

Israel could have ended this war months ago. Their military might is great enough that they could end this war speedily, but it would involve the death of

many innocents. Significantly less innocents than Hiroshima, Dresden, Alexandria, Leningrad, or any siege in recorded history... but they would be significant nonetheless. And because as Jews we treasure every single life, Israel is recalcitrant to risk lives needlessly. This is why Israel gives notice prior to launching any attack: it is Israel's desire to have as little collateral damage as possible.

And the world is taking advantage of Israel's compassion. The concept of allowing any aid into a sieged area is antithetical to any sort of victory. And we all need to recognize what is happening as a result of Israel being overly concerned with the seemingly compassionate practice of allowing aid into Gaza in the midst of war... a practice unique in human history. A practice that is putting the very survival of Israel, and of all Jews at risk.

So why is Israel doing this? The greatest reason is probably because of the pressure that the United States is putting on Israel to allow aid into Gaza; to not finish the mission of destroying Hamas; to have a two state solution, which would be an eventual death sentence on Israel. Pressure that has been working. Pressure that is guiding Israel into a path, God forbid, of self destruction.

Golda Meir once said that if the choice is to for Israel to be destroyed and the Jewish people to be pitied, or to be hated by the world but survive, we would always choose the latter. Unfortunately, it would seem that as of right now, Israel is succumbing to pressure that could lead to the former conclusion of us being destroyed and pitied.

Israeli citizens who are in the heart of this war every day are clear in their opinions. According to recent polls, at least 80% of Israelis want to finish the mission and destroy Hamas no matter the collateral damage, and the same percentage totally reject the idea of a two state solution working. Conversely, over 90% of Gazans still applaud what was done on October 7 and are committed to repeating the horrors of that day. We mourn for their dead while they rejoice in the death of every Jew.

American Jews need to stop being delusional and get honest: this is a war against an enemy that has no ethical boundaries, uses children as human shields, and are committed to the utter destruction of every Jew on the planet. It is in the

charter of Hamas, which calls for the full obliteration of every Jew. (Covenant of 1988, Article 7) It is a concept officially supported by Palestinian leadership, which still has yet to condemn Hamas for October 7.

On October 8, nearly every Jew on the planet was dedicated to completely destroying Hamas as an act of self preservation. Now, all too many of us have gotten war weary, accepted the narrative foisted upon us by Western media and the Biden administration, and are allowing our compassion to overwhelm our judgment. We are forgetting this is a war for survival, and too many of us are more concerned with being kind to a ruthless enemy rather than recognize that true evil cannot be negotiated with, and like an aggressive cancer, must be rooted out and destroyed.

This is painful to admit let alone vocalize, but we must restrain our compassion for innocents in Gaza and instead realize there is a greater compassion to finish this mission so that a real peace can be created.

Hamas is a cancer to the entire Western world, and must be removed. The enabling of Hamas by the U.S., western media, and especially by Jews who naively believe that a lasting peace can be established with Hamas is risking Israel's survival.

Again, Israel is starting to lose this war, and each day that this war is prolonged by "compassionate" practices like allowing aid into a besieged Gaza is creating a greater risk for Israel's survival.

So there are two big questions that every Jew needs to ask. Do you want our children to God forbid, grow up without a nation of Israel? Do you want them to live in a world of Jew hatred (which is nothing new) and in which they will need to hide or abandon their religion in order to live safely? Each day that this war is prolonged brings us closer to that future.

The second question we must all ask is what are we willing to do to stop that future from happening? Are we supporting Israel's war effort with our energy and finances? Are we supporting Jewish communities locally and nationally? Are we gathering together as Jews in prayer, discussion, and Torah learning? Are we applying pressure on political candidates so that they know whatever their party affiliation, be it Democratic or Republican, will not receive our political donations nor our votes unless they are vocally fully pro-Israel?

Each day that the war goes on is another day leading to an ugly future for our Jewish children. Is this what any of us want? Each day brings us closer to the reality of Israel losing this war, and ultimately no longer existing, God forbid.

What future do you seek, and what actions are you doing to manifest that future? Israel is losing as each day goes by. What are you willing to do to ensure Jewish survival and a thriving nation of Israel?

I implore each of us to work towards that positive future of a safe Israel. If you would like to support an Israeli charity, I recommend the Bnai Zion Hospital in Haifa (www.HealthCareForIsrael.org) or Magen David Adom (www.mdais.org). If you want to donate locally, I obviously recommend our synagogue (www.NerSimcha.org/Give) or Stand With Us (www.standwithus.com); and I cannot stress how important it is for each of us to come to services or classes, even if only online.

L'dor v'dor... from generation to generation. God forbid, but if we do not stop supporting the enemies who seek to destroy us, the next generation will grow up without Israel and in a much worse state than we could ever have imagined in our own childhoods.

Am Yisrael Chai! But that statement only remains a reality if we are willing to do what is necessary to keep us alive.

May we all have the courage to become honest, and act on that realization in ways that guarantee a safe world for Israel, our children, and Judaism.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 3, 2024

24th of Adar, 5784

April 4th 2024 at 6:06 am PDT

The Jew Hater Will Hate, What Should We Do?

Chevre

A rabbi once went into a village and saw a bunch of targets with arrows in the direct center of the bullseye. He asked who the great archer was, and was told that it was Shmuley, a 9 year old boy. He asked Shmuley if he had hit all those bullseyes, and the boy replied that he had. When the rabbi asked how he did it, the boy replied, "It's easy...I shoot the arrow and then draw the target around it".

This is how anti-Semites perpetuate their Jew hatred. Whatever happens in the world, they draw a target around the incident in order to use it to hurt Jews. It is why anti-Semitism is called "the hate that mutates".

When Hamas commits horrific depravities, the Jew hater says they were justified because of how evil Israel was. When the IDF accidentally kills two hostages, they cheer and revel in the "incompetence of the IDF", but when a similar mistake happens and NGO workers are accidentally killed, the Jew haters claim that the IDF is out of control and purposefully killing civilians, and should be stopped. Both the US and UK are using this accident to further stifle Israel's efforts to win this war, and are not only condemning the accident, but saying that this proves that Israel should not go into Rafah lest there are more civilian deaths.

When the world sees the dangers of Iran, which back so many terrorist groups like Hezbollah, Israel is blamed for not having eliminated Iran's threat to a stable region. When several high ranking Iranian military officials are killed by Israel in Syria earlier this week, the world (including the US) condemn Israel; and Iran vows revenge. As a result, reserves in Israel are being called up in preparation for Iranian retaliation.

The world, especially the United States needs to be aware that the war in Israel is only the first line in a religious jihad that wants to make the entire world part of an authoritarian caliphate theocracy. Israel and the Jewish people worldwide need to remember that our only true ally is God. We have been seeing for months now that even the historical truth of the US being a supporter of Israel is not accurate as the administration has been working to remove Netanyahu from power, create a two state solution, and then use that as a political tool to help in the upcoming domestic election.

Israel is, has been, and ultimately will always be alone. She is partnered with God, and that holy partnership is enough... as long as we trust it in faith, and act together as one people. Am Echad.

We need to stop placing our trust in other men. Rather, we need to band together as Jews in unconditional support of Israel, and to have the courage to trust that relationship with God fully and completely... and to demonstrate that faith in our actions: be it in Israel with reserves being called up, or domestically with standing up against Jee haters.

The haters will keep drawing targets around every incident that happens in the world as an excuse to further hate Jews and Israel. We need to stop being delusional.as a people and to honestly recognize the depths and breadth of the Jew hatred around us.

And we need to act as one people, Am Echad. Through our faith and our actions, we need to open our hearts to God, our one true partner.

In getting honest, we will see that Am Yisrael Chai is not just the cry of the Jewish people to God, but it is also God's response to the Jewish people... a promise to our ancestors, us, and our descendants.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 4, 2024

25th of Adar, 5784

April 7th 2024 at 12:09 am PDT

Shavuah Tov in Israel and the U.S.

Chevre

In Israel, preparations are being made for even more conflict as the Gaza mission is still waiting on the entry of the IDF into Rafah, and Iran is sabre rattling that is

is coming after Israel. One of the most telling notes about what is really going on is that the Israeli government gave grants to northern hospitals to enhance emergency rooms.. not a good sign of what may be coming.

Domestically, Nancy Pelosi showed who she really is by signing a petition with the 36 most anti-Israel people, including Tlaib and Ocasio-Cortez, in her caucus that is asking Biden to withhold the arms and munitions that have been approved to go to Israel. In this dangerous time, for Israel and the world, she prefers to cater to extremists like Tlaib rather than condemn the terrorists of Hamas and support Israel.

I don't have the words to express my disgust at Pelosi's actions and hypocrisy.

But we must always all choose faith over fear; and know that the integration of faith and action has always protected the Jewish people; and with God's help, always will. Of this, we can be certain; and we need to remember where our real strength comes from.

Shavuah tov, and Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 7th, 2024

28th of Adar, 5784

April 8th 2024 at 12:05 am PDT

What Really Happened Today? Plus..an Eclipse of Redemption?

Chevre

You may have seen on the news that Israel withdrew from Gaza, and/or that there is a ceasefire deal, and/or that Israel has given up in removing Hamas, and/or any number of things.

I have found that domestic media has an agenda on what and how they report regarding Israel; and have found the best sources to be friends in Israel as well as specific Israeli media and WhatsApp groups that I am part of. So...this is what I

have gleaned so far.

The IDF is removing most of its forces from different parts of Gaza, but leaving a division in the Netzarim Corridor, which splits Gaza and allows the IDF to immediately act in any part of Gaza at a moment's notice. There are two reasons for this. 1: According to General HaLevi, they are preparing to go into Rafah after trying to protect civilians there. 2: They are preparing for a multi-front war that could include attacks from Iranian proxies like Hezbollah as well as directly from Iran itself.

There has been tremendous pressure from Biden who wants to have a foreign policy success to go into the upcoming election. Biden has been threatening to fully withhold the promised arms to Israel, which they will need if they have a multi-front war. (The irony is that had Biden not released billions of dollars to Iran, this war probably never would have started...and his release of an additional 10 billion dollars in November, after the war had started, has prolonged this war for months.) This American pressure is directly affecting Israel as Iran does more sabre rattling, as Israel needs those arms. Biden, who has repeatedly stated that he demands a 2 state solution, keeps threatening to withdraw all support for Israel.

The IDF and cabinet were very clear and consistent about their goals today: get hostages back (the most immediate goal); eliminate any and all Hamas ability to be involved in Gaza; eliminate all Hamas brigades; and the return of all residents of the north and south of Israel to their homes in safety.

18 of the 24 Hamas battalions have been totally dismantled. There are 4 untouched brigades still in Rafah that need to be destroyed; which is also where a number of Hamas leaders are hiding with hostages. All Israeli leaders from Netanyahu, Gallant, and HaLevi on down are clear that the operation in Rafah is upcoming.

This is not part of a cease fire in exchange for hostages deal at this time. Officials in Cairo from both sides have said today that this type of exchange deal is still chasms away from success, despite what American media is reporting.

It is a telling statement that the Israeli government has given multiple grants to different hospitals in the last 48 hours...seemingly in preparation for a multi-

front war. The longer this conflict is prolonged, the more dangerous it is for Israel's survival. Netanyahu and IDF leadership has repeatedly said that full victory is only weeks away, but the biggest obstacle to an end of this war with the goals above accomplished is coming from the United States at this time.

On a modern theological note of hope, there is a total eclipse of the sun today, Monday, April 8 that can be seen on its pathway that includes portions of the United States. In California, there will be a maximum of 36% that will take place at 11:14-11:15am. Eclipses are always considered powerful in many levels, but especially this year with regard to the war in Israel and around the world against Jews.

The 9th plague in ancient Egypt that preceded the Passover was a plague of Chosek...Darkness. A complete blotting out of the sun. It was a reminder to the world of their own darkness in not accepting God; and a preface for the redemption and survival of the Jewish people that would come on the eve of Passover. It is the hope and prayer of many of us that this eclipse is a similar preface to the redemption and survival of Israel and the Jewish people again in our time.

May the darkness of the eclipse and the light that comes after be a mirror of the darkness of Jew hatred in the world being replaced by an acceptance, respect, and treasuring of the Jewish people and Israel in our time...now.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 8th, 2024

29th of Adar, 5784

April 9th 2024 at 12:18 am PDT

I Hate Reruns: Hamas Keeps Showing Repeat Episodes While the World Treats It As New

Chevre

The WHO famously sang that they would pray not to get fooled again. Obviously, the world needs to express that prayer because Hamas keeps doing the same thing over and over.

Let's be clear: Hamas kidnapped hostages and keeps promising a hostage deal that doesn't materialize as a way of stalling, rebuilding, and gaining world support against Israel...and they keep doing it and the world and US keep playing along

Today, Hamas leadership announced that Israel isn't meeting their demands in order to release hostages, but that they "will study it further". They also said again that they "won't compromise on key demands", and are pressuring Biden to pressure Israel...which he probably will try to do to Netanyahu.

And the United Nations continues to play the same anti-Semitic tape they have been playing for decades as the UN Security Council prepares to decide this month to accept a bid for Palestinian full status entry into the U.N. A made up country with no land, government, currency, infrastructure, or history other than a few decades of terrorism and terror activities is being considered for full United Nations status.

We need to stop letting these reruns continue, and loudly call out the lies and hypocrisy that the world has gotten used to accepting.

And we need to pray....fully and passionately. For Israel, for our children, and for the survival of the Jewish people

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 9th, 2024

1st of Nissan, 5784

April 9th 2024 at 6:58 pm PDT

Biden Just Completely Abandoned and Betrayed Israel

Chevre

I have been trying to limit myself to just one email per day about Israel, but the news of the last few hours needs to be shared.

President Joe Biden has publicly called for Israel to have a unilateral 6-8 week cease fire. Unilaterally and without any conditions other than for Israel to let aid into Gaza.

His words: "What I'm calling for is for the Israelis to just call for a ceasefire, allow for next six, eight weeks total access to all food and medicine going into the country."

No hostages released (Hamas has already admitted over the last few days that at least some of them are dead). No conditions on Hamas surrendering or even stopping their rocket attacks and acts of terrorism. Nothing for Israel except that they should pull out and have a 6-8 week cease fire.

You can read more about it

here: https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/in-major-policy-shift-biden-calls-for-israel-to-unilaterally-declare-ceasefire-in-gaza/

War only ends because it is so difficult for one side and it's populace to continue the war. And Biden wants to keep dragging it out; allow Hamas, which has pledged and is committed to the destruction of Israel to regroup and re-arm; and set the stage for more events like October 7, God forbid.

Now, more than ever in my lifetime, we must support Israel. We must send her financial donations, and actively support Jewish communities and organizations locally. We must speak loudly for Israel, and against the incredible and extreme foolishness of Biden. We must let our voices be heard domestically that we will not support any politician, group, or party that is committed to the destruction of Israel through their words and/or actions.

If we remain silent in this time, we are guilty of being complicit in this foolishness.

Am Yisrael Chai.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 8th, 2024

1st of Nisan, 5784

April 9th 2024 at 11:35 pm PDT

When in Chaos, Stand Together as Jews

Chevre

Within hours of an interview with President Biden being released in which he called for an immediate 6-8 week unilateral ceasefire from Israel; the White House released statements that he was being misinterpreted, and that he was basing his statement on a pre-condition that hostages are released. Whether he intended in his interview on having that pre-condition met or not, Israel media is leading their stories with Biden's statement, not the intention. There are two new challenges with this latest speaking gaffe of Biden's.

1: It seems to be firing up Israelis (or at least Israeli media) to be anti-Biden, which does not help the war effort in the long run.

2: The statement seems to be meaningless given that an "anonymous" Hamas official in Cairo said that Hamas can't release 40 at-risk hostages because, according to that well reported anonymous source, they are dead. If they are, may their memories be a blessing; and it creates even more problems.

At the same time, Netanyahu and Gallant said conflicting things in their speeches today. Netanyahu has said that there is a clear date that Israel will go into Rafah to clear out the remaining Hamas battalions, and Gallant has said that no clear plans or dates have been set. If 2 Jews = 3 opinions, I have no way of interpreting an objective reality when two Israeli leaders contradict each other.

Additionally, this busy day had GOP Senators proposing that Sec of State Blinken certify that Qatar either desists from supporting Hamas and expels all Hamas leadership out of Qatar, or that Qatar be immediately terminated in its status as a major non Nato ally (MNNA). If passed, this would put tremendous pressure on

Qatar, and as a result, on Hamas.

A ray of light also shone in New York today, where over 7000 supporters of Israel congregated outside the United Nations not just as a rally, but as "a clarion call" for the hostages' immediate release. The rally had members of Congress from both sides of the aisle, as well as former Israel Prime Minister Naftali Bennett calling for the immediate release of hostages.

Whatever the circumstances of hostages, the war effort, a ceasefire, or any of the challenges facing Israel and Diaspora Jews, there is an important lesson to remember from the demonstration in New York: we must stay together and support each other as Jews.

I have a friend whom some of you met at my sons' Bnai Mitzvah, who tells a story about her father teaching her son when he was young. The grandfather gave the boy a wooden stick match to break, which the boy did easily. The grandfather then gave the boy a thick handful of matches and asked him to break them as a group, and the boy could not. The obvious teaching was about how much stronger we are together.

While that old man was referring to a family sticking together, it is also true about the Jewish people. When we stay unified, both here and with Israel, we are strong. We must always support Israel unconditionally, especially in these times of war... for we are all one Jewish family. Am Echad...One People

When the war started six months ago, someone asked me if I have family in Israel. I said, "Yes, all of Israel is my family".

The Talmud teaches that the Holy Temple was destroyed because of "sinat hinam", "baseless hatred between Jews (Yoma 9b). It is our choice as Jews how we choose to act: with baseless hatred towards each other, or as a group of people tied together as a family.

I pray that we make the right choice, because we can be guaranteed to reap the results of whatever choice we make.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 9th, 2024

2nd of Nisan, 5784

April 11th 2024 at 6:10 am PDT

Every Moment is in Movement

Chevre

It is predicted by the US that Iran will attack Israel, as one US diplomat said, "not if, but when". Israel has made it clear that if something like that happens there will be a swift retaliation. In speaking with Israelis, the expectation is that Iran will attack through a proxy, but that it is coming and will be ugly.

In speaking with Israelis tonight, it was also sad to hear that none of the ones I spoke with think there are any more than 20 or 30 hostages still alive.

By the time you read this in the morning, things may already have changed. Every moment is in flux and the situation could shift dramatically at any time.

This may be the lesson we can all take from this volatile time:

Life is filled with moments that are always in movement.

If you really meditate on this statement, it has the potential to help you understand some of the deepest Jewish mystical secrets, and to open your life.

In a moment, there could be an even more horrific war going on in Israel, God forbid. Over 3000 people went to work in New York one September morning, and over 3000 of them didn't make it home; and we all are aware of what happened in a moment on October 7. And in a moment, inventors came up with ideas; peace can be established between previous enemies; and in a moment, lives have been changed for good and miracles have happened. Each single moment can truly make a difference...for good or evil.

Each moment is unique, and we don't know how it will turn out. The Talmud teaches that "everything is in the hands of heaven except the awe of heaven". Each moment is moving. Each moment is precious. Only God knows... and by treasuring each moment we have the potential to feel the hands of heaven upon us. This moment could lead to war, or it could lead to peace. By the time this is read it is possible that Iran has attacked Israel and we are at war; Israel might have been attacked and retaliated so strongly that Tehran is rubble; there might have been no conflict; or anywhere in between... including a peace could happen.

Which is why our faith teaches us to live fully, passionately, and with the realization that everything may ride on our own single action or attitude.

Each moment is special and filled with potential... another reason that while we must pray as if everything depends on God, we must act as if everything depends on us.

Through integrating that faith and action, we can make each moment meaningful, and moving towards a better world. May we all choose to move in that direction

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 11th, 2024

3rd of Nisan, 5784

April 12th 2024 at 12:52 am PDT

The Precipice?

Chevre

By the time you read this, the news may have changed....

As of right now, the US has said that Israel should expect an attack from Iran in the next 24-48 hours; and has apparently told US employees in Israel that they

should not leave Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, or Beersheva. Israel has made it clear that if there is any sort of attack from Iran, there would be swift and strong repercussions. Tensions are high all over the world.

...and anything may change in a moment

So as you prepare for Shabbat and the upcoming Passover, please say extra prayers for protection for our soldiers, and give charity in their honor.. action and faith together as we continue in these challenging times that are on the precipice of world conflict.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 12th, 2024

4th of Nisan, 5784

April 13th 2024 at 1:51 pm PDT

I Know It's Shabbat, But...

Chevre

I typically have tried to avoid sending emails on Shabbat, but even the Chief Rabbi of Israel said yesterday that active communications must be kept open during the Sabbath this weekend... and much has and is happening.

A 14 year old boy, a shepherd, disappeared on Friday afternoon in the West Bank while he was tending his family's goats. His corpse was found on Saturday, "murdered in a terror attack" according to Israel security forces. This has prompted riots by Jews in the West Bank; and while the IDF and police are asking for them to stop and to let the authorities find the terrorists who killed this boy, the communities are searching for themselves, causing violence, and making the West Bank even more of a powder keg.

Iran has started its direct involvement, with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard rappelling from helicopters and seizing a 25 crew Portugal which is partially

owned by Israeli billionaire Eyal Ofer's Zodiac Group that was in the Strait of Hormuz.

Schools, universities, day cares and community centers in Israel are closed as the nation prepares for attacks by Iran and its proxies. Over the Shabbat, Hezbollah launched 5 rounds of drones and over 50 rockets, and Hamas also launched rockets towards Sderot. The nation is bracing for even more intensified war as the world forgets what these perpetrators of evil did on Oct. 7 and since. Airlines from around the world are turning their planes around, many European nations have recommended that their citizens leave both Israel and Iran, Central Israel is under GPS jamming, Netherlands has closed its embassies in Iran and Iraq, and US officials are saying they are expecting an attack on Israel in the early hours.

So how can we wish each other a Shabbat Shalom in this time of increased war? How can we wish each other a Sabbath of Peace as we are preparing for war and fighting for our survival.

We can't... and shouldn't even try to. Now is not the time for "Shabbat Shalom", it is the time to wish each other and pray for "Gut Shabbos"

Gut Shabbos means "Good Sabbath", but there is actually a deeper understanding in the words themselves. The word "Gut" is spelled with the Hebrew letters of gimel, vav, tet. In Judaism, every word has a numerical value based on the values of its composite letters, which here is 3 (gimel) + 6 (vav) + 9 (tet) for a total value of 18. As many of you know, 18 is also the value of the word that means "life" (chai). So to say "Gut Shabbos" is actually to wish someone a "Sabbath of Life"... which is what we all need in these dark and dangerous times.

So may it be a Gut Shabbos for you, for every Jew in the world, and especially for Israel. A Sabbath of Life, in which Life itself embraces Israel and supports her in this war against an evil that not only looks to destroy Israel and kill every Jew worldwide; but seeks to destroy Western culture itself (more on that in an upcoming email...but you can easily learn about the worldwide A15 violent demonstrations that are being planned for Monday with the intent of entirely shutting down the world's economy in the "name of palestine".)

Gut Shabbos to us all; and may we all remember that we are Am Echad, One People

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 13, 2024

5th of Nisan 5784

April 13th 2024 at 2:05 pm PDT

Iran Attacks

Chevre

50-100 suicide drones have been launched from Iran. They are expected to arrive in Israel between 430pm-5:10pm PST.

May the Holy One keep Israel and her people and let land sage and protected.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 13, 2024

5th of Nisan 5784

April 13th 2024 at 3:20 pm PDT

Mite attacks

Chevre

Sources say that 4 to 500 drones have been launched as well as ballistic missiles from Iran.

Let us pray for the people in the land.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 13, 2024

5th of Nisan 5784

April 13th 2024 at 4:53 pm PDT

War is Here

Chevre

A US base has been attacked by Iranian drones, and France is sending naval aid to help Israel.

750 Alerts have been sounded throughout the country so far, defense forces are saying over 95% have been intercepted.

Iran has threatened Jordan with attacks if they intervene and help Israel in any way.

Iran appears to be trying to attack Dimona nuclear center.

Pray for safety, for Israel, and for the entire world at this time as we are truly at a precipice.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 13, 2024

5th of Nisan 5784

April 13th 2024 at 6:41 pm PDT

Some Details

Chevre

Here are some more details that have been released.

Hundreds of drones attacked Tel Aviv. Over 95% were intercepted, B"H, and we are still waiting to hear what damage was done.

The following areas have been hit: Umm Al Fahm, Southern Negev, Arad, and Rabbat Ammon in Jordan.

American-British warplanes are attacking in Yemen.

Iranian drones have reportedly attacked a US base in Erbil, Iraq. I have heard this as part of a whatsapp group in Israel, but have not seen this on news at this time.

The war cabinet has approved Netanyahu, Gallant, and Gantz to decide on the Israel response to all of today's attacks

Please remember that as in any war crisis, news is always a bit questionable in the moment as everything is moving at such a rapid pace; but it is a dark day for the world.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 13, 2024

5th of Nisan 5784

April 13th 2024 at 8:43 pm PDT

President Biden

Chevre

President Biden just made an announcement of condemnation of Iran and its proxies for today's "unprecedented air attacks" on Israel.

He claims to have sent aircraft and missile defense destroyers to the region; and that he convening G7 leaders to "coordinate a united diplomatic response to Iran's brazen attack". He also claimed (despite either reports) that he "has not seen any attacks in our forces or facilities".

Let us pray that he is accurate and honest about everything in his statement.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 13, 2024

6th of Nisan, 5784

April 13th 2024 at 9:15 pm PDT

Report Just Released on Biden/Bibi

Chevre

It has just been released that President Biden and Prime Minister Netanyahu had a call and that Biden said that "The US will oppose any Israeli counterattack against Iran". Axios reported it an hour ago, and CNN and The Times of Israel is now reporting the same.

A meeting just started a few minutes ago led by Gen HaLevi, Chief of General Staff and including the Commanding Officer of the Israel Air Force, Commanding Officer of Operations Directorate, and Commanding Officer of Intelligence Directorate in which it is assumed that discussions are being had about Israel's response to today's attacks.

A senior Israeli official said to Channel 13 in Israel, "Iran's attack was a strategic failure. Now they can get ready and not sleep in peace."

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 13, 2024

6th of Nisan, 5784

April 13th 2024 at 10:29 pm PDT

Official Release From IDF

Chevre

Rear Admiral Hagari, the official spokesman for Israel, gave the following statement about the last 12 hours:

OPERATIONAL UPDATE BY IDF SPOKESPERSON, REAR ADMIRAL DANIEL HAGARI, REGARDING THE INTERCEPTION OF IRANIAN SURFACE-TO-SURFACE MISSILES

Iran launched dozens of surface-to-surface missiles toward Israeli territory. The vast majority of the missiles were intercepted outside of the State of Israel's borders by our Aerial Defense Array. A few missiles fell within Israeli territory; at this stage, we are aware of one child who was injured, and a hit on an IDF base in the south, where there was only minor damage to infrastructure. I repeat, the damage to the IDF base in the south was minor and to the infrastructure only.

Additionally, Israeli Air Force aircraft intercepted more than ten cruise missiles outside the country's borders, and dozens of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) were also intercepted outside of the borders of the State of Israel, with over 200 threats launched in total. The event has not yet concluded, and we continue to intercept threats on their way to Israel, including UAVs and possibly additional cruise missiles. We are still fully deployed with dozens of aircraft in the air for defense. While the majority of threats have been intercepted, I repeat and emphasize not to take risks and to act according to the instructions of the Home Front Command—these instructions save lives.

As I mentioned, the incident is still being managed, and the Home Front Command's alert system will provide sufficient warning in areas where danger is imminent. The IDF is very strongly deployed in all arenas and is prepared to continue according to a structured plan. We prepared for these scenarios well in advance, and we are operating according to operational plans. Continue to follow the guidelines, and demonstrate responsibility and composure as you

have been doing over the past few hours. The IDF is doing and will do everything necessary to protect the security of the civilians of the State of Israel. I will continue to update you from here on every operational development."

Israel Defense Minister Yoav Gallant continued: "The world saw tonight who Iran is. We stopped the most significant wave in an impressive way that resulted in few injuries... The event is not over..."

IDF has beat this round (it was actually multiple rounds) of Iranian attacks with US, UK, French allies. Despite over 300 aerial attacks and over 100 ballistic missiles and 30 cruise missiles, 1 base took minor hits, and 1 young girl was hurt by indirect shrapnel."

The words of these leaders express it all, and May the Holy One, blessed be He and His Presence, bless Israel, her land, and her people with protection, safety, courage, and strength

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 13, 2024

6th of Nisan, 5784

April 14th 2024 at 9:07 am PDT

Now What?

Chevre

The first wave finished, and Iran is rattling their sabres even more. But thank God, Israel was able to survive with little actual damage.

The war cabinet has said that there will be a response within 48 hours, and a Hezbollah munitions plant in Lebanon has already been destroyed. A "coalition" is being assembled by Israel, and Biden is looking for "diplomatic solutions".

Iran's President Raisi has made a statement publicly threatening Washington with attacks on US bases if America helps Israel in any response to the last 24 hours; and as emailed last night, there are multiple reports that Biden has said to Netanyahu that the US will not support Israel if they launch any counter-attack. Iranian state television has aired clips of a fire in Chile and claimed it was destruction in Israel; and Iranian officials are going on their state tv and threatening the U.S. if we do anything to support Israel.

John Kirby on Meet the Press this morning expressed more of his political double-speak. He said that the US will continue to support Israel's right to self defense; but also said that the US isn't seeking an escalation in the region and implied that the US will not support any actions from Israel that would create a "wider war in the region". At the same time, Minister Gallant just said (7:30am PST) that yesterday's attacks are giving Israel the opportunity to develop an international alliance against Iran.

Iran has already appealed to the United Nations that this was a "legitimate response" to what Israel did almost 2 weeks ago in a strike that killed some Iranian military leaders, and that if Israel does not respond to yesterday's attacks, Iran "will consider the matter closed". Israeli officials have made numerous statements that they will respond, but pressure from the U.N., world media, and especially America may affect their response.

An announcement was leaked (I received it from someone in Australia) that Israel has developed an Electronic bomb (E Bomb) that could knock out all infrastructure in Tehran or a nuclear or power facility. If this is true, it could be a game changer; but it is entirely unconfirmed.

In the midst of this, for the last 24 hours Israeli officials from Netanyahu to Gallant to Gantz to others have said that their focus is still on getting the hostages back. We must make sure that this attack from Iran does not take us away from the mission of what we must do in Gaza...and we must continue to pray and act for success there.

We must all pause and thank God for protecting Israel during these past hours, and ask that the Master of the Universe continue to protect and strengthen the land and people of Israel.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 14, 2024

6th of Nisan, 5784

April 15th 2024 at 6:50 am PDT

Talks and "A15"

Chevre

There has been no official Israeli statement about if and how Israel will respond to Iran's attacks. But news has come out that Hamas is willing to make a hostage deal now under the following terms:

3 phases of 42 days each.....

In the first stage Israel would have to withdraw to the separation line in all areas.

All displaced Hamas must be allowed freedom in North Gaza

For each hostage released, 30 palestinian prisoners with life sentences (mass murderers) must be released, 50 of Hamas releases a woman.

Hamas is supposedly supportive of this proposed framework.

Today, April 15 has now taken a new meaning as "A15 Action", funded and organized through Open Society, has promised a day of economic blockades, violence, and harassment to hurt the world's economy as a show of solidarity with Palestine. So far today in Australia and Europe these demonstrations have been relatively small and have not achieved any of their goals.

Both the US and Europe are urging Israel to not reply to the attacks from Iran... even after the many attacks from Iran.

No doubt we will see developments in the next hours or days as Israel determines their actions (or non-action)

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 15, 2024

7th of Nisan, 5784

April 16th 2024 at 12:08 am PDT

What's Next?

Chevre

The world waits and watches to see how Israel will retaliate for Saturday's attack from Iran. The US is publicly stating that Israel will not retaliate on Iran, only Iran's proxies. Gen Halevi of Israel has publicly stated that there will be retaliation upcoming when and where Israel wants. Channel 12 in Israel is reporting that the war cabinet is saying that Israel will hit back "clearly and forcefully".

To be clear, the official statistics released by the IDF about the attack are that it included:

170 drones

50 cruise missiles

120 ballistic missiles

The IDF said that 99% were shot down, the vast majority before they entered Israeli air space.

Jordan has publicly stated that they allowed Israel to use their air space; and Saudi Arabia shared intelligence with Israel about the attack as it was happening.

We can all wait and see what Israel's response is to Iran, but there have been numerous Israeli officials who have said anonymously that the response will be specific and not involve other nations in the region.

The A15 demonstrations were problematic worldwide, but not as violent nor as populated as anticipated. Reports are that each rally had less than 300

activists show up...but 300 people can do a lot of damage. There was some violence, especially in Australia, Canada, and the US; the Golden Gate Bridge among other areas was shut down by people chanting "Death to Israel, Death to the U.S": Interstate 190 leading to O'Hare Airport in Chicago was shut down, as was the Brooklyn Bridge in New York. Those few people who were arrested are having their bail and legal costs being paid for by the Community Justice Exchange, which is a subsidiary of the Tides Center, a group that houses numerous groups including Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation and Occupy Wall Street.

Let us pray for protection and safety not only in Israel, but for Jews around the world from the people who seek Jewish destruction and conflict. And let us always stay strong in our faith and our actions...and let our prayers and our hopes empower us to live better lives.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 15, 2024

8th of Nisan, 5784

April 16th 2024 at 12:58 pm PDT

Tuesday Night in Israel

Chevre

Israel is ten hours ahead of those of us in PST, and Tuesday night in Israel is already busy...

Foreign ministers from Europe and the US have been coming into Israel to urge "restraint" and not counterattack Iran. "After all", they say, "almost no missiles landed". They, along with the U.N., are also pressuring both privately and publicly for Israel not to attack any of Iran's nuclear bomb uranium processing sites because of "danger"... yet these same countries seem to have had no issue with Iran and made no statements when Iran was sending ballistic missiles towards an Israeli nuclear facility. The UN Atomic

Energy Agency is especially expressing great concern about any Iranian nuclear facility being a target; although they have been and are extremely silent about Iran having those illegal facilities in the first place.

At the same time, Hezbollah has launched nearly one hundred rocket attacks this evening towards Israel, and the US Air Force has announced that all US bases in the Middle East are on maximum alert tonight. Iran has emptied their nuclear facilities of people, and promised to send more missiles at Israel "as soon as the first plane takes off". As of a few hours ago, GPS and Internet disruptions began in Lebanon.

In Gaza, the United Arab Emirates is preparing to establish 5 large humanitarian shelter complexes in the Gaza Strip with the aim of taking care of displaced people from Rafah. It would seem that the operation in Rafah will commence soon, as will some sort of measured counterattack on Iran... but with all the worldwide pressure for Israel to just stand down, it is unclear what those responses will be.

...and so we must continue to pray for safety and strength for Israel, her land, and her people. In terms of actions we can all do, here is a brief excerpt from the Dvar Torah I gave a few weeks ago about what every Jew can do right now to help Israel:



Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 16, 2024

8th of Nisan, 5784

April 17th 2024 at 7:43 am PDT

Hezbollah, and We Wait

Chevre

The day in Israel has been one of waiting while we hear the world tell is not to respond to Iran's attacks. At the same time, Iran's proxy if Hezbollah continues to send rockets; and some hit a community center in the north, causing 6 serious injuries and 1 critical. During evacuation by helicopter, two more rounds of rockets were launched.

Hasn't the world been screaming that it's a war crime to attack medical personnel? I'm just saying...

And we wait to see what will or will not be Israel and the world's response to the weekend attacks.

And we pray....

And I hope to see some of you at class tonight about how to make this year's Passover experience more powerful, and how to use it to help create victory and peace in Israel. 7:30pm tonight at Stonehaus at Westlake Village Inn, and we will learn together some of the hidden secrets of Passover...secrets that can aid Israel in her time of need

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 17, 2024

9th of Nisan, 5784

April 17th 2024 at 10:20 am PDT

Tonight's Class on Passover and the War in Israel

Chevre

Tonight's Talmud and Tobacco monthly study session at 7:30pm at Stonehaus will be about the hidden secrets of Passover, but also so much more... (and yes, there is a non-smoking area for those who prefer not to have the cigars around them).

We will go into detail about how to make Passover an event that helps bring victory and peace in Israel. Besides some of the hidden kabbalistic secrets of the Seder and the holiday, we will be delving into specific ways to utilize the holiday and the Seder in the circumstances facing the world today. There are things each of us can do during our holiday celebration that will help Israel,

her land, and her people...and I hope you will come join in the discussion and learning.

I hope you will join us tonight, and that I never against have to teach these particular secrets about war in Passover.

7:30pm Tonight at **Stonehaus at the Westlake Village Inn.**

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 17th, 2024

9th of Nissan, 5784

April 18th 2024 at 12:37 am PDT

Who Knows?

Chevre

What is happening in Israel seems to be confusing, and certainly has machinations within machinations...

Let's start simply. In the last 24 hours, the IAF struck Hezbollah infrastructure targets in the north that were used by their aerial defense system; destroyed multiple Hezbollah targets in the area of Khiam (southern Lebanon); and accomplished very targeted strikes in Gaza, destroying vehicles hiding terrorists, mortar launchers in Rimal, and eliminating the head of Hamas' Security Dept, Yussef Shabat, dealing a severe blow to Hamas' investigative abilities.

But what about Iran?

It had been released that the war cabinet had approved two different plans to retaliate against Iran. But not only has that not happened, but Netanyahu has said that those plans are shelved for now, and many Israeli officials say a reprisal will not happen until after Passover.

Huh?

But a deeper look at what is being said and done may give us some gleanings ("may" being the important word). Rumors from anonymous sources in both Israel and US governments say that a deal was struck between Biden and Netanyahu that if Israel held back, the US would be supportive of Israel going into Rafah. An unnamed Egyptian official in Qatar told Al-Araby Al-Jadeed "The American administration showed acceptance of the plan previously presented by the occupation government regarding the military operation in Rafah, in exchange for not carrying out a large-scale attack against Iran"

Officials in Israel are saying that there will be a reprisal, and that it will probably be less than the ones approved by the cabinet. But if delaying the reprisal against Iran means that the US will stay out of Israel's way in completing the mission in Rafah, it is worth it. Business leaders and local officials in northern towns are implying that the time will come to deal with Tehran, but that cleaning Gaza is a higher priority for now.

So the real answer is that things are unclear...although trading attacking Iran right now for the ability to finish Hamas in Rafah seems like a worthwhile trade... especially given that Israel can go after Tehran in the future.

As we prepare for Passover, let us continue to pray and act for the freedom, security, safety, and peace in Israel

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 18, 2024

10th of Nisan, 5784

April 18th 2024 at 7:16 pm PDT

Israel Has Attacked Iran

Chevre

Please say prayers for Israel, her land, and her people. It has been confirmed that Israel has attacked sites in Iran, and may have in Syria and Lebanon (unconfirmed).

I will send out emails periodically as news is confirmed, but please open your hearts and spirits for God to bless Israel with safety, protection, and ultimately peace.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 18, 2024

10th of Nisan, 5784

April 18th 2024 at 9:22 pm PDT

An Update...

Chevre

All sorts of things are going on, and the only thing to be sure of is that we need to recognize that we are rarely ever able to fully and accurately know what is going on in the world (well, and to never trust x/twitter or instagram as news sources...even when they are right, it just proves that even a broken clock is right twice per day).

So what do we know...

We know for certain that there was a vote in the UN Security Council about granting Palestinians full member status in the UN, and that the United States vetoed the resolution.

Reports have come in from all sources including Israel, the US, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Iran...and many of them are conflicting. It seems that they all agree that Israel has attacked Iran in a "limited" way; but the IDF will not address US reports that Israel attacked Iran...so even that is not totally clear.

Israel said earlier that they would not attack nuclear facilities; and Iran has said the opposite: that they are still considering whether they would be willing to attack an Israeli nuclear facility or not. There have been reports that are unconfirmed that there has been action over Syria and Lebanon...but again, these are not confirmed.

Reuters, the New York Times, Bloomberg, and other international news sources are all giving conflicting stories citing "anonymous" officials. The US embassy in Jerusalem has been confirmed to be on a security alert, but again, that could mean any number of things.

So what does this mean?

It means that just as it has been for days, weeks, and months (and honestly, years and decades) that Israel is in potential conflict with enemies that want its destruction. It means that, as always, Israel is in potential danger.

And it means that every one of us needs to do two things:

Pray. We must open our hearts and pray for the safety of Israel, her people, and her land. As we do in the Mi Sheberach prayer, we must remind God of His covenant to always protect us. We all must go to sleep with the prayers in our hearts to be for Israel, and to allow our souls to enter the dream state with the deepest of our spirits' prayers.

And we must act. Please go to any Jewish charity that you know of and make a contribution. It doesn't matter which charity, and it doesn't matter how much. What does matter is that give the charity in honor and in the name of Israel, her people, and her land. Even a few dollars makes a difference: the key is that you give that tzedaka specifically with the intent in your heart that it is for the protection and safety of Israel.

To help you with really feeling those prayers in your heart, here are a few videos to open up your emotions. Our prayers are ALWAYS more powerful when they come from our emotions rather than our intellect.

Prayer for the IDF:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=7dxk9kUTAp&pp=ygUQTWkgc2hYmVyYWNoIGlkZg%3D%3D>

A Prayer and Reminder that We are All One People:

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=H_c2MZkpCag&pp=ygUIQW0uZWNoYWQ%3D

A reminder from only 3 weeks ago of the joy and faith in Israel...and that we will NEVER be afraid (this is all in Hebrew with no English subtitles):

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=rwXfO8RRHsU&pp=ygUPQW0ueWlzcmlbC5jaGFp>

And a reminder that the People of Israel Will Always Live - Am Yisrael Chai:

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=2p3rtnQ_7y4&pp=ygUUQS55aXNyYWVsLmNoYWkgZ29sYW4%3D

When other confirmed information becomes available, I will send out more emails....

Let us pray and act...and always have faith

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 18, 2024

11th of Nisan, 5784

April 24th 2024 at 7:55 pm PDT

Let's Catch Up With What is Happening

Chevre

First let me apologize for not sending out emails for the last few days. I was sick, and then observing these first two days of Pesach. So let's try to catch up together...

At the front of all news are the campus "demonstrations" that are taking place at Columbia and all over the nation. These are not only virulent Jew hatred actions, but are way too similar to Germany in the 1930s, when Jewish faculty and students were prevented from attending their universities. All of these are illegal according to Title VI, yet most universities are not stopping them by calling in law enforcement. These are not "free speech" demonstrations, but "camps" that take over campuses and terrorize Jewish students.

What may be scariest about these events is how they are so "cult-like", with ignorant students (the future leaders of our country?) following and repeating chants of hate that their leaders are saying. You can see and hear how are youths are becoming zombie-like followers of Jew hatred:

<https://www.tiktok.com/@the.free.press/video/7360846965288013086>

It says everything that Hamas put out an official statement of support for these college campus riots. Netanyahu gave a speech today pointing out the similarities to 1930s Germany, and calling on the world to "not stand idly by".

133 hostages are still being held, although best estimates is that there are probably only 20-40 still alive, if that.

While the world, especially the United States, pressured Israel not to attack Rafah during the Moslem holiday of Ramadan, they have been noticeably silent about the many rockets launched at Israel by Hamas and Hezbollah during Passover; including the increase in attacks on Monday night.

As a result of Israel taking out Iranian radars that protect Iranian nuclear plants without even entering Iranian air space; Iran has been moving radars into Syria. The IDF has also been positioning itself for preparations to finally go into Rafah, despite the Asst. Sec. of State saying today, "We did not give the green light for military operations in Rafah". At the same time, Israel has been helping Palestinians who don't want to stay in Rafah to evacuate the area.

So there is chaos domestically; Jew hatred everywhere (it has now become popular with pundits like Tucker Carlson, who is openly sharing his support for Palestine and against Israel); and Israel is about to escalate military actions, still being committed to rescuing hostages and avoiding unnecessary loss of life.

What can we do?

We can take a lesson from our Sages and tradition: we must pray and act during this time of Passover.

We must pray with all our emotions for the protection of Israel, of Jews worldwide, and especially for Jewish college students. And we must act. Although I have not been a fan of recent actions of the ADL, they are the forefront in the campuses. Hillel clubs on campuses around the nation need financial help to fight this college tide. And always we should support local Jewish organizations and synagogues. But...

If/when we make any donation, however small or large to whatever organization, we MUST have an inner intention (kavannah) that the donation is for the protection of Jews both home and abroad; both in Israel and in college. A donation is good; but in combination with a prayer and intention it is not only good... it is powerful.

In 1973, Israel was attacked on the holiday of Yom Kippur. The Beatles song "Let it Be" was transformed into a prayer for Israel: Lu Y'hi. This song is as true today as it was during the Yom Kippur war, and we need to feel the pain and the hope for a better world for Israel, for all Jews, and for the world.

***"Amid a neighborhood in shadows
Waits a small house all alone
All that we request, let it be
The summer ends, the journey's over
Let them please at last come home
All that we request, let it be"***



Please God, please, protect all Jews, in Israel and in college; in America, Israel, and the world; and please let the soldiers and the hostages come home. All that we request, please let it be. Kol Sh'Nevakesh Lu Y'Hi.

Pray. Act. And always have faith, no matter how dark the world seems.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 24, 2024

17th of Nisan, 5784

2nd day of the Omer

April 25th 2024 at 5:19 pm PDT

We Are Experiencing A VERY Weird and Dangerous World

Chevre

Recently I have started feeling like Alice in Wonderland as our world gets curiouser and curiouser.

College campuses around the country are being taken over by "encampments" of pro-palestinian professional demonstrators mixed in with clueless college students (is that redundant?), many of whom don't even know what they are demonstrating for. Some college administrators are having them dispersed through law enforcement; but the majority are kowtowing and just letting it happen, despite the threats on Jewish students and faculty. USC locked down its campus, UCLA is being taken over at Royce Plaza, and many of the schools around the country are resorting to a "hybrid" class situation where students can finish their classes online.

The question that no one seems to be able to answer is: How is it that all these encampments have the same microphone systems, the same language of cult-like "call and response" from the leaders, and how all these encampments seem to all have the same tents being put up? (Mat Gurman suggested that they all shop at "Terrorists R Us"). It is as if they are all coordinated together. What is clear is that they have all been officially endorsed and complimented by Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran's Ayatollah.

Israel is again being pressured in multiple ways. In order to comply with "international law", Israel is being forced to allow two foreign representatives to visit the prisoners who committed the heinous crimes on Oct. 7, to make sure that (and this is a quote) "they are getting enough fresh fruit and are not getting too much processed meat". According to the Geneva Convention, they have no rights as "unlawful combatants", and should be charged for "crimes against humanity"... but the world wants to protect them while ignoring the hostages...

Senior Hamas official Khalil al-Haya told Al Jazeera that the problem with hostage negotiations is that Israel is not willing to meet Hamas' demands that the IDF fully withdraw from Gaza; implement a total ceasefire which would last 6 weeks before any hostage is returned; and release 50 prisoners that have been sentenced to life imprisonment for each female hostage. And so, much of the world's media is blaming the keeping of the hostages on Israel for not accepting such a deal. An Egyptian delegation is expected to arrive in Israel tomorrow to

negotiate a deal that Hamas will accept.

The US has started building an aid pier...a portable sea pier offshore of the Gaza strip. The IDF is committing an entire reserve brigade to secure the work. Just yesterday, the area was attacked by Hamas rockets as UN officials toured the site, which is apparently Israel's fault for not providing enough security. This is in spite of the reality that there is already an overabundance of food being let into Gaza... so much so that people are hoarding it and selling it at a quarter of what the same food costs in Israel proper.

What we are experiencing is almost unbelievable, except that it is happening.

But we are never to be scared, as God is always with us, even if He seems absent. And so we must pray and act. Pray from the depths of our emotions, and act with courage.

One thing that we can all do for both prayer and action is to gather together this Monday night, April 29 at 7:00pm at our synagogue for a last night Seder. The last night of Passover is when our ancestors stood without any "reasonable hope" at the edge of the Sea of Reeds, the uncrossable waters in front of them and Pharaoh's army approaching them from the rear. They had faith and acted in that terrifying night, and God opened the Sea for them to cross safely.

We too must always retain hope that the world will change for us as it did our ancestors; and we will cross this sea of craziness around us into safety. I hope you will join us on Monday, April 29 at 7:00pm for this Seder. (Although rsvps are not required, please let Orlando know if you are coming at Events@NerSimcha.org to make it easier to prepare... but if you don't get around to emailing him, show up anyway!)

Chag Sameach and Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 25, 2024

17th of Nisan, 5784

2nd day of the Omer

April 26th 2024 at 1:22 am PDT

Colleges, Chaos, and Craziness

Chevre

While college campuses are getting filled with progressively more violent chants to kill Jews, we are also seeing some universities calling in police to break up these encampments; expelling students who are preaching hate; and more Jewish students willing to stand up and not be intimidated.

But sadly, many schools are still capitulating to this form of terrorism. Columbia is "negotiating" with a student who has released a video of himself from a university hearing in January that was streamed, saying that everyone "should be grateful he's not just going out and murdering Zionists...Zionists don't deserve to live." Rather than expelling this young man in January, Columbia let him attend school this semester and is now "negotiating" with him about the taking over of the school. (Given that this student identifies as "he/she/they" there is an additional irony that if he went to Gaza, Hamas would immediately execute him for his sexuality.)

Today began more intense demonstrating at UCLA. At USC, they have closed the campus and cancelled graduation ceremonies. This is especially sad as the graduating seniors probably missed their high school graduations four years ago due to Covid lockdowns. College seems to no longer be about learning, but about surrendering to the loudest, most threatening voices on campus.

In Israel, a civilian was killed in an anti-tank missile attack by Hezbollah on Thursday night, bringing the total deaths on the Lebanon border to nine civilians and 11 IDF.

As it becomes clear that Israel is about to enter Gaza, we see Hamas now calling for more negotiations; and Blinken has now scheduled a trip to Israel to arrive on Tuesday, after Passover is over. His mission is released as, "to discuss the operation in Gaza and to secure a deal for a total pause in the fighting for hostage releases". He is coming to Israel even as the White House is "demanding" answers about the Hamas claim that Israel dug mass graves at Gaza hospital...despite a vast amount of proof that the mass graves were actually dug by Gazans.

As the chaos and craziness of the world increases, it becomes ever more important to stay connected in a Jewish community, and to pray fervently and act courageously... let us all have the strength and passion to do both.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 26, 2024

18 of Nisan, 5784

3rd day of the Omer

April 26th 2024 at 7:32 pm PDT

IMPORTANT FOR EVERYONE'S SAFETY (not about Israel)

Chevre

A rally has been planned for this Sunday at 1:00pm in memory of Paul Kessler z"l. Please do not attend this event this weekend, there is nothing to be gained from it, and a lot to lose.

The police are preparing for the rally as counter demonstrators may also be present. It is a hotbed for potential violence if pro-Hamas people show up. These kind of demonstrations don't affect any policies or actions, and very easily can escalate into violence, as we are seeing on college campuses around the nation.

Immediately after Oct 7, there were weekly demonstrations, and each week I sent out an email suggesting that everyone stay away from them. As we all know, one of these events resulted in Paul's death. Passions are even higher now, tensions are greater, and violence is becoming more accepted.

Please do not attend this event as nothing good can come from it. It would be better to gather as a Jewish community in prayer at a last night Seder, Shabbat, or class..which are safer and accomplish more.

It is sad to say, but if Paul had heeded the emails and not attended that rally

months ago, he would have been able to celebrate Passover with his family.

May we all stay safe and protected in these challenging times, and may the Holy One, blessed be He, and his Presence protect Israel, her land, and her people.

Shabbat Shalom and Chag Sameach

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 26, 2024

18th of Nisan, 5784

3rd day of the Omer

April 27th 2024 at 11:31 pm PDT

Psy-Ops, Security, and Suits

Chevre

Hamas has released a 3 minute video of 2 hostages, addressed to the Israeli people and with the hostages pleading for the Israeli government to make a deal, any deal, so that they can come home. The entire purpose of this video, similar to one sent last Wednesday, is to sow divisiveness in Israel and around the world. It is an attempt to get Israeli citizens and the world to prevent the government from going into Rafah and clearing out the remaining 4 Hamas battalions there.

Here in the US, the world just keeps getting more anti-Israel and anti-Jew. The New York Times reports that Biden has said that if Israel goes into Rafah, he will personally cut off all arms sales from the US to Israel. This is after his comment earlier this weekend that he will only accept zero civilian casualties from any attack Israel does. Many college campuses around the country have been taken over by encampments of pro-Hamas students and outside activists; and most of the campus administrations are demonstrating that they would rather cancel classes and even graduation ceremonies (USC among others) rather than remove these illegal trespassers on public property who are constantly threatening

violence to Jewish students.

At 8:15pm tonight, the LAPD issued a city wide tactical alert in response to disturbances by USC.

In the north of Israel, there were 26 rockets sent by Hezbollah, which were then returned with non stop counter-attacks by Israel into southern Lebanon. While the IDF prepares for Rafah, the IAF (air force) is working diligently and effectively in the north.

I know there is a feeling of impotency combined with a desire to something... anything... to combat this tide of Jew hatred that is being expressed in so many ways. And there are things you can do, and also things not to do as they are not wise and will not lead to the desired outcomes.

What not to do? Don't attend this rally in Westlake tomorrow. As has been said before, these types of events are powder kegs waiting to explode... and while it may "feel good" to be with some other Jews on a street corner, it will accomplish nothing in terms of policy changes. Marching on a street corner is playing directly into what these provocateurs desire. Additionally, you may be subject to misdemeanor or felony charges for unlawful assembly, disturbing the peace, or failure to disperse. Similarly, please don't go down to UCLA or USC to protest or walk through the encampments... again it plays into their hands and accomplishes nothing.

What to do? Act and pray. If you have a child at any college that is allowing these Jew hating demonstrations and/or closing classes, etc.... it means that you are a potential stakeholder in suits against that university. The courts have determined that it is "free speech" until there is a "substantial disruption". If your child's classes have been cancelled or worse, you have experienced a substantial disruption and you are a stakeholder in a potential suit, and should immediately contact an attorney. When enough suits are filed, the colleges around this country will remove these vandals for fear of financial loss. There are many law firms that are taking on these cases in the last week, including Dignity Law (www.DignityLawGroup.com), who are members of our own temple community. This is one way to stop the craziness on campuses, but you must be a stakeholder directly affected and it must reach the standard of

"substantial disruption".

Those of you who know me well know that I do not back down from righteous causes, but it is important to temper our passion with wisdom; and to act in ways that will actually make a difference. And there are many proactive ways to do that.

Write or call your local representatives (Jaqui Irwin Henry Stern, et al) and let them know that as a Jew, you are feeling unsafe, and how you expect them to create a safe environment... reminding them that this is also an election year. Support Israel with your volunteer efforts and/or finances. Educate others about the actual goings on in Israel and Gaza, as well as the honest history of the region; and don't ever let someone spew lies about Israel without confronting them with the truth. To remain silent is a tacit form of approval; and the old saying is true that all evil needs to succeed is for good men to do nothing.

And gather together in safe environments as Jews. At our synagogue, like many, there is always armed security at every service, class, and event; and local law enforcement are aware of every temple gathering. And when you gather to learn, commune, or just enjoy each other's company...always pray as a group. Prayer is powerful, and as Rabbi Heschel z"l taught, either prayer means everything... or it means nothing.

In that vein, I hope you will join the community this Monday night at 7:00pm for a last night Passover Seder at the temple. The last night of Pesach teaches us how to act by integrating courage, wisdom, and faith; and the lessons of our ancestors are especially applicable in the chaos and hatred of today's world. I hope to see you on Monday, and although not required, please let Orlando know at Events@NerSimcha.org if you are coming so that we have at least an idea of how many plates to set.

Pray. Act. Let our faith and traditions determine our actions; and bring us the wisdom to act in ways that actually lead to success in defeating and destroying the evil of the modern Amaleks and Pharaohs... without damaging our own souls in the process.

I look forward to seeing you on Monday night, Shavuah Tov, and Chag Sameach.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 27th, 2024

20th of Nisan, 5784

5th day of the Omer

April 28th 2024 at 11:59 pm PDT

Negotiations, Bananas, and the Last Night Seder

Chevre

Israel has started moving (slowly) into Rafah with three air strikes, and "suddenly" Hanas is acting positively towards a proposed deal for some hostages to be returned in exchange for some sort of cessation of military activities from Israel. Descriptions of the deal are all over the map, but the one thing that seems consistent from "sources" is that Israel would receive 20-40 hostages in exchange for many times that number of released arabs terrorists currently in Israeli prisons; Israel would not go into Rafah and might even pull out of much if not all of Gaza; and that there would need to be weeks (reports vary as to how many) of cessation before any hostages are released. But this is all conjecture, much of which is based on "anonymous sources". What is clear is that an Israeli delegation has been invited back to Cairo to discuss details.

Domestically, there were demonstrations and counter demonstrations at college campuses all over the country, and a number of colleges including Humboldt here in California have chosen to close their campuses until next autumn. And many pro-Israel supporters have now adopted a symbol of a banana: there were complaints at UCLA from the Jew hating side that someone in the UCLA terror zone was allergic to bananas, and pro-Israel supporters were throwing and waving bananas...which were scaring the person with the allergy. As a result, pro Israel supporters around the country are now showing banana images and holding bananas. We have moved from the unbelievable and into the absurd: as terrorist camps on college campuses are chanting for Jews to die, and being scared of a fruit. (Why do I keep thinking of the old Woody Allen film "Bananas"). Perhaps we should put bananas on our last night Seder plate on Monday night?

Hezbollah has continued to launch rockets in the north, and 5 unmanned drones were shot down over the Red Sea.

The Chief Rabbi of Israel has made it clear again that in this time of war, the normal prohibitions of Shabbat and holidays do not apply. Pikuach Nefesh (saving a life) trumps all else, and in these times of war, communication between Jews and in a community are more important than the typical holiday prohibitions.

Community gatherings are so important on so many levels, and I hope you will join us on Monday at 7:00pm at the temple for a last night Passover Seder. This is an evening of dedicating ourselves to actions based on faith, and especially important this year. Our Mekabulim have also taught that this ritual is an opportune time to find your beshert...your life/love partner, as well as a good sign for having children. I hope to see you for this Seder, and that we all commit ourselves to action based in faith.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 28, 2024

21st of Nisan, 5784

6th day of the Omer

April 30th 2024 at 7:56 am PDT

Dorms, Drones, and Deals

Chevre

The craziness on college campuses continues with "encampments" around the country prohibiting Jews, and anyone who disagrees with them, from getting to class. There were multiple incidents of violence and injury around the country, including many instances of mace being by protestors. A number of colleges started threatening suspension today, with Columbia saying that all students still involved would be suspended after 2pm. But the time came and went, and what did happen at Columbia is that professional burglars burst into a couple of halls

on campus; and protestors broke down the doors of Hamilton Hall (which connects to some of the Columbia dorms) and have barricaded themselves inside... placing an "Intifada" flag in the building and insisting they will not leave until their demands are met. (Which are vague, but include Columbia divesting itself from anything Israeli.) This does not look like it will end well for anyone. Many police forces around the country feel their hands are tied as the university's campus security and administration have said they don't want the local police on campus. This is what the LAPD announced about UCLA, today, which also had some violent episodes on campus.

Attacks continue on Israel while American and Egypt claim that a deal is close between Israel and Egypt. Hamas for their part left Egypt to consult with their billionaire masters in Qatar; and Israel decided not to send a delegation to Cairo after all. Hamas has been more inspired to make some sort of hostage trade as they see Israel is closer to going into Rafah, but there is no deal at this time.

As we finish this first week of the counting of the Omer, let us have the courage to let God's light shine through our words and actions in the physical world.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 30, 2024

22nd of Nisan, 5784

7th day of the Omer

April 30th 2024 at 11:27 pm PDT

Some Changes Today...

Chevre

As of a few hours ago, the NYPD went into Columbia and started arresting the criminals who had taken over Hamilton Bldg on campus.

At the same time, Israel has created a "safe zone" for Rafah citizens who want to evacuate before the upcoming IDF incursion to eliminate the Hamas battalions in

Rafah. Additionally, the IAF struck Hezbollah infrastructure targets in Southern Lebanon.

Locally, at California Baptist Univ., there was an attempt to create a pro-Hamas encampment. Bishop Juan Carlos Mendez went and spoke with the University President, and then contacted the Riverside Sheriff. Together with the Sheriffs, they went to the newly formed encampment. They calmly explained to the protestors there that they were on campus property, and that while that allowed them to study, go to class, etc., it did not give them the right to set up an encampment. They were told that they had a choice: they could either disband; or they would be expelled from the school; be ex-communicated from their church; and would be arrested and placed in the Sheriff buses that were present to take them to jail. When confronted with those realities, the protestors immediately took everything down and left. Upon investigation, Bishop Juan Carlos and the Sheriffs discovered that all of the tents had been purchased with credit cards that were all linked together, and not in the students' names.

This was an example of effectively and safely combatting the Jew hatred that was infiltrating the campus. For other ways to deal with the Jew hatred surrounding us, I hope you will join the community tomorrow night, **Wednesday May 1 at 7:30 pm at the Stonehaus for our class on "Is Never Again Now?"**. There will be armed security at class for everyone's safety, and we will learn how our Sages taught to deal with these troubling times.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

April 30, 2024

23rd of Nisan, 5784

8th day of the Omer

1 week and 1 day of Counting the Omer

May 5th 2024 at 12:30 pm PDT

Yom HaShoah is More Than Remembering the Holocaust

Chevre

Tonight at sunset, May 5, begins the holiday known around the world as “Holocaust Remembrance Day”, or “Yom HaShoah” (*shoah* being the Hebrew word for holocaust). Anti-Semites will rejoice at the holiday commemorating the death of Jews, and pro-palestinian supporters of terrorism will make extra efforts to demonstrate that the Holocaust was just the beginning. The world will argue about the fate of Israel; the safety of Jewish college students: and the weakness of a Jewish people who celebrate as a holiday the event of six million of their own being killed. The holiday will be used as a demonstration that Jews are “victims” who celebrate their own demise; and that it is only a matter of time before, as the [Hamas Charter phrases it, the “Day of Judgment will come and every Jew obliterated”](#). These Jew haters, who have come out of the closet and so clearly revealed themselves in the last seven months, use this holiday as a goal rather than a warning. We can be assured that in the halls of the United Nations and on college campuses, there will be discussions about how the Nazis didn’t finish the job, how the world would be better if the Jews just disappeared, and how grateful these Jew haters to Hamas et al for what they did on Oct. 7.

And in doing so, they betray their ignorance on every level; for this is actually not “Holocaust Remembrance Day” at all. The actual name of this holiday is “The Day of Remembrance of the Holocaust and for Strength” (*Yom Hazikaron l’Shoah v’legevurah*).

This is not a day about the tragedies of the Holocaust, and the focus of this day is and has always been about the powerful strength of the Jewish people, as is exemplified by the Jewish resistance fighters in WWII, specifically the heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt. More than a day of mourning, it is a day of inspiration. More than a day of sadness, it is a day of committing to do what is necessary to stop evil. More than a day of remembering the victims of the death camps, it is a day of remembering the courageous heroes who shut down the Nazis... as well as the Jewish military heroes who against all odds stopped evil throughout history.

And there is a 3500 year history of Jewish courage succeeding against the greatest military empires of world history, despite the odds. The ancient Hebrews under the leadership of Joshua over 3000 years ago. The Jews of Jerusalem 2700 years ago, who defeated the Assyrian Empire in their Siege of Jerusalem (you can still walk the underground tunnel they dug that led to their victory in [City of Jerusalem tours](#)) and forced the greatest empire of its time to

go back home in defeat. The Maccabees, who stopped and defeated the mighty Seleucid Greek empire in 167 B.C.E. Masada, in the first century, in which 960 Jews held off Roman military battalions for almost two years; which was followed a few years later with the Bar Kochba Revolt, which held an independent nation of Israel against the might of the entire Roman Empire for four years. The successful Jewish victories against empire after empire for two thousand years from Europe to Persia to China and back to the Middle East in the early 20th century.

And this holiday especially remembers the inspiration of the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt, in which a Jewish flag was raised over the ghetto in Warsaw, and 700 unarmed “soldiers” held off the entire German war machine longer than the entire nation of Poland, and handed the Nazis their greatest propaganda defeat, showing that the Germans could and would be defeated.

These victories and acts of courage is what this holiday is actually about, not gas chambers. These are the reasons that, when the first commemoration occurred in 1951, the symbol for the holiday was a bronze statue of Mordecai Anielewicz, the leader of the Warsaw uprising. It is why the original full name of the holiday as determined by the Israeli Parliament was “Holocaust and Ghetto Uprising Remembrance Day”.

The enemies of Israel should probably remember these facts: that this is less a day of mourning victims, and more a day of honoring warriors for freedom.

Many people throughout history have mistaken a commitment to peace for weakness. They view the Jewish attitude towards treasuring each individual life as if it is a sign of fear. They fail to recognize that at the core of Judaism is the importance of every life... Jewish and non-Jewish. They mistake Israel’s recalcitrance to quickly destroy her enemies as a weakness that can be exploited rather than what it really is: a commitment to the sanctity of every one of God’s creations. Israel does not hesitate to fight because of fear of defeat, but out of concern that in victory we could lose our own souls by becoming as out of control as our enemies, God forbid.

And the enemies of Israel forget the other teaching of this holiday that is hidden in plain sight. Israel, and the Jewish people’s greatest weapon is not the Iron Dome nor it’s weaponry; not the air force or special forces; not America nor any

foreign power. Israel's greatest ally is God, who has demonstrated for over 3000 years that He will always keep His covenant.

Because of the value placed on each life, Jews are slow to resort to physical confrontation. But history, and this holiday, has shown repeatedly that when tyrants and despots go too far, the Jewish people stand up. And as scary as it is on multiple levels, it appears as if that time may be starting to happen again, in our time.

After trying negotiation and kindness, [Jewish students started in the last week to make a stand to stop the domestic terrorism](#) on college campuses; forcing law enforcement to come in and destroy those encampments at Columbia, UCLA, and elsewhere. Since the horrible tragedies in Pittsburgh and Poway, every synagogue I know of (including ours) has armed security present. [Jewish gun ownership has radically increased](#) since the BLM riots, and many temple congregants bring their firearms to their synagogue services. But while Jews are preparing for physical conflict, we pray for a peace achieved without violence multiple times per day.

This holiday is about strength, and this means the courage to try to work out issues without violence or war. To create peace and safety on college campuses without more destruction. To return the hostages home and have a lasting peace with her neighbors before Israel's only alternative is even greater destruction. This holiday also inspires us with the courage of our ancestors when all other alternatives have been exhausted. It is a reminder for us and for the world that if pushed too far, Israel and the Jewish people will not let a holocaust of Jews happen. **"Never Again"** means what it says.

It would behoove us all for the world to remember what this holiday of Remembrance of the Holocaust and for Strength is about; and that the world comes to its senses before we see the descendants of the Maccabees and Warsaw Ghetto forced to act in ways reminiscent of their ancestors.

In Judaism, the goal of conflict is peace, not victory. Not a cessation of violence, but a lasting peace, which history has shown can sometimes only be achieved as a result of violence. Yet we continue to pray and act for that miracle of peace to be reached in other ways.

May we all pray for that peace to be found without violence; and for the world to put aside Jew hatred and replace it with harmony and respect... lest the focus of the days following this holiday become filled with even more hate and pain, God forbid.

Am Yisrael Chai, the People of Israel live; and Am Echad, we are one people! Let the strength of our ancestors remind us of this truth, and may we truly have a lasting peace in our time.

Chag Sameach, and Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 5th, 2024

27th of Nisan, 5784

12th day of the Omer

May 6th 2024 at 7:40 am PDT

They Will Not Have Died in Vain

Chevre

Again, please forgive my recalcitrance in not keeping up with daily emails about Israel. With God's help, my recent health issues are in the process of being resolved (but then again, many of you may not even have noticed emails have not been consistent for the last week and a half lol)

Today at 10:00am, sirens rang through Israel, traffic and business was paused, and the people of Israel were atill for two minutes as they remembered those who died in the Holocaust. As has been discussed, this holiday is also about Jewish strength, and the people of the Holy Land are committed to that strength.

Yesterday, Hamas launched a barrage of rockets from Gaza, which killed three soldiers and wounded over ten civilians. Senior Hamas official Marzouk made an official statement rejecting any form of hostage deal without Israel entirely withdrawing from Gaza; releasing "prisoners" (terrorists guilty of capital crimes currently in Israeli prisons); lifting any form of blockade, and having a permanent

ceasefire that would "add Russia, Turkey, and China as guarantors" because Hamas has determined "American guarantees cannot be trusted".

In other words, they are making the exact same demands they have been making for months to get our hostages released.

Defense Minister Gallant responded by saying that the Israeli operation in Rafah is about to start; and leaflets were dropped throughout Rafah with instructions to move to temporary humanitarian safe areas; and these messages were also sent out via SMS texts, phone calls, and media broadcasts in Arabic. CIA Chief Bill Burns arrives Monday afternoon in Israel to try to pressure/convince Israel to make more concessions to make a hostage deal.

Domestically, Jew hatred on campuses is continuing; with Politico reporting that "activists" on college campuses are not leaving during the summer breaks until/unless their demands are met. It has also been released that after investigations in multiple cities, .any of these "organic protests" are actually being paid for by the same groups/organizations. Many of the arrests at Columbia, CUNY, UCLA, and other schools were not of students, but of paid professional protestors. Numerous schools had their graduation ceremonies this weekend, many of which, such as Univ of Chicago, Univ of Michigan, and more were crashed by pro-hamas demonstrators, who disrupted the graduations.

It would seem that it will be a summer of demonstrations in the United States; and that Israel will actually be going into Rafah to remove Hamas battalions in the immediate future... but as with all things related to Israel, plans can change in a moment.

And so we must continue to act and pray... especially praying today that we have the courage and strength to not let the 6 million have died in vain, but rather to act in ways that strengthen Israel and the Jewish people worldwide.

The theme across the Jewish world today is "Never Again"... and I would add that this will always be true as long as we are committed to our faith and our people... and know that we really are "one people"... "Am Echad"

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 6, 2024

27th of Nisan, 5784

Yom HaShoah u'l'Gevurah

13th day of the Omer

May 7th 2024 at 1:06 am PDT

Rafah is Entered, & Hamas Manipulates the Media

Chevre

The IDF has started going into Rafah in extremely precise ways and after warnings and providing safe exits for anyone wanting to evacuate. Rafah crossing has been controlled by the IDF, and with the war cabinet's approval, the operation is commencing and proceeding forward with the intent of eliminating Hamas in the area.

Hamas immediately began manipulating the media, claiming they had approved a hostage deal for a ceasefire, and Israel is the one who doesn't want peace. I guess in some level they did approve a deal...but not one that Israel or anyone else negotiated...just the one that they have said all along: Israel leaves Gaza entirely; Hamas stays in power; Israel releases over 1000 convicted and imprisoned terrorists, and after a certain number of weeks, then Hamas would release 30 hostages, who may be alive or dead. But the worldwide media is carrying Hamas propaganda for them and portrays Israel as the villain... although some outlets are starting to report on the lunacy of what Hamas says and how they act.

The US has sent the aircraft carrier Eisenhower back to the Red Sea, which means that Biden/Blinken intend in putting more pressure on Israel to accept whatever deal is offered to them, no matter how dangerous it would be for Israel. Biden also said today that he is unilaterally deciding to hold back some of the precision bombs that have already been approved to go Israel.

May we all pray that the Israeli armed forces are protected and kept safe; and that they speedily liberate the people of Gaza from the Hamas terrorists who

seek to destroy Israel, America, and Western culture.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 7, 2024

29th of Nisan, 5784

14th day of the Omer

May 7th 2024 at 10:41 pm PDT

The News From Israel

Chevre

Israel intercepted rockets coming from both the north and south on Tuesday night: from Hezbollah in the north; and towards Eilat in the south from Hamas. Rockets were launched from Rafah where there is still a strong presence of Hamas; and there is footage of Hamas executing more Gazans who were trying to evacuate. The rockets fired from Rafah towards Kerem Shalom Crossing and the Reim area in the south are preventing any aid from getting into Gaza. Some of the projectiles were intercepted, and seven landed in open areas.

Hamas' rockets are preventing any aid to the people of Gaza; Hamas is executing Gazan civilians who seek to evacuate; and the world continues to condemn Israel. Hamas' "proposal" for a ceasefire takes none of Israel's needs into account, and would allow them to kill hostages before releasing them.

At the same time, President Biden has unilaterally refused to deliver the precision bombs that have already been approved and paid for by Israel. The irony (or plan?) is that without the precision bombs there will be more collateral damage in Rafah than there would be with the precise munitions. A growing movement has emerged in Israel to become "weapon independent" so that Israel can protect herself without being unduly influenced by other nations which may have different agendas; but that process will take time and be costly.

Oct. 7 was seven months ago; and one of the questions that Israelis keep asking

themselves is whether they should have just devastated Gaza quickly, as they question whether the world's reaction would have been any worse than it is now...

And so we must pray; act with our time, financial support, and energy; and "tie ourselves to Jewish communities" in support of each other, Israel, and the Jewish people.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 7, 2024

30th of Nisan, 5784

15th day of the Omer

May 9th 2024 at 6:08 am PDT

Simple and Disturbing...

Chevre

The major news in Israel is what most of us are aware of in the United States: President Biden on Wednesday made very clear and specific public comments about holding up weapons to Israel that Congress approved and Israel has paid for until/if/when there have been US reviews that approve Israel's plans in Rafah. This is the lead story in Israeli media, and is shocking and disturbing to many. It is especially foolish since these particular weapons are precision targeting, and would significantly decrease the collateral damage of Israel operations in Rafah. Without these arms, Israel will be forced to use weapons not as precise, with the corresponding effect on collateral damage.

Israel however, has been moving forward in going into Rafah, where Hamas battalions are still strong. Rockets were shot again today from Rafah at Israel, and Hamas even fired 3 rockets at the new US humanitarian aid pier. The IDF has already found complicated tunnel networks of Hamas in Rafah, and have eliminated two important Hamas leaders since Monday night.

Although there is no reason to believe this, it is hoped by both Israelis and Jewish Americans that Biden's words are for public consumption and to get political support from the anti-Israel wing of his party... and that in private conversations he has admitted that he is politically posturing, and expects Israel to go fully into Rafah.

Let us all pray and hope that this is the truth; for it would be very disturbing if in fact, the United States consciously chooses to abandon its only ally and the only democracy in that region.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 9, 2024

1st of Iyyar, 5784

16th day of the Omer

May 10th 2024 at 6:09 am PDT

More of the Same and Gut Shabbos

Chevre

Some days so seem like the day before, which may just be the nature; and like yesterday; Israel is still reeling from the shock of Biden's comments to unilaterally stop the delivery of precision weapons to Israel.

The IDF and IAF are performing dozens of small operations in Gaza, as well as strengthening the Israeli position in the North of Israel in expectation of even more conflict there. But where was little reported statement out of Tehran that Iran is considering developing and potentially using nuclear weapons, which they claim to be able to build. The statement said that Iran will change "nuclear doctrine if Israel strikes any nuclear facility".

College campus "encampments" continue to spring around the country; although counter groups typically composed of Jewish and religious Christian students are also pushing back in places.

I hope you will join us at Shabbat services tonight at 7:30pm in our sanctuary as we welcome the rest, wisdom, and joy of Shabbat into our hearts.

Chazak u'Baruch and Gut Shabbos

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 10; 2024

2nd of Iyyar, 5784

17th day of the Omer

May 11th 2024 at 8:30 pm PDT

A Multi-Faceted Shabbat In Israel

Chevre

Shavuah tov. Shabbat in Israel was marked with all sorts of unrelated happenings, but all affect the wellbeing and attitude in Israel.

14 rockets were launched by Hamas in Rafah at a children's playground in a densely populated area of Be'er Sheva, but thank God there were no serious injuries reported. The IDF responded and destroyed the launch site, which then led to more complaints about Israel acting in Rafah.

While America is trying to stop Israel and claiming that it would take months to evacuate civilians, this belies the reality that over 30% of Rafah civilians have already been evacuated in a few days. IDF spokesman Admiral Hagari gave a detailed statement about conflicts in the north and south, and reiterated the Israeli commitment to emptying Rafah of Hamas terrorists.

In an act that demonstrates the hypocrisy and double standard in the world, Egypt is now refusing to send aid trucks to Gaza until Israel withdraws. The world can now blame Israel for Egypt's actions; and show pictures of Gazans needing food which had been committed by Egypt, while blaming Israel for that food not being in Gaza.

In a seemingly bizarre move, the United States is now offering Israel information on locating Hamas leaders if Israel stays out of Rafah. Israel for her part needs to both eliminate Hamas leadership and destroy the battalions in Rafah, so we will see what they do.

In the midst of a war for our survival, the Israeli people united again...but this time around a singer. Eden Golan, representing Israel in the Eurovision competition became a symbol for Israel in the last 48 hours after qualifying for the finals. There were protests, violent demonstrations, and threats directed at her, as well as boos from the live crowd and comments from other performers that she should have been boycotted. Eurovision (for those like me who knew nothing about it) is a huge 37 country European cultural competition that also allows countries from "the rest of the world" (like Israel) to compete with original songs, and is judged by a combination of European judges and tele-voting. Eden did not do well with the judges, but did extremely well with the tele-voting, and ended up taking 5th place.

It says volumes about the resiliency of the Israeli people that they could celebrate a singer in the midst of a war; and right before Yom Hazikaron, which begins Sunday night.

And that is what we always need to remember about Israel and the Jewish people: we will always rebound with God's help; and will always celebrate life, passion, love, and the joy of living. While Hamas worships death, we worship life. While they seek to destroy, we seek to build. When they hate, we hope...

And that is how we know that Am Yisrael Chai is more than just words...it is the promise of a people who are unified and will always live.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 11, 2024

4th of Iyyar, 5784

19th day of the Omer

May 13th 2024 at 12:53 am PDT

Israel Memorial Day

Chevre

Tonight began Yom HaZikaron LeHalelei Ma'arkhot Yisrael ul'Nifge'ei Pe'ulot HaEiva - Memorial Day for the Fallen Soldiers of the Wars of Israel and Victims of Actions of Terrorism. It is Israel's Memorial Day, and we honor and remember those who have given their lives so that the Jewish people can be safe and free in their own land. At 11am on Monday in Israel, sirens will blare across the country; everyone stops what they are doing; people get out of their cars; and all is silent while the sirens blast and we remember the fallen. I have never been there during this time, but here is a video that shows the commitment of the Jewish people to always remembering and honoring our dead, and demonstrates the abiding truth of Am Echad...We Are One People.

<https://m.youtube.com/shorts/tPoTk-K8kqY>

As Israel prepared for this Monday morning, rockets were being fired again (it is a different sounding siren for alarm than it is for memorial). From Gaza, rockets were launched in the south as our people prepared to remember. While we rest in the comfort of our suburban homes, our Israeli brothers and sisters hear the sirens and have to go to shelters on an almost daily basis...especially those living in the south, where they are attacked by Hamas rockets from Gaza nearly every day. Still. It is a part of daily Israeli life. Now, with most of the Hamas battalions dismantled, most of these Gaza attacks come from Rafah; with launchers that are usually hidden and part of schools, hospitals, and residential neighborhoods.

This holiday is not just about remembering, but about recommitting ourselves to our people and land. It is easy to forget the many sacrifices that have been made to have our Jewish homeland; and it is excruciatingly painful to remember them...especially the horrors of October 7. But we must remember them, and we must always dedicate and rededicate ourselves over and over again to the Jewish values, beliefs, and practices that are the spiritual foundation of the State of Israel.

My friend and teacher of blessed memory, Rabbi Shlomo Schwartzie Schwartz z"l used to say that every Jew only has one real and permanent home: Israel. It is the only place in the world where we are not the minority, and the only place

that we will always be safe and welcome (one needs only look at the increase in American anti-Semitism and Jew hatred on American campuses to see the truth of Schwartzie's statement). Today is a day to remember that truth, and to recommit ourselves to the hope based on faith and action that a time will come, may it be soon, when Israel is at peace both internally and with her neighbors

So please take a few minutes today and pause... pause from your daily routine and direct your thoughts, prayers, and actions towards Israel. Make a financial donation to a Jewish organization in memory of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for Israel... for each of us. Say the Kaddish. Feel your connection to Israel, and her connection to you.

And remember that we are at our core a people of hope based on faith and history. Here is a video of IDF soldiers in Gaza from Sunday night, and their prayers for Israel as they sing Hatikvah

<https://twitter.com/i/status/1789717528148643880>

May we all have the courage to stand and act for Israel and the Jewish people at all times; the commitment to remembering and honoring those who have gone before us; and the strength to have faith that with God's help, peace will come to Israel in our time.

Chag Sameach, and in the name of those who have died for Israel and the Jewish people...

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 13, 2024

5th of Iyyar, 5784

Yom HaZikaron

29th day of the Omer

May 13th 2024 at 6:00 am PDT

Yom HaZikaron From Israel

Chevre

This video says more than I can say in words. Please take the two minutes to watch it, and let us all open our hearts and souls for all whom we have lost, May their memories be a blessing, and their families comforted among the mourners of Zion.



Chag sameach and Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 13, 2024

5th of Iyyar, 5784

Yom HaZikaron

20th day of the Omer

May 14th 2024 at 1:44 am PDT

Yom Ha'Atzmaut - Independence Day

Chevre

Today is Yom Ha'Atzmaut, Israeli Independence Day. As Israel is at war in multiple fronts, we also celebrate 76 years of the Magen David flag being flown over our homeland, the modern State of Israel.

The IDF is moving into Eastern Rafah, and rockets have again been launched at Israel by Hezbollah in the north; and from Hamas launchers in the city of Rafah, still the home of Hamas battalions, in the south of Israel.

Israel's news is buzzing with articles and tv shows about Biden. It has been a VERY bad week for him there as the Israeli people feel betrayed by him on the deepest level: his lack of response to the anti-Israel encampments on colleges; his unilateral withholding of weapons to Israel that Congress has approved; and now his statement about giving information about the locations of Hamas leaders. Biden said that if Israel withdraws from Rafah, America will give Israel the hidden locations of Hamas leadership. This last action has enraged many Israelis as it implies that Biden has known where these leaders are, but not given the information to Israel, and to make matters worse, is stating that he is using these locations to blackmail Israel to stay out of Rafah. Throughout this war, most Israeli media has been complimentary of Biden, but in the last few days he is being denigrated in the extreme for the weapons and for not just giving the locations of Hamas leaders to Israel...America's only ally in the region. Israel's faith in America as an ally and partner has been severely damaged; and even long term supporters of Biden like Haim Saban (one of Biden's largest financial supporters in 2020) has publicly called out the President.

Locally, the preliminary hearing on the Paul Kessler case begins today. Local law enforcement, led by Chief Jeremy Paris, and Sheriff Jim Fryhoff have been doing research for months, and District Attorney Erik Nasarenko has his top prosecutors on it, and has not only looked at massive amounts of videos, but has gone through huge amounts of witness statements to help determine what really went on during the sad day of Paul's death. These are all amazing men filled with integrity, and I have total faith that whatever they choose to do today will be just and righteous, and will employ the best strategy. They are conscious of the needs of our Jewish community, and are committed to fulfilling the Torah commandment of pursuing justice. Let us all give these men our support and keep them in our prayers as they seek justice.

Although obviously muted by the last seven months of war, today is Yom Ha'Atzmaut. It is a day to remember how God has always taken care of us, and to renew our faith that He will continue to. It is a time to celebrate the miracle of Israel, and commit to a future of an Israel in a lasting peace with her neighbors. Maybe the feeling of this holiday is best phrased by David Ben-Gurion in that Independence Day 76 years ago:

*they were about to realize what was one of the most remarkable and inspiring achievements in human history: A people which had been **exiled from its homeland two thousand years before**, which had endured countless pogroms, expulsions, and persecutions, but which had refused to relinquish its identity—which had, on the contrary, substantially strengthened that identity; a people which only a few years before had been the victim of **mankind's largest single act of mass murder, killing a third of the world's Jews**, that people was returning home as sovereign citizens in their own independent state.*

Israel is the home of every Jew; a land of ancient history integrated into modernity; and a living reminder of our partnership with God. May we all experience Israel, her land, and her people being protected and safe now and always.

Chag Sameach and Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 14, 2024

6th of Iyyar, 5784

21st day of the Omer

May 15th 2024 at 7:19 am PDT

Mixed Signals

Chevre

It seems as if our nation is not only divided with regard to Israel, but has developed a dual personality disorder. President Biden is insisting that no matter

what Congress votes, he will veto and refuse to let the already approved precision weapons go to Israel. At the same time, White House aides said today that the White House will be sending to Congress a 1 billion dollar weapons package for approval for Israel. It seems like contradictory actions; but it is also paradoxical that while on the one hand Biden objects to blunt weapons and says Israel must be precise, on the other hand Biden is proposing sending only less precise weapons to Israel that are more likely to create collateral damage.

More video was released showing Hamas terrorists working out of and near UNRWA facilities. It is clear with every video and event that UNRWA is and has been a front for Hamas; and estimates are that as many as 40% of UNRWA staff in Gaza are actually either Hamas terrorists or supporters.

...and still the rockets fly daily from Rafah into Israel...

The IAF announced today that Hezbollah leader Hussain Mekky was killed; which is significant to Hezbollah as he was the architect of multiple attacks of terror on Israel. There have also been reports out of Iran by a few Iranian officials that Iran has the ability and materials, and can have a nuclear bomb any time they want.

Pray from your heart, and act with passion. It is easy to get depressed with the state of the world, but we are Jews and must live our purpose of being a light unto the nations by retaining faith in God and hope for peace. Each time we say "Amen" at the end of a prayer, it is a reminder of that faith in God keeping His covenant; for "amen" is an acronym for **El Melech Neeman**... "God is the King of Faithfulness". We must choose to have faith (and faith is always a choice) that God will always take good care of the Jewish people and Israel.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 15, 2024

7th of Iyyar, 5784

22nd day of the Omer

May 15th 2024 at 9:44 pm PDT

Paul Kessler's Death Is Leading the Country to a New Hope

Chevre

We all remember that on November 5 of last year, long before the pro-Hamas encampments at Columbia and UCLA, there was a pro-Hamas demonstration at Westlake and Thousand Oaks Boulevards. A counter demonstration supporting Israel occurred at the same time. Arguments between the two sides got heated, and an older Jewish man named Paul Kessler was killed.

There were outcries from all sides, and our sleepy suburb became a national news site as Jews cried for justice, claiming that Kessler had been hit in the head by one of the pro-Arab activists. Pro-Hamas supporters screamed that Kessler had just fallen down and hit his head, and that the Jews were exaggerating the incident and acting like victims. Law enforcement was staying quiet as they were investigating, and had multiple conflicting stories about the event; and they were additionally finding it difficult to locate any video of the actual incident.

For almost two weeks, the police investigated. Jews wanted vengeance, and much of the nation's media focused on Westlake Village being a microcosmic model of what was happening (and would happen) nationwide. As the local Rabbi, many of you will remember that I wrote articles and spoke about how we needed to stay calm and let the police do their investigation. We needed to have faith in Ventura County Sheriff Jim Fryhoff and Chief of Police Jeremy Paris as I knew them both and had faith they would do the right thing. Ultimately, after reviewing over 600 pieces of evidence; interviewing over 60 witnesses; and spending over 2000 man hours of research, an arrest was made. Loay Alnaji, a pro-Hamas activist, was arrested. The nation's media moved on, the war in Israel continued, and the country got progressively more anti-Semitic over the last months. Campuses became unsafe for Jewish students as illegal encampments of domestic terrorists have covered the country's colleges.

For the family of Paul Kessler, the nightmare has continued. But part of that nightmare has just been resolved, and it affects all Americans.

On yesterday and today, the preliminary hearings were held in Alnaji's case. Under the guidance of District Attorney Erik Nasarenko and the work of Senior Deputy D.A. Courtney Lewis, the court held the defendant to answer on the charges against Alnaji for involuntary manslaughter and battery causing

serious bodily injury. Alnaji is accused of getting in a heated argument with Paul (Kessler yelled at Alnaji that Hamas killed babies and Alnaji yelled back that he wanted proof, and it escalated from there); hitting Paul with the megaphone that was in his hand; and Paul falling on the concrete and receiving an injury to his head that resulted in his death. The additional charge of a hate crime was not made. Although anti-Semitic hate speech was heard at the event, the investigations did not find any evidence linking Alnaji to any hate speech directly (and this after also using Arabic translators who work for the D.A.), nor is there any evidence that Alnaji attended the demonstration with the intent of causing physical harm... all necessary components to charge someone with a hate crime in California. Law enforcement is still exploring that possible charge, and if new evidence comes to light it can be added to the other charges.

But outside of our community, why should the country care about the death of Paul Kessler and the fate of Alnaji?

This entire drama so far has made two important points that we all need to keep in their consciousness. The first is that our local law enforcement, like most in this country is comprised of good men and women who really do seek justice. D.A. Nasarenko charged Alnaji with crimes that he feels the suspect can be convicted on. Although Alnaji is clearly a hate monger, his actions don't rise to the legal level needed (for now) to add that charge of a hate crime. As any good D.A. should, he is conscious of all sides of the issue, and is working to get a conviction, and not just media exposure. But the integrity of law enforcement is only the smaller of the two teachings that come out of this case.

What is more important is for us all to see that these crazy activists supporting Hamas are not as the main stream media tries to portray them: they are not "untouchable". It may take longer than many of us would like, but these criminals can and eventually will receive the just punishments they deserve. These "activists", be they Alnaji or students on a college campus, are criminals. This latest hearing shows clearly that in spite of the media's agenda, they can and will be punished for their actions.

"Occupiers" in colleges should be looking at the Alnaji case and should start getting afraid. Afraid because they have been breaking the law, and this case shows that will not ultimately be tolerated.

Afraid because it demonstrates that the rule of law in this country will be

victorious, even if it takes months or longer. Every demonstrating student should be afraid because their lives will ultimately be destroyed with criminal records and convictions if they participate in these illegal activities. Alnaji's case shows each of these fools who think that demonstrating, invading public buildings, and setting up illegal tent cities as a protest is "cool" or "dope", that it is something entirely different: these are actions that will land them in prison.

And Alnaji's case should give hope to the rest of us. Hope that this country will right itself from the ill of Jew hatred. Hope that most Americans, including law enforcement, have had enough of this craziness. Faith in our legal system, and that the times of allowing BLM riots, college encampments, and unrestricted animalistic behavior (such as killing another man by hitting him with a megaphone) are over.

When any of us experience the hate of people like Alnaji or these imbecilic students, we must act consciously. We must go to law enforcement and charge them with crimes. We must file civil suits against the universities for violation of Title VI and more. The ADL is bundling up campus violations together in multiple suits, and this process should be utilized. Private law firms are taking on civil cases for students and their families who have suffered as a result of campuses being unsafe. The Alnaji case is a precedent and demonstrates that these legal options are, in fact, viable ways to stop the hate.

This case shows the nation something we have all been hoping for: the legal system can and will work to stop the hate of the pro-Hamas haters. While this may give no solace to Paul Kessler's family, this case is a step in the right direction of returning to a nation that is committed to the rule of law.

May Paul's memory be a blessing and his family comforted in their loss; and may we all start to return to a faith that law enforcement is returning to a time of enforcing the law.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 15, 2024

8th of Iyyar, 5784

23rd day of the Omer

May 17th 2024 at 6:02 am PDT

The Consistency of the World

Chevre

Hezbollah had been daily attacking from the north. Daily rockets are launched from Rafah at Israeli settlements. Israel is slowly but fully retaliating, and as of now we are destroying base after base of our enemies. With precision attacks, today saw some major leaders of Hezbollah die; and we saw more and more discoveries of Hamas' stronghold in Rafah being destroyed.

The most ethical army in the history of the world is being attacked on all sides. Hostages are still being kept, and the nation is reeling from the horrors of Oct. 7.

But the world is consistent. The U.S. State Dept. again complained today that Israel isn't taking good care of its enemies and "must provide more humanitarian aid". Spain is refusing to allow a ship carrying weapons to Israel to round the port of Cartagena. And Canada has imposed sanctions against four Israel settlers "in response to violence against palestinians".

Israel is attacked, and hated for defending herself. It is the same story of the Jew that has been repeated for thousands of years: we are condemned when we defend ourselves like any other people. And it is the reason that every one of us needs to gather in Jewish communities to give and receive mutual support, and we must all unconditionally support Israel against "the Pharaohs that rise up in every generation".

May we all stand up for Israel, Judaism, God, and each other as Am Echad...One People. And I hope you will join me tonight at Shabbat services at 7:30pm to welcome in the Sabbath Queen as a kahal..a holy community.

Shabbat Shalom and Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 17, 2024
9th of Iyyar, 5784
24th day of the Omer

May 18th 2024 at 8:15 pm PDT

Baruch Dayan Emet - May Their Memories Be a Blessing

Chevre

Shavuah Tov. This Shabbat brought much sadness to Israel and the Jewish people. Besides the three hostage bodies recovered from Gaza, a fourth body was found over Shabbat, that of Ron Binyamin, z"l. It is rumored that an additional 11 hostage bodies have been found, but not confirmed and no names released (these type of tragedies are only confirmed by the Israeli government after the family has been notified). The IDF has released that it has been established that Binyamin was killed on Oct 7, and that Hamas took his corpse back to their tunnels to use as a bargaining chip as a hostage. How many more of the hostages have been dead for seven months?

And even so, Israeli politicians are infighting. Gantz issued an ultimatum to Netanyahu, and if his demands are not met he will leave the War Cabinet, which could force Israel into divisive elections in the middle of a war. He has given Bibi until June 8 to meet his demands.

Hamas has now threatened the US aid pier, which cost the US 400 million dollars. White House adviser John Kirby is pressuring Israel to provide more supplies to Gaza, while Egypt has refused to allow ANY aid in through their nation. The White House seems to believe that we should resupply our enemies who want to kill us..and that other neighboring countries can place more of the burden on Israel.

800,000 people have been evacuated from Rafah since May 6 (thats over 70% according to UNRWA, so probably even more have evacuated). Remember that Biden and Blinken repeatedly said that Israel should not go into Rafah, and it would "take many months to evacuate most of the people". Maybe it would have taken the US that long, but Israel has succeeded in evacuations in just 10

days.

James Lindsay, the former legal counsel for UNRWA, testified before Congress. He testified about UNRWA, ***"I would not be surprised if half of the organization's employees are Hamas operatives."***

If even their former executives are admitting that UNRWA is a Hamas front, why is the US still supporting them? What will it take for America, and especially American Jews to stop supporting organizations that want us destroyed?

Hezbollah has increased its attacks, especially with suicide drones, some of which are starting to get through Israeli defenses. 16 more of these were launched during Shabbat, in addition to rocket attacks on northern towns.

I wish I could have started our week with more uplifting news, but we still must choose faith and action over depression or anger.

Always.

May the memory of the hostages who died months ago be a blessing; may their families be comforted among the mourners of Zion; and may their deaths inspire us to live righteously and to destroy the modern Amaleks of the world so that these types of horrors never happen again in this generation.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 18, 2024

11th of Iyyar, 5784

25th day of the Omer

May 19th 2024 at 11:55 pm PDT

"The Butcher of Tehran"

Chevre

It has been confirmed that Ebrahim Raisi, the President of Iran who was also known as "The Butcher of Tehran" and "The Hangman, died when his helicopter crashed into a mountain. He was the presumed heir to the Supreme Leader, and earned his nicknames as a prosecutor at the end of the Iran-Iraq war in 1988, and was responsible for sentencing thousands of political prisoners to death.

Already, there are accusations around the world that his death was the work of Israeli intelligence; and Russian media specifically has been filled with accusations against the Mossad for his death. Raisi was responsible for Iran's mass drone and missile attack on Israel, and was devoted to the destruction of Israel.

Blinken and Biden are negotiating "peace deals" on their own for Israel, apparently confident that they can get Netanyahu out of power. Blinken announced that there is a potential deal where Saudi Arabia would finally "recognize" Israel; but the costs will include Hamas staying in Gaza, and Israel recognizing a Palestinian state. Lapid is being met with and courted by White House advisor Jake Sullivan, including meetings on Monday in Israel (our Sunday night), who has made it clear that the US and Biden administration do not want Netanyahu in office.

It has only been open a few days, but the American floating port built to get aid to Gaza is already being threatened by pro-Hamas and other groups. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine has threatened the pier if "there is any Israeli or foreign presence at the floating sea port or at the border crossings", and that all of these presences "including American forces, would be a legitimate target". Rocket and drone attacks continue from Hezbollah in the north; and out of Rafah in the south.

Whether Raisi's death was planned or an accident, we once again see God protecting Israel from her enemies. There is no joy to be had in his death, but he was a self declared enemy of Israel and the Jewish people, and one of the heads of the snake that seeks to destroy Israel, God forbid.

And we must remember to have faith that we will survive thanks to God; and we need to act on a daily basis to support Israel and Jewish communities.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 19, 2024

12th of Iyyar, 5784

27th day of the Omer

May 21st 2024 at 6:14 am PDT

Warrants and Mourning for Evil?

Chevre

The Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court at the Hague has requested arrest warrants for Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Gallant for "causing extermination, causing starvation as a method of war including the denial of humanitarian relief supplies, deliberately targeting civilians in conflict".

Biden responded that the warrant is scandalous. The U.K. British Defense Minister said it will not affect the export of arms from Britain to Israel. And the Czech Prime Minister said it was shocking and unacceptable. 106 MKs in Israel signed a letter saying it is unacceptable (only the Arab Party and Labor Party did not sign), and Netanyahu said it best: "It will forever tarnish the reputation of the international court". If I add any words to describe this, they will only be more disparaging about a court that, like the United Nations, has become a sham and agency of propaganda against Israel. Shame on them.

Nearly every country in the world, including the United States, sent messages of condolences to Iran on the death of Iran's President. This is one of the most evil men of the last 40 years, even earning the title of "The Butcher of Tehran". But these nations sent "their thoughts and prayers" as sympathy for his death, and the United Nations Security Council, including the United States, held a minute of silence today in Raisi's honor and memory. A man who murdered countless citizens of his own country, developed the attacks on Israel, and had vowed to destroy the United States... and leaders from around the world mourned him like a saint.

I have repeatedly taught that while we may be forced to destroy our enemies

like Hamas, we should never rejoice in their deaths. We should never allow ourselves to feel joy at the death of anyone, especially our enemies. Judaism prohibits this type of rejoicing. But neither are we obligated to mourn them. Raisi was an evil man devoted to the death and destruction of Judaism, Israel, America, and all of Western culture. We are not allowed joy, but neither do we need to be sad at this killer's death. May his soul receive exactly what it deserves, and may he be replaced by people who seek to have a longlasting peace with Israel and the West.

And may peace come speedily to Israel and the world. Please God, please.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 21, 2024

13th of Iyyar, 5784

28th day of the Omer

May 22nd 2024 at 5:35 am PDT

As The World Turns...

Chevre

Tuesday morning is disturbing in Israel, and it will get even more so in the evening. The daily rockets are being launched, the Hague is working on arrest warrants for Israeli leaders, and the United Nations keeps demonstrating their hate for Israel. But Tuesday has already been tough in other ways, and will get even tougher.

On Tuesday morning, Ireland announced it's recognition of a Paleatinian state; and Spain and Norway, announced that they will be formally recognizing a nation of Palestine within the next week. This is horrific on every level: not only does history repeatedly show that the two state solution is not workable; it sends the message to terrorists everywhere in the world that if you act horribly enough, as Hamas did on Oct 7, you can get what you want. It is a terrible and

dangerous precedent. Israel has already recalled its envoys from Ireland and Norway; and is waiting to see if a more formal announcement comes from Spain, in which case it will remove that envoy as well.

Tuesday night will continue the challenges in Israel as, with the families' permission, the Hostages and Missing Families Forum is publicly releasing a 3 minute 10 second video of the kidnapping on Oct 7 of five female soldiers. The description of the video is "harrowing; and is from Hamas bodycam footage of the kidnapping of Liri Albag, Karina Arielev, Agam Berger, Daniella Gilboa, and Naama Levy. "The footage reveals the violent, humiliating, and traumatizing treatment the girls endured on the day of their abduction, their eyes filled with raw terror," the forum said in a statement. The video will be released at 6pm in Israel (8am PST).

The pain of both this video, and the world succumbing to the terrorism of Hamas and recognizing a "palestine" while they condemn Israel is monumental.

It is also another confirmation that Israel and the Jewish people must rely on God and on ourselves; and not on the integrity or ethics of other men and nations, which as we see can be easily forgotten (as it has been in Ireland). We must pray that God will again take care of us, as He always has; and we must act in ways that support Jewish communities locally, throughout the world, and especially in Israel.

Each day it seems harder to say...and that is why each day we must acclaim with ever growing passion and faith... Am Yisrael Chai!

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 22, 2024

14th of Iyyar, 5784

29th day of the Omer

May 23rd 2024 at 6:07 am PDT

A Non-Stop Loop

Chevre

It seems like we are an ever turning merry go round: Israel defends herself; the world condemns Israel; Israel is willing to go back to try to negotiate for the hostages; Hamas teases a deal while the IDF pauses; Hamas makes ludicrous demands and then walks away; Hamas attacks Israel with rockets etc again; Repeat the cycle

Currently we are in the stage of Israel having made military strides with precision attacks in Rafah and Hamas asking to come negotiate for hostages, and the War Cabinet agreeing to send representatives to try to get back hostages. Does anyone believe that even if Hamas promises anything, that they will actually keep their commitment? They have yet to keep one agreement; and by their own admission are committed to the destruction of Israel, every Jew worldwide, and Western culture. And in their own charter, they freely write that they will never sit down at a peace table except as a method of subterfuge against their Zionist enemy.

But we must always remember that as frustrating and tiring as this merry go round is for us, it is exponentially more difficult for our brothers and sisters in Israel.

We cannot let ourselves get "war weary", nor let anyone give up on Israel. Hamas has already been taking credit for three European nations recognizing a state of palestine...encouraging the use of terrorism like Oct 7 to achieve their goals.

Is this really the world we want? One in which the side that is most violent and horrific determines the decisions?

Pray for Israel. Pray for peace. Pray for Jews around the world. And pray that the Jewish people everywhere remain unified at all times in support of each other, and of Israel

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 23, 2024

15th of Iyyar, 5784

30th day of the Omer

May 23rd 2024 at 9:32 pm PDT

Surrenders, Signals, a Speech, and a Snip

Chevre

As the IDF continues its precision attacks in Rafah, a couple of things are happening as a result. Dozens of Hamas terrorists surrendered today, and the deputy commander of the Hamas national security forces was killed. And as Hamas struggles to survive, suddenly Hamas leadership is signaling that they want to reopen discussions for a cease fire. Bill Burns, head of the CIA is heading to the region to try to renew negotiations.

House Speaker Johnson announced that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will "soon" address a joint session of Congress. It will be interesting to see the reactions of anti-Israel Congress members like Tlaib and Omar, and to see if they are censured or sanctioned if (when) they act inappropriately according to Congress rules of order.

...and again, as in every day, rocket attacks were launched by both Hezbollah and Hamas.

Judaism is clear that there is always hope for the future as "everything is in the hands of God". Our faith supports us, and we need to embrace that faith to remain optimistic about the future...

We also need to support Jewish communities, including our own

synagogue. I have been pressured by community members to cut my hair on Lag B'Omer as a temple fundraiser. The amount cut will be reflective of how much is raised, and you can participate in this by going to NerSimcha.org/Fundraising. (You can also choose to donate to keep the ponytail...which would be much appreciated)

Lag B'Omer is the traditional day of haircuts in Judaism, which falls this coming Sunday, May 26. We will have an ice cream social on Sunday, and will celebrate and learn about this mystical holiday. Again, please support the community in this fun event by going to NerSimcha.org/Fundraising and I hope we can all have fun together on Sunday.

Faith and action. Always.

Chazak u Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 23, 2024

16th of Iyyar, 5784

31st day of the Omer

May 25th 2024 at 8:10 pm PDT

What Is The Lag B'Omer Holiday That Begins Tonight

Chevre

Shavuah Tov! Tonight begins the holiday of Lag B'Omer, a lesser known Jewish holiday that integrates both an historical and a mystical meaning together.

The name of the holiday translates to "33rd day in the Omer". From the second day of Passover, we are biblically commanded to count each day until Shavuot, the holiday celebrating the giving of Torah at Mt Sinai (Lev. 23:15). This seven week period (Shavuot is the 50th day) is a time of preparing ourselves for Shavuot: to be spiritually

ready to receive the gift of Torah.

By ancient times, the first 32 days were considered days of mourning, where we do not have celebrations, haircuts, etc., in remembrance of the 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva who died during those 32 days. Some say they died of plague, others by persecution as punishment for the Bar Kochba Revolt against the Romans, but all agree that their deaths were a tremendous loss to the Jewish people...and so we mourn them as a people in similar ways to how we personally mourn a relative. The plague ended on the 33rd day, and so that becomes the celebratory holiday we still observe.

The holiday is extremely important in our mystical tradition as it is the Yahrzeit of the Talmudic Sage Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. Rabbi Shimon was a Rabbi during Roman times, and lived in hiding from the Romans with his son for 24 years in a cave, sustained by a carob tree that God put in the cave. He was one of the greatest legalists and ethicists in the Talmud, and considered beyond holy: so much so that it is taught that there was never a rainbow during his lifetime (the rainbow is a sign of God's promise to not destroy the world, and Shimon was the sign and so no rainbow was needed). So holy was he that on his deathbed, he made the day last longer so that he could give more mystical teachings to his students and the world; and darkness did not fall for many hours so that he could share these secrets before his death.

Rabbi Shimon is also traditionally considered the author of the Zohar, one of the primary books of Jewish mysticism; and Lag B'Omer is a holiday treasured by Jewish mystics. Each of the days of the omer between Passover and Shavuot have a mystical meaning, understanding, focus, and intention. (The focus of the 33rd day is "hod sh'b'hod"... empathy/splendor/glory to the extreme.) This day is celebrated by Jewish mystics as a tribute to God's splendor; Rabbi Shimon's ascension to heaven; and an opportunity to allow God's glory to become awakened within each of us.

The customs of this holiday are beautiful and joyous. Because there

was a fire that burned Rabbi Shimom but did not consume his body as he was dying, and because of the light that was extended; we create bonfires in celebration. In Israel, children gather wood for weeks from construction sites, etc. in order to light as big a fire as possible. People gather at the Rabbi's grave in Meron overlooking the Galilee and Safed to pray and celebrate. Because of the war, both of these activities are being prohibited by the government during these dangerous times.

Children play with bows and arrows on this holiday. Why? It is a play on words. Since Rabbi Shimon was a "rainbow", we gather "bows" that are shaped like rainbows (most bows have that curve) in memory of him.

Since this holiday ends the period of mourning discussed above, we celebrate by doing things we could not over the previous 32 days. We sing, dance, play, and cut our hair. It is traditional to give a child his first haircut on this day, and adult Jews get the haircut they have been lacking.

Our synagogue will be celebrating Lag B'Omer on Sunday, May 26 at 3:00pm at a private home at 30303 Rainbow View Court (of course we will be celebrating at a house on a rainbow!). There will be a bonfire, and ice cream sundaes. There will be music and drumming, so bring your percussion as we share songs and stories for the holiday.

And for better or worse, we will be doing haircutting... specifically cutting off however much of my ponytail that I've had for decades that the donations dictate. You can add to the amount of hair cut by going to www.nersimcha.org/fundraising. The more money raised, the more hair that will get cut. If the community collectively raises \$144,000, my ponytail will be entirely cut off and the hair donated to Locks Of Love, which creates wigs for children who have lost their hair due to medical conditions (at least 10 inches of hair are required to make that hair donation).

So Happy Lag B'Omer! I hope to see you for a fun afternoon of

music, ice cream, and haircutting in celebration of our mystics, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, and the life and light of the Jewish people.

Again, please do a double good deed of supporting the temple and gathering hair for sick children by donating at www.nersimcha.org/fundraising.

Chag Sameach and Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 25, 2024

18th of Iyyar, 5784

33rd day of the Omer

May 27th 2024 at 6:13 am PDT

Major Hamas Leadership Eliminated

Chevre

The consistent anti-Israel actions by the International Court of Justice is hardening the resolve of the majority of Israeli citizens. As the ICJ, backed by most of the world including the United States, is demanding that Israel get out of Rafah, and all of Gaza, the IDF continues its precision targeting of Hamas targets. The IDF attacked a Hamas stronghold in Rafah that was inside a UNRWA building (again), and killed Yassin Rabia, the Chief of Staff for Hamas in Judea and Samaria. Within an hour of the attack, which was also a munitions depot that was used to launch attacks on Israel, Hamas leadership reported that there were 35 people killed in the raid.

Attacks are coming at Israel from all sides; and it vitally important to the war effort that those of us in the Diaspora support Israel unconditionally. You may disagree with the politics in Israel, but we must all remember to stand together and strong with Israel...and now is not the time for us to dispute each other or

Israel. Before we succumb to in-fighting, we must win this war, which has now lasted over 7 months.

Let us pray for success and for a long term peace between Israel and the rest of the world.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 27, 2024

19th of Iyyar, 5784

34th day of the Omer

May 27th 2024 at 11:57 pm PDT

We are and will always remain One People

Chevre

Iran was in Israel's news today as it was reported that the Atomic Energy Agency has identified that Iran has 30 times the limit of enriched uranium, that President Biden is pressuring the U.K. and France not to criticize Iran's nuclear program (also reported in the WSJ), and Iran is making more veiled threats that they can have nuclear weapons any time they want... all of which is disconcerting to Israel

The EU is considering sanctions against Israel for not following ICJ demands of "international law"... in other words, for not pulling entirely out of Gaza and letting "unrestricted aid" into Gaza (for Hamas). The UN Security Council is scheduling an emergency closed door meeting to respond to Israel's successful attack in Rafah on Sunday night, that supposedly killed 5, 10, and now Hamas is claiming 45. Footage has now been released however that shows that actually, Israel hit an armored vehicle that was transporting explosives... but the facts don't matter when it comes to the UN accusing Israel.

235 days into this war and some parts of the story remain the same. Iran and its proxies want every Jew dead; the European Union is controlled by anti-Semites; and the UN will use any excuse to condemn Israel. (They have passed more

resolutions against Israel than against all other countries combined!)

And so we must choose to be honest, self reflective about how the world really views Israel, pray for Israel's protection, and act as a supporter of Israel as well as Diaspora Jewry in every moment.

We are one people... and we need to start acting like it. Am Echad

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 27, 2024

20th of Iyyar, 5784

35th day of the Omer

May 29th 2024 at 11:15 am PDT

News From All Over...

Chevre

Each day just seems to get more surreal, and certainly the last 24 hours has been disjointed... the one commonality being the world's hatred for Israel and Jews. A lot has gone on, but here are some highlights:

---There is now no doubt that any civilians killed in the attack and subsequent fire in Rafah was caused by munitions and bombs caches hidden by Hamas. The small munitions used by the IDF could not have caused the large secondary explosions, and there has now been footage released that demonstrates these were secondary and caused by Hamas keeping hidden munitions

---Despite the reality of the civilians being killed because of Hamas, nearly no media outlet has retracted their stories blaming Israel

---Anti Israel politicians like Tlaib and Omar are continuing to blame Israel, as is the UN Security Council, which today is evaluating issuing a stronger resolution against Israel, and calling for Israel to leave Gaza immediately

---The White House has come out that they will veto any bill to sanction the ICJ, despite the clearly anti-Israel bias that they are continuing...which is being

called "a war by the ICJ against Israel" in Jerusalem

---In the last 24 hours, Hamas is publicizing on Arab stations that there have been two "massacres" in Rafah. However, they have no photos or video, no posting of casualties, and the IDF has been clear they did not attack...but that doesn't stop Al Jazeera from publicizing this fallacy, nor does it stop world wide media from re-reporting it

---Turkish President Erdogan has called for an invasion of Gaza and Israel, saying that "Israel is not just a threat to Gaza, it is a threat to all of humanity"

---America has entirely failed in helping get any aid to Gazans. The trucks that were being sent were hijacked by Hamas, and now, the pier that the US spent 320 million dollars on has partially collapsed. Part of the pier is beached, other parts broken away, and it is almost entirely useless at this point.

A lot of information, but what can we do? The same thing Jews have always done: pray, have faith, and act. Pray from the depths of our hearts and souls. Have faith that God will always keep His covenant. And give charity in a daily basis. It is better in our tradition to give a dollar a day to a Jewish cause than thirty dollars each month, or \$365 once a year. Put the money daily in a charity box, and each week before Shabbat give it to a Jewish cause. Repeated small actions make a huge difference over time, and as it says in the Book of Job, "water wears away stone"

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 29, 2024

21st of Iyyar, 5784

36th day of the Omer

May 30th 2024 at 1:21 am PDT

Landlords and Visas

Chevre

The UNRWA has been proven to be in league with Hamas; using UNRWA facilities to house Hamas terrorists; making repeatedly false claims against

Israel; and over 50% (if not more) of UNRWA staff are consciously supporting Hamas with munitions, hiding places, and some even helped Hamas on Oct 7. All of these are verified facts over and over with videos and more.

On Thursday morning, at the direction of the Ministry of Housing; Israel has evicted UNRWA from their Jerusalem facility for refusal to pay rent. They are demanding that UNRWA vacate within 30 days and pay back rent due of NIS 7 million (just under 2 million USD).

Israel has also just confirmed on Thursday that they are introducing a new electronic authorization system for visitors from visa exempt countries. Visitors will be required to obtain an ETA before boarding a flight to Israel, which will be good for two years. It begins with US passport holders in June 1, and can be purchased at any time, even if you don't have a planned trip. You can apply at <https://israel-entry.piba.gov.il/>

Both actions are clear steps making Israel more safe and secure, and it would probably be a good idea for everyone to get the ETA now as it is good for two years.

An Israel that is safe and secure; healed and hopeful; let us all continue to pray and work towards these goals.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 30, 2024

22nd of Iyyar, 5784

37th day of the Omer

May 31st 2024 at 12:27 am PDT

By the Book...

Chevre

Today was what has become a "normal" day in Israel: rockets were launched

by Hamas and Hezbollah; progress was made by the IDF in Rafah, sirens went off, and the world and media hate Israel (although much media was distracted with the court case in New York)

But something significant did happen, and really is a move in the right direction. According to IMPACT-SE, an international research organization which monitors school actions worldwide, there is some good news regarding schoolbooks in Saudi Arabia. No longer will Saudi schoolbooks refer to Zionism as a "racist European movement" nor deny a Jewish presence in the land for over 3000 years. The books will all be modified to remove the word "palestine" from maps of Israeli sites.

Given that this is a demonstration of how many Arabs actually feel about Israel, this is a meaningful change. And it starts to educate young Saudis without the crazy Jew hatred that has been part of the school curriculum for decades.

May this change start to bring peace in the region and the world, and create a new generation committed to seeking peace.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

May 31, 2024

24rd of Iyyar, 5784

38th day of the Omer

June 1st 2024 at 8:09 pm PDT

Politics, War, and A Tzaddik

Chevre

Shavuah tov! As we get closer to the revelation that comes on Shavuot in 10 days, may we all be worthy of receiving insights and wisdom that will strengthen and preserve the Jewish people and Israel.

In Israel, politics and war have been active this past Shabbat. While over 100 rockets were launched by Hezbollah, there were thank God only a few minor injuries. The IDF is activating precise attacks in Rafah, and destroying Hamas rocket launchers as they discover more tunnels...including one large enough for armored vehicles that goes from Rafah into Egypt. The IDF base in Kiryat Shmona was hit with heavy rockets and sustained significant damage, although no injuries have been reported.

Politically, Israel is once again being pressured by the U.S. to accept a deal that would be horrible on all counts for Israel. This deal, negotiated by the US, Qatar, and Egypt would remove all IDF forces entirely from Gaza; free hundreds of terrorists who are currently incarcerated in Israel, and after six weeks, Hamas would release some hostages (no commitment about how many and/or if they would be alive or dead corpses). Minister Lapid, who for months has been in private discussions with Blinken et al, is attacking Netanyahu and pushing to accept this (he has been clear for a long time that he thinks he should be PM of Israel). The conservative members of the war cabinet have made it clear that they will leave the coalition if this is accepted. Netanyahu (who will be speaking before the US Congress) made a clear statement that the goals are for all hostages to be returned and that Hamas cannot be left in power...but this latest proposal of Biden's would accomplish neither goal.

Ambassador Gilad Erdan is resigning from his position in the U.N., citing family needs. Erdan has been a consistent and courageous voice, and he will be difficult to replace. We should all be thankful for his work, and bless he and his family with all that is good in the world. He is an example of how we must all deal with the anti-Israel hatred pervading the world, and has been a light for the Jewish people.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 1, 2024

25th of Iyyar, 5784

40th day of the Omer

June 3rd 2024 at 1:28 am PDT

The Pressures of Israeli Politics & A Small Miracle

Chevre

As a Jew in the post-October 7 world, each day seems filled with news, challenges, and hate... and sometimes a glimmer of surprising joy that reminds us that our faith is always justified. Something that an old friend of mine used to call "a God shot", and that we all periodically need.

Biden's surprise speech about a "deal" (which was never previewed for the Israeli government so that it would cause more pressure) is being ridiculed in Israel as well as deeply concerning everyone. His language, as well as subsequent language from "the White House" was clear that Israel better accept what Biden says "or there will be consequences". As was intended, this has put tremendous pressure on the government to accept a deal that is clearly problematic on many levels, both short term and long term. That pressure is also increased through the repeated meetings between Blinken and/or Kirby with people like Lapid (who has always wanted the PM job) that go around the official Israeli coalition government.

So there is a lot of continuous pressure on the Netanyahu government. Two members of the coalition have been clear that they will break apart the government coalition if the deal is accepted as is...which would force elections in the middle of a war. The polls in Israel show that the Israeli people are more and more supportive of both Netanyahu and finishing off Hamas no matter the "collateral damage"; and at the same time the protests against Bibi and for any deal that might get any hostages back are getting louder and more publicized.

Simply put...Israel is getting tremendous pressure from external sources; and is getting internal pressure as it is becoming a nation of a quieter majority wanting to finish this war with a military victory vs. a louder minority that wants to get out of Gaza asap. And for both sides, this pressure is hurting morale, which is the exact opposite of what is needed in a time of war.

Add into this the case before the High Court of Israel that will decide if the Haredi should be drafted into the IDF, and you may start to understand what

the average Israeli is feeling every day. (Even the government attorney's statement to the court recognized that there is a real problem with drafting Haredi: we can't have IDF soldiers who aren't going to fight, and as he said, "you can't drag people kicking and screaming into the army".) When you combine the crazy political infighting with the constant attacks from Hezbollah in the north and Gaza in the south... every day... you can see why Israel, and the entire Jewish world as a result, is in pain.

But as I said at the start of this email, we also have received a surprise "God shot".

It has been announced with 95% certainty on early Monday morning that Claudia Sheinbaum, the Head of Government of Mexico City (the equivalent of a state governor) has been elected as President of Mexico. She is the first female President in the history of the country, and...

She is the first Jewish President of Mexico!

Her paternal Ashkenazi grandparents emigrated from Lithuania, and maternal Sephardi grandparents from Bulgaria in the 1940s to escape the Holocaust. Just think of the joy that her ancestors are feeling seeing her attain this level of success and influence. The new Mexican President has a PhD in energy engineering, and has been involved in politics since 2006; but got more involved in elected executive offices in 2015 when she became Mayor of Tlalpan. She will B"H serve a one time six year term as President of Mexico. In a world where Jew hatred is significantly increasing, there is now a Jew leading Mexico.

20 years ago, most people would have said that America will always unconditionally support Israel; and that no Jew, let alone a Jewish woman, would ever become the President of Mexico.

So let us all continue to have faith that through prayer, action and with the help of God; Israel and the Jewish people will always be sustained.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 3, 2024

26th of Iyyar, 5784

42st day of the Omer

June 4th 2024 at 12:26 am PDT

Another Paradoxical Day & Jerusalem Continues to Grow

Chevre

Fires are blazing in the north of Israel as Hezbollah rockets and drones continue to attack. Israel has announced the deaths of four more hostages who had been held by Hamas, and first reports are that the four have been dead for months. Biden, Blinken, and the Qataris keep announcing that a deal for hostages is close, while official word from the government is the opposite; with Minister Chikli, the Minister of Diaspora Affairs saying, "The current deal proposes a six-week war pause without knowing the condition of the hostages. This is a joke, not a deal"

But there were other pieces of news out of the Israeli academic world as well. A bill has been proposed that would lay off lecturers and deny budgets to universities that have professors or lecturers who make enemy and terrorist supporting statements. And an anonymous donor withdrew his 250 million dollar commitment to Columbia University, and gave it instead to Bar Ilan University.

...and on Monday, it became official that Jerusalem has become the first city in Israel with one million inhabitants. May this holy city of King David continue to be safe and protected, populated and prosperous.

"Jerusalem of gold
Of bronze and of light
You are the song, I am the harp"

Yerushalayim Shel Zahav (Jerusalem of Gold) became an unofficial anthem for Israel. Released in May 1967, less than a month before the Six Day War, it captures the love of the Jewish people for Israel and especially King David's

holy city. This week is the 57th anniversary of that war (26th of Iyyar - 2nd of Sivan, 5727) and we need to remember the importance of Israel, and continuously pledge and re-pledge ourselves to the survival of Israel and the Jewish people. The song has been recorded by everyone from Shuli Natan to Phish to the soundtrack of Schindler's List, but here is one of the classic Israeli versions (with English translation) to help us all remember that even if we are not conscious of it, a part of every Jewish soul is always in Jerusalem.

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=JH8gtdDA5x0&pp=ygUXeWVydXNoYWxheWltIHNoZWwgemFoYXY%3D>

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand lose it's cunning. May my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth. If I ever forget thee, O Jerusalem, if I do not raise Jerusalem above my greatest joy." (Psalm 137)

May we rejoice in Jerusalem, the home of the Jewish heart, and may the Holy One, Blessed be He and His Presence always bless the land of Israel, the people of Israel, and all Jews everywhere in these challenging times.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 4, 2024

27th of Iyyar, 5784

42nd day of the Omer

I hope you also enjoy this very different version of Yerushalayim Shel Zahav, recorded by over 400 rock and roll musicians at the footsteps to the Old City Walls a year ago.

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=o90xP6R6p-M&pp=ygUgeWVydXNoYWxheWltIHNoZWwgemFoYXYgaG9zdGFnZXM%3D>

June 5th 2024 at 12:10 am PDT

57 Years Ago Today

Chevre,

Today is Jerusalem Day. 57 years ago today and against all odds, the Six Day War began... a war which Israel won against the united Arab nations and which unified the city of Jerusalem. It was a modern-day miracle, and an example of successfully using military strategy as a last resort. To really understand the politics of the Middle East today, it is worth remembering what really happened then, and to see how this anniversary reminds us of what needs to be done.

The 1967 war did not just happen. The heads of the Arab states had been clear since the Suez war in 1956 that the goal was to destroy Israel entirely. In his 1964 speech to the United Nations, Egyptian President Nasser made it clear that the problem of Israel is not Palestinian refugees, but “the very existence of Israel” itself. In 1964, the Palestinian Liberation Organization was created with the express purpose of destroying Israel, and under the leadership of Yasser Arafat, proceeded to be the terrorist arm of the Arabs.

In the two years prior to the Six Day War, the PLO committed 113 attacks on Israeli civilians. Not military, but specifically civilian men, women, and children (sound familiar?). In 1965, Arab leaders met in Morocco to discuss their detailed plans to destroy Israel. King Hassan II of Morocco did not trust these Arab leaders, and so he secretly taped the meetings, which allows us to see the insidious evil intentions of Nasser and his cronies. Hassan was so disturbed that he gave those tapes to the Shin Bet Mossad, allowing Israel to be prepared for the upcoming aggressions.

On May 18, 1967, Nasser ordered the UN to withdraw its peacekeeping forces, and without even bringing it up to the Security Council or General Assembly, UN Secretary General U Thant did what Nasser told him. With the UN forces no longer there as a buffer between Egypt and Israel, the Egyptian forces had massed at Israel’s border by the end of the month, and Syria was moving its military to the northern border. On May 23, Egypt closed the Straits of Tiran, creating a blockade that entirely cut Israel off from the Suez and any shipping to or from it’s port city of Eilat.

Despite repeated attempts by Israel for a peaceful negotiation to prevent a war that could destroy Israel, the Arabs were clear in their intent and on never

sitting down to talk with the Israelis. UNEF, the Arab radio station said it clearly. "The sole method we shall apply against Israel is total war, which will result in the extermination of Zionist existence." This call for genocide was echoed by the Arab leaders. Syrian Defense Minister Hafez Assad (father of the current Syrian President Bashar Assad) exemplified the rhetoric, saying "the time has come to enter into a battle of annihilation". Nasser was clear. "Our basic objective will be the destruction of Israel", and "We will not accept any coexistence with Israel." A commitment of alliance was signed between Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Algeria, Kuwait, Sudan, and Iraq; whose President Araf said, "Our goal is clear: to wipe Israel off the map".

On June 4, 1967, Israel knew what was coming. Surrounding Israel directly at her borders were 465,000 troops, over 2800 tanks, and 800 aircraft. Israel knew that within a day or two they would be attacked, outnumbered, and outgunned; and that it was a distinct possibility that Israel would be destroyed and 2 million Jewish citizens killed. The government even made preparations for tens of thousands of mass temporary graves in Tel Aviv parks.

And so, in a "hail Mary" move, Israel mobilized its air force on the morning of June 5 to preemptively attack the Egyptian planes while the pilots were eating breakfast. It had to be timed perfectly within a minute, or there would be Egyptian pilots in their planes and fighting back. But it was successful in destroying the Egyptian aircraft, and the war had started. Egypt, Syria, Jordan, et al attacked Israel; 325,000 Arab citizens in the West Bank who preferred to live in an Arab state fled deeper into Jordan to avoid the crossfire; and the war was fully blazing. Through a combination of the Egyptian air force being decimated and a plethora of miraculous military victories, including especially in the north, Israel won the war in six days.

One of the first things Israel did was to welcome any and all refugees from the war back into Israel as citizens. Only 20%, about 65,000 refugees, chose to reenter Israel. The descendants of those 9000 families have been and are still full citizens of Israel, with all the same privileges that are enjoyed by all Israeli citizens.

Miracle after miracle occurred, which allowed this victory to happen 57 years ago this week. The multiple military victories; the unification of the Israeli government with ALL members of the government unanimously supporting

each other, even the opposition parties; the ability for Israel to win even though both France and President Johnson stopped supplying arms to Israel; and especially the miracle of the successful victory over the Egyptian air force. All of these factors coalesced into a miraculous victory against evil.

And it was, and continues to be evil. The Arabs pledged to create a genocide of the Israelis, a pledge reiterated today by Hamas, Hezbollah, the P.A., and their supporters. Then, like now, the enemies of Israel were committed to destroying Israel. And as it was true then with Arafat, Nasser, and the PLO, it is still true that the charters, documents, and rhetoric of the Arab leadership in Hamas, Hezbollah, Qatar, and the Muslim Brotherhood is committed to destroying Israel and killing every Jew.

As it was in 1967, Israel is still the buffer between these players and their achieving their self stated goal of creating a worldwide caliphate of Sharia law. In a direct parallel to 1967, the enemies of Israel still do not seek a peaceful coexistence with Israel, but are pledged to destroy her. And like in 1967, we are again at war... but this time the world is actively supporting the terrorists who want Israel and America destroyed.

There are many lessons from 1967 that we can use in today's situation. The absolute and unbreakable unification of the Israeli government of 1967 during war is the opposite of today, where we see Israeli politicians like Lapid jockeying for their own personal power instead of unifying with each other. The willingness of Israel (and the world) to call out the evil intentions and actions of the PLO, Muslim Brotherhood, and petty tyrants like Nasser has been replaced with a tacit acceptance of the evil of Hamas and Hezbollah. (Why are we even treating kidnappers as if taking hostages is a legitimate action, or the rapes and murders of Oct. 7 are anything but demonic evil?) 57 years ago, Israel did what was necessary for its survival; and now we all too often see the government capitulating to external countries and organizations instead of being more concerned with taking care of the country.

Golda Meir, who was the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1967, famously said, "If we have to have a choice between dead and pitied, and being alive with a bad image; we'd rather be alive and have the bad image."

Golda's words are not just true for Israel now, but for all of the world. If the world keeps succumbing, accepting, and even promoting Hamas values, we may find that all of the free world is destroyed and pitied, replaced by the worldwide caliphate of Sharia law that Hamas and its predecessors have always sought... and continue to work towards.

May Israel remain a beacon of light; protected, safe, and unified.

Ps: for those who have heard that Prime Minister Netanyahu was to speak before Congress in June 13, the holiday of Shavuot, this is a fallacy. Congress invited him to speak before a joint session (which numerous members of Congress like Bernie Sanders have already said they will boycott) on that Jewish holiday, and the Prime Minister rejected the date. According to Reuters and CNN, the probable date will be late June/early July.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 5, 2024

28th of Iyyar, 5784

43rd day of the Omer

June 5th 2024 at 11:05 pm PDT

Tunnels and More Tunnels...

Chevre,

The IDF has now found over 20 tunnels that go from Rafah into Egypt, with over 80 shafts that have now been revealed. Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists move through these mazes with confidence; although on Wednesday there was a precision strike from the Israelis on a Hamas base hidden inside... you guessed it, a UNRWA facility. It has become so commonplace that one has to wonder if it wouldn't just be easier to admit that almost all UNRWA facilities are being used by Hamas, and then point out any exceptions (if any exist)

Hezbollah is claiming that a drone did significant damage to an Iron Dome launcher, while the IDF has yet to formally confirm nor deny. The Iron Dome is a great tool, but let us never fall into the complacent fantasy that it is entirely impervious. Ultimately our protection always comes from God and His covenant with us, and we must choose to have faith that the Jewish people will always be protected.

Faith and Action. The protective gear of a Jew, and two of the foundation stones of our religion. Let us each have both in abundance

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 5, 2024

29th of Iyyar, 5784

44th day of the Omer

June 7th 2024 at 1:27 am PDT

The Surreal...

Chevre,

Does it ever seem to anyone else as if the world has become some weird scripted tv show? Sometimes what is going on just seems "fictional".

Take for instance the latest comments out of the White House. More statements went out today that Israel is accepting the peace deal that the US is pushing, even though A: Hamas isn't accepting it; B: it doesn't guarantee the immediate return of any hostages; and C: it requires Israel immediately leaving all of Gaza in the hands of Hamas.

Forgetting about the fact that Netanyahu and multiple other ministers have said this is "ludicrous"; it seems delusional on the part of the US to say that Israel is accepting it. But at the same time, it seems equally unbelievable that President Biden would say in an ABC interview on Thursday that Netanyahu listens to him; and that Israel did precious

attacks in Gaza because he told them to. The lack of mutual respect from both of these leaders towards each other is palpable; and it is doubtful either ever listens to the other. (Although July 24 has been scheduled for Netanyahu to speak before the US Congress.)

The surreal quality of the world seems omnipresent. Decades ago, who ever would have thought that the United Nations would be hiding terrorist bases in their schools? But video was shown along with the IDF announcement that this is exactly what they are repeatedly finding. Dozens of Hamas terrorists were found, including some that were known to be directly involved in the Oct. 7 horrors. Admiral Hagari, the IDF spokesman pointed out the chilling truth on Thursday when he said that this is the 5th time this month that there have been Hamas bases inside UNRWA facilities...this time in a school.

But maybe "surreal" isn't so bad. The exodus was certainly "surreal", as was the giving of Torah on Mt Sinai, which we will be celebrating as Shavuot this coming Tuesday night at the temple. Maybe we need to recognize some of this surreal darkness in the world so that we are prepared for miracles of light, victory, and peace.

We are Jews. Jews are in the miracle business, and business is always good. So let's have faith together that the miracles of God will back up the faith and work of Jews...both here in the US, in Israel, and in all the world.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 7, 2024

1st of Sivan, 5784

45th day of the Omer

June 8th 2024 at 8:15 pm PDT

Redemption, the World's Reprisal, and The Importance of This Tuesday Night

Chevre,

As many of you probably know, a daring operation by the IDF rescued four hostages on Saturday. At services this morning, we discussed what would happen in terms of attacks on Israel as a result, and sadly, it has started.

First, let us be grateful to God that these four hostages were rescued. The Talmud teaches us that to save a single soul is to save a world, and this is a true miracle. Let us also pause for a moment to remember the sacrifice of squad commander Armon Zamora, 36, who was killed leading this operation.

The hostages were rescued from the homes of wealthy Gazans, and as such were treated exponentially better than those held in tunnels by Hamas.. This reality means a few things. A: the "civilians" are supportive of Hamas and celebrate Oct. 7. These "civilians" could have released their hostages but didn't. B: however awful it was, the physical condition of these hostages is NOT reflective of the majority of hostages, most of whom are probably dead by now. C: we must remember always that these were hostages, kidnapped at a music event...something that is beyond any semblance of human behavior and the accepted rules of war.

To accept that they were ok and could have been released in the negotiations that Qatar and Blinken were demanding is to justify kidnapping civilians as a legitimate form of warfare in the first place...and encourages terrorists to use kidnapping as a tool of war in the future.

But let's look for a moment at the results of this rescue beyond the four redeemed souls.

Hamas has reported that it was a "massacre" of palestinians; first claiming there were 50 deaths, and then increasing each hour so that they are currently saying that 250 palestinians were massacred. And the world is lining up behind Hamas in support of condemning Israel for rescuing hostages that should never have been taken in the first place.

Imagine if God forbid, your daughter was kidnapped, and that in rescuing her you were forced to kill the kidnappers. You would be celebrated as a

loving hero. But the world does not believe that any Jew should be rescued, and we can see it clearly in some of the reactions in the last few hours.

---While the Chancellor of Germany used this rescue as a way to emphasize that Hamas must release all hostages immediately; Biden "welcomed" the hostages, and tried to say that this rescue is the proof that we should make a deal for hostages (huh? Hasn't that repeatedly been unsuccessfully attempted for 8 months?) American pressure has now increased today, claiming that if only Israel would do as it is told by the US, all hostages would eventually be released unharmed (again, huh?)

---There was a protest in Jordan at the US embassy for the "massacre"

---EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy said, "Reports from Gaza of another massacre of civilians are appalling. We condemn this in the strongest terms".

---Egypt and Jordan issued a statement "condemning the barbaric attacks".

---Norway condemned the rescue operation as "another massacre of the citizens of the Gaza strip".

The representative of the Palestinian Authority at the United Nations is demanding an emergency meeting of the Security Council to discuss the consequences of the "massacre".

---The reports from Associated Press and Reuters are reflective of the general tone: it was an Israeli planned massacre of poor Palestinian citizens, and Israel should be stopped from any actions like this and punished for rescuing the hostages.

This spin on rescuing hostages from terrorists is a 180 degree opposite of the world's commending Israel on the Raid on Entebbe in 1976, which rescued 103 hostages, killing 52 terrorists in the process. But in 1976, there was still a conscience in the world that recognized the evil of terrorist kidnappings...a conscience that is clearly absent today.

Instead of condemning Israel, the world should be condemning Hamas for hiding the hostages there. Instead of castigating the IDF for their heroism, the world should be lauding them for their devotion to rescue every hostage. Instead of pushing for the replacement of Netanyahu, the world should be admiring his commitment to the people of Israel and authorizing this daring and successful operation.

But instead, we are hated, castigated, and condemned. Hamas has condemned Israel saying that any violence could have been avoided if only Israel had accepted the Hamas proposed deal (pushed by the US, Qatar, and Egypt) which would have left Hamas in power, removed the IDF from Gaza entirely, and not commit to getting the hostages back until months after the IDF pulls out.... as if Hamas, which has broken EVERY agreement they have made should be trusted... despite the reality that Hamas has and continues to promise to repeat the horrors of Oct 7 again and again.

Since Oct 7 I have repeatedly written and said the same thing. Hamas demonstrated on that day that they surrendered any semblance of human souls, and is the modern incarnation of Amalek. Although it is profoundly sad, they must not be defeated, but destroyed entirely so that something new can be born in their ashes in Gaza.

If the world wants to stop the killing of anyone, then they must first get Hamas to simply do two things: immediately release all hostages; and surrender all remaining Hamas terrorists. At that point, real discussions can be initiated about how to make Gaza a peaceful neighbor with Israel. Those are the **only** factors that must be met for Israel to cease fire in Gaza per the War Cabinet. Everything else is possible, but must be predicated on those two factors.

As Diaspora Jews, we all have a responsibility. We need to convince everyone we know that no one wants peace with their neighbors more than Israel, but those two factors must be met...and should be.

If, God forbid, your family member had been kidnapped or worse on Oct 7, would you accept anything less?

Until that happens, let us celebrate the success of the IDF today and in operations like this, which has returned home four innocents from their captivity.

May the Holy One blessed be He deal graciously with all the hostages as He has dealt graciously with these four; and may the people of Israel be safe and protected as they fight this war against a true evil that revels in

kidnapping, rape, murder, and torture.

I hope you all will join our temple on this Tuesday evening, June 11 at 8:00pm for Shavuot... the evening of renewing the commitment between God and the people of Israel. There will be a Yizkor service as part of the evening, which will include study, prayer, insight, and deepen each of our individual connections with God... and strengthen the protection for Israel and the Jewish people in these challenging times.

Shavuot was one of three holidays our ancestors were commanded to travel to the Temple for the Festival. We too are commanded to travel to be together in prayer, and I hope we will all join together for this powerful holiday on Tuesday night.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 8, 2024

3rd of Sivan, 5784

47th day of the Omer

June 9th 2024 at 7:34 am PDT

What to Expect Today...

Chevre,

The Sunday shows and talking heads will undoubtedly be discussing the rescue operation that brought 4 hostages home. These are the shows that typically shape the news view for the coming week, so expect the following:

---the operation will be called a "massacre"

---calls will go out that Israel should have notified civilians that they were about to attack (which would have obviously led to a failed rescue mission)

---comments will be made that this hostage rescue was "illegal"; and the narrative will begin that this rescue operation is more proof of Israeli "war

crimes" (Prof Ben Saul, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Counterterrorism has already started this narrative)

---we will hear repeated comments from media and governments that if only Netanyahu had agreed to the Hamas proposed peace deal, there would have been no Gazan civilian casualties. The events of yesterday will be used as leverage to force world opinion to pressure Israel to accept Hamas' proposal

---Pope Francis called for an immediate acceptance of the Hamas peace proposal this morning at about 430am PST. This will also be reported and leaned on as an "impartial" leader tries to pressure Israel as well.

---casualty and death counts of Gazan "civilians" will keep going up. Al Jazeera has put the number now at over 700. Although all of those number will be proven wrong (we have repeatedly seen Hamas exaggerate by a factor of 5-10); the Hamas numbers will be put out today, and never retracted in a few days when real estimates become available

---we will see a lot of focus about how the hostages were kept by civilians, and claims that there should have been no military action to rescue them. The houses the hostages were kept in were protected by Hamas brigades with heavy artillery including RPGs and grenades; but the media will try to spin it as if passive civilians just happened to be holding the hostages in their comfortable estates. We must always keep in mind that when "civilians" are hiding Hamas terrorists, keeping hostages in their homes, letting Hamas dig tunnel entrances in their homes, etc...they are not civilians at all: they are simply Hamas terrorists who are fighting with different weapons than RPGs. They gave up hiding behind the title of "civilian" the moment they became active participants in Hamas' horrors. As the Israeli pundit put it, "If you don't want the IDF attacking you, just don't hold our people as hostages."

It has been rumored for weeks that Minister Gantz was going to resign from the War Cabinet today, but the hostage rescue may have changed that... at least temporarily.

So as you hear the media spin and talking heads pontificate today, don't let it affect you, and instead remain grateful that four hostages were rescued. As we watch the world use even miraculous events like this as propaganda opportunities to hurt Israel... please remember that we are one people, Am Echad

May we all stay strong, grateful, and safe; and know Am Yisrael Chai

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 9, 2024

3rd of Sivan, 5784

47th day of the Omer

June 9th 2024 at 11:08 pm PDT

Am Echad?

Chevre,

Jewish history shows us over and over that when we unify together, God comes to our aid and we are successful. Conversely, when we allow pettiness and politics to divide us, the Shechinah does not rest on the people of Israel and we become vulnerable.

For many months, the US has been exerting pressure on Ministers Gantz and Lapid to leave the war coalition, and create a new government that does not include Netanyahu. Blinken and Sullivan have had multiple private meetings with both men, even though Netanyahu is the Prime Minister. For a number of reasons, the US administration wants Bibi out and replaced by someone that they can control better.

On Sunday night, their pressure started to manifest in what may be the biggest mistake done in this war yet. Minister Gantz resigned from the coalition. It is still strong, but the divisiveness that Gantz has created is exactly what Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran have been seeking. In airing their disagreements publicly, Gantz is causing more pressure to be placed on Israel; and his move was called out as selfish throughout Israeli media and the other ministers.

Israel is a democracy, and healthy disagreement is good...but not this

way. To publicly resign with fanfare is dangerous for Israel, which is facing an existential threat and must be unified, if not united.

Let us all pray for Am Echad...for one people united in cause and action.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 9, 2024

4th of Sivan, 5784

48th day of the Omer

June 11th 2024 at 12:15 am PDT

Truths & Lies, but Shavuot is this Tuesday Night!

Chevre,

Truths:

---Over 19,000 rockets have been launched into Israel since Oct. 7...that's an average of over 80 rockets per day being fired into Israeli airspace (how is that people who are starving have the funds for such continual attacks?)

---Israel is ramping up operations in the north, and targeting specific Hezbollah sites in Lebanon

---Despite the US official policy of not interfering with foreign governments and their election choices, Blinken has been having as many "private meetings" as he can with Israeli politicians who might be inclined to abandon the Netanyahu coalition.

A Lie to Exert Pressure: The UN security Council voted unanimously on a resolution that Hamas should accept Israel's cease fire proposal.

Except....

The proposal they voted to accept is not accepted by Israel. Israel has been very clear that all hostages must be returned, but this is not the proposal that the UN is pushing. This is all a political move so that Hamas/the United Nations/United States (which proposed the UN

resolution) can attack Israel for not accepting an "Israeli proposal" that they actually never proposed! It is all a blatant lie designed to either pressure Israel into something they do not accept, or to have the world attack them even more for not accepting this proposal.

But there is a light...

Tonight, Tuesday night is Erev Shavuot. This is one of the most important and joyous dates in the Jewish calendar, and is considered by the Kabbalists to be the wedding night between God and Israel. We will be celebrating in our sanctuary at 8:00pm. There will be a brief yizkor service; study; discussion about the deeper meanings of the Torah and our sacred texts; and a guaranteed fun and meaningful evening. It is traditional to have dairy desserts on Shavuot, so please bring one to share with the community, i.e. cheesecake, ice cream, tiramisu, cheesecake, pudding, etc (did I mention cheesecake?)

I hope to see you at Shavuot, 8:00pm tonight at our sanctuary.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 11, 2024

5th of Sivan, 5784

49th day of the Omer

June 11th 2024 at 4:50 pm PDT

Please Join Me at a Wedding Tonight

Chevre,

Tonight begins Shavuot, the holiday that celebrates the giving of the Torah at Mt Sinai; and considered by the kabbalists to be the wedding night between God and Israel.

I invite you to join is in celebration at 8:00pm tonight at our

sanctuary. There will be a brief yizkor service to remember our loved ones, followed by an evening of studying a kabbalistic text, Tikkun Leil Shavuot (in English) so that we can feel how much we are truly loved by God. In these challenging times of war and Jew hatred, we all need to celebrate and feel God's eternal love, and I hope you will join us.

Naturally at a wedding there must be a reception with delicious food. It is traditional to have dairy desserts on the holiday as part of the reception; and so I invite you to bring your favorite dairy dessert to the evening to share.

I hope to celebrate with you tonight. We have all had enough pain, and this joy will be healing for all of us.

Chag Sameach and Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 11, 2024

5th of Sivan, 5784

49th day of the Omer

June 14th 2024 at 12:57 am PDT

What A Difference 2 Days Make

Chevre,

Now that the holiday of Shavuot is over, there is so much to catch up on. For those of you who were unable to be at the synagogue on Tuesday night, here is a link to the first two hours...the first few minutes are a brief yizkor service, followed by the study session we did of the traditional mystical text *Tikkun Leil Shavuot - Rectification of the Eve of Shavuot*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDiifKTZxq8>

The last two days of Shavuot (it's a one day holiday in Israel, but two here in the Diaspora) have been extremely busy in Israel, as well as in the Diaspora Jewish world.

Many of us remember how the world attacked Israel and demanded that we cease fire during the Islamic holiday of Ramadan (a month long holiday that actually has an Islamic history of Moslems initiating wars). Apparently the world cares only for Moslem holidays, not for Jewish ones, for Israel was heavily attacked during our important holiday of Shavuot. Over 250 rockets were fired into Israel. Much of the north was attacked, including Tiberias and the Galilee, each are sacred to us Jews, but also to every Christian. Over 80,000 Israelis from the north are displaced, and there have been a lot of fires because of the attacks, although thank God, limited casualties. There is an especially large fire around Safed, where currently 15 fire teams are working to contain the blaze.

The IDF is clearly prepping for more intense conflict in the north, as troops are being moved from Gaza to the Lebanon border area. A number of high Hezbollah officers have been eliminated in targeted air strikes, and this may lead to even more rockets from Hezbollah. If, God forbid, any of those rockets hit a civilian target, we should be prepared for Israel to launch a significant defense operation that would go into Lebanon. The IDF has officially recommended as of Friday morning to "end the Rafah operation quickly in order to prepare for a wider war in Lebanon".

The last two days have also been full of fake cease fire proposals. Although never approved by the Israelis, Biden/Blinken/Qatar/Egypt spent the last two days saying that there was an approved Israeli cease fire deal on the table for Hamas. Yesterday, Hamas made it clear that they refused even that proposal; and are demanding Israel leave Gaza entirely (in the hands of Hamas), release hundreds of Arab terrorists who are currently serving time in Israeli prisons, and immediately stop all military maneuvers... in which case after six weeks Hamas would release some hostages.

(As a tangential question, doesn't it seem odd that Egypt is so involved in these cease fire negotiations given that A: Egypt has been extremely clear that no Gazan can come into Egypt, even building a wall between Egypt and Gaza to prevent it; and B: the IDF has found miles and miles

of terror tunnels leading from Rafah into Egypt that the IDF has been destroying?)

Polls were also released on Friday morning that showed that 73% of Palestinians still support Hamas' decision to attack Oct. 7; 96% of Palestinians who have not personally seen Hamas' footage do not believe that Hamas committed atrocities; and 54% of Palestinians who have personally seen the Hamas footage and Oct 7 videos still do not believe that Hamas committed any atrocities against Israeli civilians.

Many people still do not understand the game plan of Hamas; and why many of us speak and write about Israel winning all the battles against Hamas, but losing the war...and why it is so important that all Diaspora Jews stand up as individuals and together to combat the "palestinian" propaganda. I was sent this brief 5 minute video (I don't know who made it) that explains extremely well what the Hamas game plan really is, and their warfare plans for both short and longer term. <https://twitter.com/HilzFuld/status/1726197487864529397?t=QVtIY2zaGSE39pPMMVf2g&s=19>

While we are hearing so much media about how Israel is divided in what to do in this war, everyone I have spoken with in Israel says the opposite. They all say that the nation is unified in fully defeating the evil of Hamas and getting every hostage back (alive or God forbid, their bodies); and they all say that the only divisiveness in the nation is the politicians. They are also clear that Netanyahu, who won the last election, still has a clear majority coalition; and while some people want him to resign when the war is, God willing, over; most people just want a stable government right now so that the wars both in Gaza and in the north can be won.

Here at home, pro-Hamas/anti-Jewish encampments have again been built over the last two days on the UCLA campus; and are again being ignored by university officials. Yesterday, video was released of top Columbia University administrators texting each other with anti-Semitic texts and "vomit emojis" during an alumni reunion panel on Jewish life on campus. Given these newest examples of where UCLA and Columbia officials stand, any of you with high school age children

considering college choices might want to remove these two from your lists.

But...top universities in Israel are offering English classes for US students to be able to come to those top schools, including Bar Ilan, Hebrew University, and Tel Aviv University. Many schools are in the process of creating programs similar to Bar Ilan, with the entire first year of classes in English along with an intensive year long ulpan study program so that they could easily take the next years' classes in Hebrew. If this is something you or someone you know would like to learn more about, please email me.

As we complete these two busy days of studying for the holiday and catching up on the events in Israel, we have news here in our own temple as well.

We will begin our Shabbat Under the Stars services on **Friday, June 21st at Deer Hill Community Park**. All through the summer, we will be celebrating Friday night services outdoors, and although services start at 7:00pm, many people come and picnic beforehand, and I hope to see you during the summertime at these joyous evenings. I know many of you reading this live outside of Southern California, but if you are here in the area during the summer, save a Friday night to come join us in these beautiful services.

The other temple news is that you will soon be receiving your **2024 High Holiday Registration Packets** in the mail, and you will be able to register online as well commencing next week B"H. Please register early, and consider donating to the temple when you do. Although there are never any financial costs required to come to anything our synagogue does, including High Holidays, Religious School, Adult Ed, etc.; it has been a difficult financial year for the temple and we are far behind our budget right now. Our community is responsible for raising over \$700,000 for Bnai Zion Hospital in Haifa, but we need to take care of our own community as well...and now is the time as you register for our holiday services, which again will be at the Canyon Club (which has gone through an extremely expensive remodel, is beautiful, and is now a really terrific venue for Bnai Mitzvahs and Weddings..and can provide

kosher meals as well).

As I said at the beginning of this email...a lot has happened in two days. But all that has happened pales in comparison to the first Shavuot over 3000 years ago; when we were given the Torah at Mt. Sinai.

May we all be blessed to receive the blessings of Shavuot in every day and night; and may these new days bring peace to us and to Israel

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 14, 2024

8th of Sivan, 5784

June 15th 2024 at 8:49 pm PDT

Baruch Dayan Emet - May the Mourners Be Comforted

Chevre,

Shavuah Tov.

Every other bit of news pales in comparison: 8 heroes of the IDF were killed in the largest loss of Israeli life since January.

The details are still being investigated, but 8 soldiers were killed by either a rocket or an anti-tank mine in Rafah. There are no words...

Each day that Israel is prevented from finishing this war in Gaza makes it more difficult on us. Although the politicians are not, the Israeli people are united in wanting to stop "half-fighting", and just finish the job of eliminating Hamas and getting back whatever few hostages may still be alive. Soldiers are already being moved into the north, and the war in Gaza could and should have been finished many months ago...except for the pressure of the world, and especially the United States, for Israel to

fight this war with both hands tied behind her back.

I know this is not what we hear in domestic media, but what we hear and read here is extremely biased. Here, we read that there are demands in Israel for another election. In Israel, only a very few loud demonstrators (which is what US media show) want another election. The majority of the country realizes that not only did Netanyahu win the last election, but even with the defections from the coalition (who left the coalition with pressure from Blinken and promises of future US support if they left the coalition), Netanyahu's coalition still holds a strong majority... so there is zero reason to hold another election at this time. Here in the US, our leaders condemn and bully Israel, with Biden saying today, "I am pressuring the Israelis to withdraw and open more humanitarian transits...I have made it very clear to the Israelis what they have to do in the near term and if they don't, what's going to happen." In Israel, the people are unified un wanting to actually finish this war and destroy Hamas for the safety of future Israeli generations.

Never before in American history has our government "told" and "dictated" to a foreign democracy what must be done. Never before have we "demanded" new elections (as Schumer did in the Senate floor). No other country in the history of the world has been as hamstrung during a war as Israel is now experiencing. Never before has the US abandoned an ally in a time of need as we have with Israel in the last 6 months

...and 8 young soldiers paid the price with their lives.

Channel 14 in Israel had a senior officer in Rafah on today. He said, "The price of indecision is hurting us! We no longer have the strength for indecision." He went on to plead for the ability to "let the IDF conquer everything and win".

With troops needing to be moved to the north to deal with the many attacks from Lebanon, the choices before Israel are clear. They must either

A: take the gloves off and finish the operation in Gaza, destroy Hamas, and get whatever hostages they can; or

B: Abandon the Gaza operation; allowing Hamas to stay in power, not get hostages, and know that Hamas will repeat the horrors of Oct. 7 as soon as they can.

On a practical level, we are now in a place of binary choices: those are the only two choices Israel has... and every American Jew must speak, write, vote, and do all we can to support the choice we believe in.

As far as "humanitarian" transits and aid go...the US has now spent over 400 million dollars to build a humanitarian aid pier that has broken apart multiple times and is currently moved and grounded (and entirely useless). Less than 10% of aid through that pier reached any Gazan citizens, as it was all hijacked by Hamas. While the world screams about Israel not giving aid to its enemy, 5 rockets were again launched today toward Kibbutz Kituffim from the "Humanitarian Area" in central Gaza. We now have multiple films proving that the vast majority of UNRWA facilities (over 80% of them) were being used to house Hamas rocket launchers and weapons. There is also now a plethora of evidence that the majority of personnel and teachers in UNRWA schools were educating children about the "evil Israel", that there is no Jewish history in the region, and that palestine should be from the river to the sea; and footage from multiple schools of UNRWA teachers celebrating Oct. 7 and every Israeli death. Again, on a practical level, there is no "humanitarianism" that is not being used as part of a war effort against Israel.

We are in the midst of an existential threat to the survival of Israel and the Jewish people, as well as all of Western culture... and while Israel can and will fight it alone, it has become far too dangerous to continue this fight half-heartedly... the Rafah officer is accurate in his words earlier today: "Decisions now!"

May the families of the eight who died be comforted among the mourners of Zion...

And may we all keep their sacrifices in our consciousness, and act accordingly.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 15, 2024

10th of Sivan, 5784

June 17th 2024 at 3:23 am PDT

"Unofficial" War is Declared

Chevre,

11 IDF soldiers were buried on Sunday, and the mourning has brought out a nationwide anger and frustration that is palpable: an anger that Israel did not just finish this war months ago, and a desire to remedy that situation in both Gaza and the north.

While Biden's Senior Advisor Amos Hochstein is on his way to Israel to try to deescalate the situation in the north, Israel is moving troops to the north for the exact opposite purpose. IDF Spokesman Admiral Hagari gave a passionate and clear speech to Israel and the world today. "Israel has a duty to defend its people, and it will fulfill that duty at all costs."

Hagari's speech was not one of reconciliation or politics, it was everything short of an overt declaration of war against Hezbollah, which de facto means a war in Lebanon, and possibly with Iran. He pointed out that since Oct. 7, over 5000 rockets have been fired into Israel from Lebanon; and that Hezbollah is hiding behind Lebanon. He made it clear that another Oct 7 type of event will not happen in the north, and that the tens of thousands of Israeli citizens who have been displaced from their homes in the north will be able to return safely to their homes, and that this is non-negotiable. In conjunction with troops being moved to the north and reservists being called up; this speech sounded very much like a clarion call to war.

At the same time, some Ministers are now making public their disdain for a half hearted war effort. Announced on Sunday were more

commitments to pause fighting in Gaza for a few hours per day to allow aid to come into Gaza; and this announcement as 11 soldiers were being buried enraged numerous officials, most vocally Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir. Smotrich went so far as to say that the process of allowing aid into Gaza ultimately means the aid goes to Hamas, and helps them to "retain civilian control of the Strip in direct contradiction to the goals of the war", and that this is "one of the reasons for the continuation of the war and the resounding strategic failure of the war effort". He accused the General Staff of being "completely disconnected from the existence of the forces in the field" if they were to issue a message "on a day when we are burying 11 of our best soldiers". Ben Gvir was equally disdainful of pausing to allow aid to get into Gaza, describing the measure as "foolish and delusional".

The deaths of the soldiers over the last few days has been galvanizing the people of Israel; who want to create a safe situation that will last for generations..and who are getting progressively more frustrated with Israeli politicians, world leaders, and international organizations who consistently draw a moral equivalency between the horrors of Oct. 7 and any other tragedy.

Let us pray for the leaders of Israel, the people of Israel, and the land of Israel; and may Israel be blessed with a lasting peace with friendly neighbors.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 17, 2024

11th of Sivan, 5784

June 18th 2024 at 6:16 am PDT

"Non-Organic" Pressure

Chevre,

Each day seems to be different variations on the same themes.

"Negotiators" for a cease fire are pressuring Israel that "there may be dozens of hostages still alive", but "who may not live much longer if there is no cease fire deal". Over 200 hostages, and "maybe" there are dozens alive? And we should be grateful for this? The world has forgotten the horrors of Oct 7...we cannot and should not.

There are "organic" and "spontaneous" demonstrations in Jerusalem demanding that Israel cease fire immediately as the only way to get hostages returned. There are calls at these demonstrations for a "coup"... a physical and violent uprising against the government. Arab media is celebrating this discord, and the world's media is reporting it as if these organic demonstrations are popular and sweeping the country.

Except...these are not "organic" nor "spontaneous". They are being run by the same people who were leading "organic" demonstrations against Netanyahu last summer, and have the same characteristics. They start and finish at specific times on the dot (I did my undergraduate work at UC Berkeley and participated in actual organic and spontaneous events...and they were always confused,, confusing, and never exactly 30 minutes; never started promptly at 10:00 and ended at 10:30; and didn't have high quality expensive portable sound equipment). These demonstrations in Jerusalem have all the same organizational qualities as the BLM riots 4 years ago, and of the recent well funded and well trained college campus encampments, that all appeared at the same time across the country. (How is it all the college encampments had the same tents, sound systems, and training how to act? Is there a new retail chain called "Terrorists R Us? Many universities have found that there were pre-paid debit cards tied together that purchased the gear, etc.) The demonstration in Jerusalem on Monday bears an eerie resemblance to what we've been seeing here at home.

There is a repeated but unsubstantiated rumor in Israeli media that Kaan 11 News obtained a document that IDF Intelligence had an idea about the attack on Oct. 7 two weeks earlier. This is not confirmed, but is being reported throughout Israel on Tuesday morning. We need to remember that there will be plenty of time to find any mistakes made that helped allow the Oct 7 tragedy; but now is the time for every Jew to be unified

together.

Hamas fired more rockets from Gaza; the IDF stopped Hamas from capturing more aid trucks; and it has now been shown on videos by multiple organizations that there is no famine in Gaza, and Hamas, which has hijacked the aid trucks, doles out food and supplies to whomever they choose.

A question for each of us to consider:

Is it really humanitarian to give aid into the hands of the rapists, kidnapers, and murderers of Oct 7? To lengthen the war by continuing to provide aid to Hamas? Is it humanitarian to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on a pier that can't even stay functional for a few months, when that money could have been used for actual aid?

As the war continues in Gaza and escalates in the north, please pray daily for Israel's people and land; that they should stay safe, protected, and ultimately peaceful.

And I hope you will join the temple community this Friday eve for our first Shabbat Under the Stars of the summer. Services start at 7:00pm, but come picnic earlier and enjoy the fiest of these special evenings of prayer in nature.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 18, 2024

12th of Sivan, 5784

June 19th 2024 at 12:50 am PDT
Churchill's Words Via Netanyahu

Chevre,

During WWII, Winston Churchill famously said to the United States "Give us the tools, we'll do the job". Netanyahu repeated this famous Churchill quote today when talking about the US holding back weapon supplies to Israel; and how it is "inconceivable" to him that the US has been withholding arms to America's strongest ally in the region. Blinken and the White House's response was expressed by White House spokesperson Karine Jean Pierre, who acted as if she had no idea what Netanyahu was talking about when questioned by the White House Press Corps. on why the weapons that Congress approved for Israel still were not there.

And Israel needs the weapons. Troops are moving north towards Lebanon; top Israeli generals today approved plans for the upcoming offensive into Lebanon to weaken Hezbollah and make the border safe; and the IDF is hoping to increase the destruction of Hamas tunnels in Rafah so that they are all destroyed within a month.

The "tools" that Netanyahu refers to are not just military, but public relations/media/correcting Hamas propaganda. The ICC and UN, along with the vast majority of Western media, have been repeatedly saying that there is a famine in Gaza caused by Israel and this war (hasn't one of the military strategies of all past wars been to make life so unpleasant, including through "sieges" so that the enemy surrenders? And given that Gaza started all this and kidnapped hundreds of hostages, doesn't that make it even more important?). But the ICC and UN's accusations have been entirely based on Hamas' reporting of the conditions...despite the historical reality that Hamas' reporting has never been accurate about anything. But today a detailed study was concluded by two professors from Columbia Univ about the actual "famine" in Gaza. I invite you to read the article about this study in the Jerusalem Post (<https://m.jpost.com/israel-hamas-war/article-806739?dicbo=v2-u5t3fus>), but the study irrefutably concludes that there is no famine in Gaza... that it is an entire "myth", and that all facts on the ground show the exact opposite.

"We found that the food supply entering Gaza is more than sufficient to all 2.2 million Gazans according to what is considered a normal diet in North America".

It is all of our responsibility to dispel this propaganda myth of Hamas about a

famine caused by Israel. When people start talking about this supposed famine, bring out this JPost article, show the study, and remember that these are professors at Columbia Univ.; not a place known for their love of Israel and Jews...yet these facts are so clear even Columbia accepted and published them.

And that is always our job as Diaspora Jews: to be "ambassadors" for Israel with our words and actions, and to stop the Hamas propaganda by fighting it with facts.

May we all become better ambassadors for Israel, and may Israel and the Jewish people be strong and be strengthened.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 19, 2024

13th of Sivan, 5784

June 20th 2024 at 5:34 am PDT

War: Hezbollah, Iran, and \$

Chevre,

The war in the north seems to be almost unavoidable at this point. The US envoy has left the region expressing little hope; Israel has moved troops; and Hezbollah has threatened not just Israel but Cyprus (if they help Israel at all) as well as threatened to invade the Galilee.

Iran has now been unquestionably exposed as adding a large number of centrifuges and will soon be able to triple its uranium enrichment rate, making it able to produce several nukes every month at this rate.

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich is attempting to weaken Hamas and Hezbollah in a different way; having frozen tax income from the Palestinian Authority; which has been helping financially support terrorism. The PA is

protesting vehemently; but we'll see what happens over the next two months.

Let us all pray for the safety of our soldiers and civilians in the north as things start to escalate there.

Chazak U'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 20, 2024

14th of Sivan, 5784

June 21st 2024 at 12:17 am PDT

Special Shabbat & War Challenges in the North

Chevre,

As we start our outdoor Shabbat Under the Stars services tonight at 7:00pm at Deerhill Community Park; there is a darkness approaching Israel...

"Unnamed American officials" are "leaking" to worldwide media outlets that Israel's Iron Dome does not have the ability to withstand a war with Hezbollah. Whether it is true, God forbid, or not, it is the type of story that can only encourage Hezbollah, Hamas, et al, and hurt Israel. We should all pray that it is false, for if the Iron Dome does not, God forbid, protect Israel; it is probable that the Israel Air Force would wreak a hell on Lebanon with much less concern for precision than they have had in Gaza.

Nasrullah, the head of Hezbollah, is stating more and more threats on Israel as well as her allies, so the importance of the Iron Dome is crucial.

A multi-front war is never an ideal; but with God's help, Israel will triumph and make the region safer in the long term.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 21, 2024

15th of Sivan, 5784

June 23rd 2024 at 12:10 am PDT

Shpilkes

Chevre,

The yiddish word "shpilkes" means to be anxious or agitated; to be on pins and needles... and it is the word of the day as Israel enters Day 261 since Hamas started this war to destroy not only Israel, but all Jews worldwide. This is the word that defines much of the attitude of Israelis right now.

On Saturday, Israel attacked some specific targets in Lebanon, and Hezbollah attacked in the north, with one of the Hezbollah drones evading interceptor missiles and hitting the northern community of Beit Hillel (thank God there were no injuries). While tensions remain high in Gaza as the IDF is still working to destroy Hamas and retrieve hostages; the multiple small exchanges of attacks with Hezbollah in the north seems to be on the edge of teetering into a full scale war. Both Israel and Hezbollah are "rattling sabres", Israeli troops have been moved to the north, and multiple countries have suggested that all foreign citizens get out of Israel while they can. Pictures from the Beirut airport look like a mass exodus is leaving Lebanon in concerns for an upcoming war.

Shpilkes is also a feeling for many in other areas of the world as well. With Russia establishing a stronger alliance with North Korea; the nuclear aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt arrived on Saturday in South Korea for a three day exercise involving Japan. Tensions have increased exponentially with Russia's stronger alliance with N. Korea; and the world is watching...

But whatever shpilkes any of us feel regarding the challenges in the world; we all must daily pray for Israel, for the people of Israel, her land, the hostages, and all Jews.

Take just a few minutes every day, please. Focus your intent on Israel and the Jewish people, and open your heart and soul to the prayer that comes from within you.

261 days. 261 days of hell for Israel and all the Jewish people; but especially for hostages and their families. Let us continue to pray fervently for them, for Israel, and for all the Jewish people...for we are one people...
Am Echad!

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 23, 2024

17th of Sivan, 5784

June 23rd 2024 at 11:31 pm PDT

Los Angeles and Israel

Chevre,

There is so much to discuss from today, but here are two "highlights"

Israeli fighter jets are taking out Hezbollah targets in Lebanon. We are flying in Lebanon's airspace, so for all intents and purposes we are at war. How far or intensely it will progress is the question, but be prepared for it to get much worse before it gets better. (And we still have troops in Gaza attempting to eliminate the last of the Hamas brigades).

As many of you know, we had a pogrom in Los Angeles today. Pro-Hamas demonstrators blocked off a temple in the Pico Robertson area; they got violent; and then went through the neighborhood to attack Jews. Karen Bass had known about this for a week, but refused to stop it in advance, and told the LAPD to stand down unless absolutely necessary. But this time...Jews fought back. Magen Am was there to stop things from getting too far out of hand, and Jews did not cower... they stood up to show that when we say "Never Again", we mean it. The riots were stopped (isn't it funny how bullies

run away when confronted), but it isn't clear if or how many arrests were made. What is despicable is Bass and the LAPD's ignoring of the situation, and treating the temple's congregants in the same way as the Hamas activists.

Can you even imagine how the City would have dealt with KKK members attacking a black church?

Now you all know why we have armed security at EVERY temple gathering...God forbid it should ever be needed.

Have faith, stay strong, pray, and act... and may we all see the results of prayers for a world without Jew hatred in our time.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 23, 2024

18th of Sivan, 5784

June 25th 2024 at 1:18 am PDT

Updates on Israel, the City's Response to Yesterday's Riots and The Power of Music

Chevre,

US Air Force General Charles Brown, the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, predicted today that even though Iran did not directly support Hamas, they would be "much more inclined to support Hezbollah...particularly if they felt that Hezbollah was being significantly threatened". This is as Blinken has been repeating warnings to Israel to not "escalate the conflict" with Hezbollah. In other words, they would like Israel to continue allowing Hezbollah to fire rockets at civilians in sacred cities in the north without responding. But Israel has been responding in the last few days, and today the Israel Air Force jets were again precision attacking specific Hezbollah targets, including "terrorist infrastructure used by Hezbollah's Aerial Defense Array" in

multiple areas of Lebanon.

General HaLevi, the Chief of the General Staff, gave a situational assessment today in the Rafah area of Gaza, where he said that "we have achieved very high levels of success in Rafah" and "we are clearly approaching the point where we can say we have dismantled the Rafah Brigade. This does not mean there are no more terrorists, but that the brigade can no longer function as a fighting unit".

Following the threats on Cyprus from Nasrallah/Hezbollah, the Greek government today said that the European Union "stands in solidarity with Cyprus against Hezbollah threats". Given the E.U.'s antipathy towards Israel, it is not clear what that really means, but it is better than nothing, and we should always be grateful for anything positive coming out from Europe.

Interestingly, there are unconfirmed rumors from a U.A.E. newspaper that Hamas is going to move its headquarters from Qatar to Iraq, and that the Hamas billionaire senior officials who currently live like royalty in Qatar might be moving their palaces to Iraq.

Here in Los Angeles, Mayor Karen Bass gave a token speech at the Wiesenthal Center about how she will not accept hate in her city; but without commitment to arrest or prosecute any of the terrorists who attacked the synagogue in Pico-Robertson yesterday. Additionally, as expected, she was careful in her words: not blaming the pro-Hamas activists for their violence, and committing to bringing together faith and cultural leaders to discuss how to protect houses of worship (she noticeably did not say synagogues, but was commenting on "Houses of worship", making more "inclusive" and not about Jew hatred). She did not mention arrest or prosecution of the extremists, but committed to establishing a dialogue to talk about better definition of permits for protests. And she was very careful not to mention the attacks on observant Jews who were walking in the adjacent neighborhood... young families who were attacked by the pro-Hamas demonstrators after they were forced to leave the synagogue area, but who still wanted to show violence against Jews.

I know that it feels dark in so many ways, but we are Jews...and we choose to have faith that this will all work out. When people ask me about having faith

when the world, our nation, and even our local areas seem to have turned against the Jewish people, I explain that this is not a "blind faith"...

We have over 3500 years of history to look at as Jews! For 3500 years they (whomever the Jew hater is in that century) have tried to destroy us. And for 3500 years, no matter how dark it got, God has remembered His covenant and saved the Jewish people. We are in the "middle of the story", and as dark as it may seem, it is our responsibility and privilege to keep our faith that God will again continue to take care of us. So keeping faith that it is going to get better for the Jewish people and Israel is not blind faith, it is a faith of clarity based on history.

In these challenging times, one of the things that can help us all retain our faith is music. I encourage everyone to take some time each day to sing, dance, listen to music, or just revel in the sounds of favorite artist. Many people spent the first few months after Oct 7 listening to inspirational music about Jews and Israel... but from what I have been told, many of us have stopped that practice. I encourage everyone to renew your soul with music, and have faith that this too shall pass, and the Jewish people and Israel will survive and thrive. To help you, here are a few inspiring music videos (I apologize for not sending them out as often in recent months...I too need to remember the power of sharing music more):

And remember....the real power of music is to create feelings, and it is those honest feelings that make our prayers honest and powerful. So use these videos to bring up the feelings of love for Israel, Judaism, God, and Life... and May we always have faith

A Prayer for the Hostages, and for all Israel: [Koolulam | Like A prayer - Madonna | Bring Them Home, NOW](#)

A Mi Sheberach Prayer for Healing for the IDF: [התפילה לשלום חיילי צה"ל | The Prayer for the IDF Soldiers \(Live\)](#)

Although 6 years old, this song of hope is sung by 600 Holocaust survivors and their children, and is truly inspiring in these times: [Koolulam | Hai - Ofra Haza | Holocaust Memorial Day | March 21st, 2018](#)

Ani Ma'Ameen: I believe in perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah, and even though he may delay, I will still believe: [Ani Maamin - Shlomo Carlebach](#)
[Feat. Eli Levin ר' שלמה קרליבך מארח את אלי לוין - אני מאמין](#)

A Prayer for a Day of Peace in Our Time: [One Day \(Shema Israel\) | \(שמע ישראל\) יום אחד](#)

1000 musicians and singers praying to Bring them Home: [1000 Israeli musicians sing with one voice, BRING THEM HOME! - Homeland concert](#)

From Jerusalem, Am Yisrael Chai, the People of Israel Will Live: [Am Yisrael Chai Jerusalem 2024 - Eyal Golan](#)

The people of Israel will always live....and we will always sing

Chazak U'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 25, 2024

19th of Sivan, 5784

June 26th 2024 at 12:13 am PDT

Food, a Victory, and the Draft

Chevre,

A meaningful victory for Israel happened on Tuesday, but it was not in Israel, but the Bronx. In the Democratic primary, pro-Israel candidate George Latimer handily defeated incumbent Jamaal Bowman. This is a large victory for Israel as Bowman was one of the most anti-Israel representatives in either house of Congress, and was extremely loud in his dislike for Israel. His hatred for Jews was well documented prior to running for office; his behavior during his tenure has consistently been to oppose any funding or relationship between the US and Israel; and his campaign focused a lot of energy and time on Israel and his support for Hamas. This is a man who for many months even denied that there were any rapes on Oct 7, and has repeatedly accused Israel of

genocide. His removal from office to be replaced by a man who has consistently spoken for Israel is an optimistic note in this election year.

Back in March, the International Food Security Phase Classification predicted that a full blown famine would sweep across Gaza between March and July. Today, they reported that they were entirely wrong, and that there has not been nor is there now a famine in Gaza. Connected to the U.N., the IPC's findings may have significant impact on the Intl Court of Justice's commitment to condemn Israel, as much of the ICC's argument was that Israel was causing a famine in Gaza. Now that argument is proven fallacious. If you ever hear pro-Hamas activists (or sympathetic friends) condemn Israel for causing a famine, you can quote this study from a U.N. organization that there is and has never been a famine.

In Israel, the High Court has determined that ultra-Orthodox Haredi Jews must now serve in the IDF, despite the exemptions that they received since the State of Israel was founded in 1948. This will cause multiple challenges in Israel, and as one Senior IDF commander pointed out, is it even really a good thing to draft ultra-Orthodox Jews to fight when they have neither the skills nor desire to be effective soldiers? This shift may cause multiple problems internally in Israel, as the nation has always viewed these ultra-Orthodox as soldiers who use prayer as their weapon. It additionally may raise internal political strife in the country at a time when we need unity.

While a war with Hezbollah is expected, today marked the arrival of the USS Eisenhower aircraft carrier along with the Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group in Greece to "assist in any operation that may develop between Israel and Lebanon". This created a slight reduction of Hezbollah attacks today.

My friend David J. Is fond of saying that we "should take the win" whenever possible, and with the ousting of a large, anti-Semitic voice in Congress, the announcement of the lies about a famine in Gaza by a U.N. agency, and the arrival of the Eisenhower Carrier Strike in Greece, there were a number of "wins" that we should be grateful for.

May Israel continue to be safe and successful, and always be protected under a covering of God's protection.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 26, 2024

20th of Sivan, 5784

June 27th 2024 at 1:00 am PDT

War, Post-War, and a Debate

Chevre,

There were less attacks from Hezbollah today, although Israel launched two surface to surface missiles in Lebanon neighborhoods with precise targeting. The IDF has not as yet released what/who the targets were.

Both the UAE and Egypt announced today that they would like to participate in a post war Gaza administrative security force. Both countries have vested interests in keeping terrorists like Hamas contained: Egypt is a neighbor that desperately wants Hamas and its ilk to stay out of Egypt; and the UAE is one of the most modern Arab countries that does not want to succumb to the pressure of Islamic extremists.

Tonight is the Presidential debate, and the odds are good that Israel will be brought up. It is a unique format for a "debate", but we can expect that there will be vague statements about Israel and the war on both sides. Pundits expect questions about Israel, campus protests, and possibly the LA riot this past weekend. Trump will probably tout his pro-Israel record (Abraham accords, moving the embassy to Jerusalem, his inclusion of anti semitism in Title VI), and focus that there was peace in the Middle East during his Presidency. He will probably point out the extreme anti-Semitism of the far left of the Democratic party (Tlaib, Omar, AOC) and Bowman's primary loss of Tuesday. Biden will probably attack Trump on accepting support from blatant anti-Semites like the Proud Boys, Nick Fuentes, groypers, etc.; and will claim to be the support and guidance that Israel and the world needs to achieve peace. Both men, especially Biden have a dilemma: nearly every poll still has American supporting Israel at over 70%; but there is a large Muslim

demographic in swing states like Michigan and Minnesota.

As always, we must have faith and watch carefully what is said...and what is not said tomorrow evening. Most importantly, we need to remember that our greatest ally is not Trump nor Biden... but is and has always been God.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 27, 2024

21st of Sivan, 5784

June 28th 2024 at 12:43 pm PDT

Israel Watches the US

Chevre,

Much of the Middle East went on "pause" on Thursday as their attention turned to the debate between Trump and Biden. Depending on which man wins the Presidency, negotiations, alliances, and tactics change for each nation in the region, and none more than Israel.

As a result of the debate, Israel's media on Friday morning has been all about the debate, and whether Biden will even be the nominee. The pundits in Israel are discussing what may happen, if Biden will be well enough to actually run, and who might replace him and what are those people's attitudes towards Israel.

There were the daily rockets fired by Hezbollah, but there was one large announcement: Israeli officials made it clear that despite pressure from the Biden administration, Israel is remaining firm in their desire to target Hezbollah in Lebanon. They are aiming to create a ten mile buffer zone into Lebanon in order to have a safer environment for Safed and the northern communities.

It was also announced today that 81 people have been diagnosed with West

Nile Virus, the majority of them in the Tel Aviv area.

Tonight we will again be observing Shabbat Under the Stars at Deerhill Community Park at 7:00pm, and I hope you will join us for a beautiful Sabbath in the glory of nature...

Chazak u'Baruch and Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 28, 5784

22nd of Sivan, 5784

June 30th 2024 at 4:29 am PDT

The War; and Important Words From an Israeli Mother

Chevre,

Israel is like much of the world right now, as they watch and see what happens in America and President Biden. So internally, there seems to be a "pause" this weekend as Israel waits...

The IDF has been preparing for a more intense war in the north as Hezbollah and Iran are making progressively more vocal threats on Israel. The Turkish army is moving forces towards the Syrian border, which is concerning Israeli ministers; and the IDF is going through cemeteries in Gaza (most recently in Sunday, from a cemetery in east Gaza City) to check for dead hostages' bodies.

The mother of IDF soldier Yair Avitan, who died this weekend, released a formal statement. Although a bit long, I think it is worth reading as it expresses the dedication and love that so many Israelis have:

"I received the messengers of Iyov (Job) at my door last night around 5:00 PM. I received the difficult news in silence just like Aharon HaCohen, who learned about his 2 sons who died. "Vidom Aharon".

On this occasion, I want to hug and strengthen first and foremost the

commanders and fighters, your beloved children, who today are also mine. Raise your head! Don't cry! Don't lose heart! This is the last war. Fight the enemy without mercy, for the sake of all the people of Israel!

We will win and in a big way only in one way - if we love each other, embrace and hold each other. We will not hate, we will not take revenge and we will not review one another.

My son died a martyr's death. He is now sitting under the kisay hakavod, under the holy throne of the creator of the world, watching over us from the best place a soul can reach and asking you one thing - don't be sad.

I personally do not intend to leave the battle, on the contrary, I AM ENLISTING IN PLACE OF MY SON.

I will continue to assist the boys in everything and anything until victory.

All hope that my son will be the last sacrifice.

The enemy made a grave mistake, he didn't know what kind of mother he was dealing with. I have very strong ties with the Creator of the world and I assure you that the revenge on the part of the Almighty will be so severe from now on that even the enemy will not understand from where it fell on him.

Am Yisroel Chai - The nation of Israel lives. "

If a mother who experienced the ultimate loss can stay so inspired and devoted to Israel and the war... we too can make it a point every day to direct our prayers and thoughts to the Holy Land, and her people

...who are also our people as we remember that we all are truly Am Echad

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

June 30, 2024

24th of Sivan, 5784

July 1st 2024 at 6:17 am PDT

Hate, Hamas, Harvey Milk, and Hope

Chevre,

The IDF is still clearing Rafah of Hamas terrorists a block at a time; finding tunnels, weapon caches, and hidden bases every day. To put Gaza in perspective for those who aren't clear, the strip is approximately 140 square miles: 25 miles long and between 3.5 and 7.1 miles wide. In other words, it is roughly the distance from Pasadena to Santa Monica and densely populated...which is why it is taking so long and is so hard to clear out (unless, God forbid, Israel just carpet bombed the whole area and stopped being concerned with collateral damage). Consider how difficult it would be to go a block at a time from Pasadena, through Downtown, Hollywood, West Hollywood, Beverly Hills, West L.A., Brentwood, etc. until reaching the Santa Monica Pier. A block at a time...

Hamas has been affected by the renewed question of who will be governing the U.S. in only 4 months, and ramped up rockets on Sunday, sending 20 rockets and producing a video of Hamas weaponry with Chinese markings.

The increased anti-Semitism is being seen more every day. An El Al flight from Warsaw to Tel Aviv was forced to land due to a medical emergency with a passenger, but the Turkish airport in Antalya refused to refuel the El Al plane... something almost unheard of. The plane flew to Rhodes to refuel there, even though before landing the Turkish government had assured them that they would be refueled in Turkey.

The renowned Erasmus University in Rotterdam has had much of its campus' mini square taken over with an anti-Israel encampment; which will only allow people to pass if they take a vow of solidarity with Palestine and dip their hands in red paint as a show of the commitment. This school is over 100 years old and has tens of thousands of students, including many Jews... who as you can imagine are terrified right now.

At Sunday's gay pride parade in New York, a group of demonstrators broke into the parade, sat down, and began chanting "no queer liberation without

palestinian liberation". Apparently the irony that anyone who is queer would be summarily killed in any sort of palestine was lost on all the people there. One has to wonder how Harvey Milk, one of the early gay rights activists who was assassinated and was also Jewish would feel about what happened in New York today, as well as the many Jewish participants in the Stonewall Riot.

In similar fashion to Hitler, Jew haters today are consciously trying to integrate many fringe demographics into their anti-Semitic hate; despite the reality that these Nazi wannabes hate those groups (like gays) almost as much as they hate Jews.

But as Rebbe Schneerson taught, when two Jews meet, both are blessed with good things. Jews are meeting each other and developing new relationships as we band together to fight this Jew hatred, and as we greet someone on the street who is wearing a sign of being Jewish (a Star of David necklace, etc.) and demonstrate our inherent bond by greeting each other.

... so we must all choose to have faith, and reach out to other Jews that we do not know and at least say "Shalom Aleichem" to them... "Peace be upon you".

We are one people, and the Jew haters hate us all. We need to remember this truth of Am Echad, and also reach out to support and recognize each other at every opportunity. The strength of the Jewish people comes from God and from our bonding together... for we are one family, and all are under attack.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 1st, 2024

25th of Sivan, 5784

July 2nd 2024 at 5:36 am PDT

Rockets & Remembering that we are all Tied to Israel

Chevre,

A German newspaper reported on Tuesday morning that there will be war starting in Lebanon in two weeks. Whether this is accurate or not remains to be seen but it is clear that Israel is tired of "reacting" to so many repeated attacks in the north that tens of thousands of Israeli are displaced from their homes and is now publicly discussing being more "pro-active"

On the Gaza front, another tunnel over a kilometer long was discovered in Rafah. Hamas launched over 20 rockets from Gaza on Tuesday, Gallant said today that great strides are still being made in Gaza, and warned that the fighting in the north is getting more intense.

As Jews, all the people in Israel are "family", and please keep the brave men and women in our prayers

... and remember that God is always present, and that the Gemarra teaches us that God's covenant will always keep us protected...for we are Am Echad...one people in different lands

Chazak u'baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 2, 2024

26th of Sivan, 5784

July 3rd 2024 at 5:16 am PDT

War, Politics, the NY Times, and Fizzy Drinks

Chevre,

Israeli Chief of Staff Halevi was clear on Tuesday that the IDF is dismantling Hamas in Gaza piece by piece. Not just militarily, but taking apart its infrastructure so that it will ultimately become impotent on all levels. Also today, a new brigade finished training and was designated HeHarim Brigade, with a purpose of defending the north in Israel.

Great Britain joined multiple countries in requesting that all citizens return

home from Lebanon. This is a strong predictor of war; and other countries that have done the same with their citizens visiting Lebanon include Canada, Germany, Netherlands, Kuwait Saudi Arabi, Jordan, Ireland, Spain, Australia, Russia, and the United States. It would seem that world opinion believes that there is about to be much more intense war in Lebanon in the near future.

The New York Times has been busy. They are claiming that a "source" informed them that Israel accepted a cease fire deal, which was immediately countered by Netanyahu that this is a fallacy, and no deal will be reached until all hostages are returned and Hamas destroyed. The Times also published an account of a conversation between Biden and Netanyahu after Iran's attack in April 14, claiming that Biden told Netanyahu that if Israel responded, than the US would pull out from helping Israel in the future. The Times claimed to have published this as proof that Biden has full mental sharpness after his problematic debate performance. Once again, the New York Times is publishing unsubstantiated articles that are designed to put pressure on Israel.

A new complaint was filed against Israel today. According to Palestinian reports, Israel is not allowing enough fizzy drinks (sodas) and cigarettes unto Gaza. Complaints against Israel are being filed with multiple international organizations so that Gazans can have more sodas and cigs...because clearly not getting enough sodas to your enemy in war is now considered cruel and inhuman punishment.

May the time not be distant when
soda disbursement really is the worst thing happening in the world.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 3, 2024

27th of Sivan, 5784

July 4th 2024 at 12:20 pm PDT

Israeli July 4 Heroism

Chevre,

We all know about July 4, and hopefully after last night's email, we all recognize the deep Jewish roots of America. Some of us are old enough to remember another July 4 incident, but it's something we should all be aware of in this world of hostages...

On June 27, 1976, Air France flight left Tel Aviv with 246 passengers and a crew of 12. It stopped in Athens to pick up 58 more passengers... and 4 hijackers: 2 Palestinians from the PFLP and two from the German Revolutionary cells. They hijacked the plane to refuel in Benghazi, Libya; and then continued to their destination of Entebbe Airport in Uganda, where they arrived on June 28. Four other hijackers joined them at Entebbe, where they were also supported by the forces of Ugandan President Idi Amin Dada, who personally visited the hostages on a daily basis. The hijackers demands were for both money and the release of 53 Palestinian terrorists, 40 of whom were in Israeli prisons. They promised to start killing hostages on July 1 if their demands were not met. On June 30, 48 non-Israeli passengers were released, mostly old and sick. This made it even clearer that this was a Palestinian way of attacking Israel: to kidnap Israeli civilians.

On July 1, Israel said they would negotiate, and the Palestinians postponed executing innocents until noon on July 4, and released the remaining 100 non-Israeli hostages. 106 hostages remained at Entebbe, which included the brave Air France crew who refused to leave.

From the moment the plane had been hijacked, Israel tried to negotiate for the release of the hostages; attempting to use Anwar Sadat of Egypt and even reaching out for help from Arafat to help. But it was to no avail. In Israel, the internal fight was whether to give in to the terrorist's demands or not. Yitzhak Rabin wanted to capitulate and just get hostages back; and Shimon Peres believed that if Israel did that, it would portend a future of Palestinians kidnapping Israelis as a war tactic.

Faced with failing negotiations and realizing that a precedent of succumbing to terrorists could be devastating to Israel in the future, a military rescue mission was planned.

One of the challenges for Israel was aircraft fuel. The Israelis would need to refuel the C130 Hercules aircraft somewhere between Israel and Uganda; and secured permission from President Jomo Kenyatta to do so in Nairobi. A total force of 100 personnel would be involved in the operation. A crucial element to success were the 29 members of the assault unit, led by Lt. Colonel Yonatan Netanyahu (the brother of current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu) who would need to assault the old terminal where the hostages were being held, and rescue the hostages. Paratroopers would secure the entire airport; the Golani brigade would secure the Hercules aircraft; and Major Shaul Mofaz would lead the team that would clear the military airstrip and destroy the MIG fighters there.

Perfect coordination would be needed and every piece fall exactly into place for the hostages to be rescued successfully.

Israeli forces landed on July 3 at 11:00pm. They traveled to the hangar in a motorcade designed to look like Idi Amin's. When the Israelis got into the hangar where the hostages were being held, they identified themselves in Hebrew and English and yelled for everyone to stay down. Three hostages either didn't understand or didn't listen, raised their heads, and were killed by crossfire. The hijackers were killed, and the hostages were rushed to the Israeli aircraft, but were attacked by Ugandan soldiers on the way, some of whom were in the control tower. 5 commandos were wounded in the firefight, and Colonel Netanyahu was killed. But the hostages got to the plane, and once Netanyahu's body was carried on to it, the plane took off to Nairobi.

The entire operation lasted 53 minutes. All 7 hijackers present at the airport, and between 45 and 45 Ugandan soldiers were killed. Of the 106 hostages, three were killed, one was left in Uganda (a woman who had been taken from the airport to a hospital on June 29th), and ten were wounded.

On July 9, the United Nations convened to condemn Israel for the attack. But with the strength of Britain and the United States together, no official resolution was passed. The Western nations of Europe and America were unified in condemning the terrorists, and effusively praised Israel for her strong actions, swift and decisive response, and for not surrendering to terrorists.

But as we have seen since Oct 7, that Western support for decisive action against evil that existed on 1976 has been replaced with a sympathy for the terrorists today. Praise for Israel as a defender of freedom has been transformed over the last 48 years into an overt anti-Israel hatred of Jews worldwide. Commitment has been replaced by capitulation.

America's Founding Fathers courageously acted on their faith and dedication to freedom 248 years ago with the Declaration of Independence. Israelis acted with that same commitment to protect freedom 48 years ago today in Entebbe. We all need to emulate their courage and commitment in every aspect of our lives by being and acting as proud American Jews every day.

This story needs to be remembered today... both because of the July 4 anniversary and because of what has happened since Oct. 7. We need to take the lessons, and see the parallels and distinctions between 1776, 1976, and today. Through remembering history, May we all find a path to a safe peace for us all in these challenging days.

Happy 4th of July!

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 4, 2024

28th of Sivan, 5784

July 6th 2024 at 9:41 pm PDT

Shavuah Tov and Miracles

Chevre,

Shavuah tov, may this be a good week for us all.

Rumors are abound again that there will be some sort of cease fire deal for hostages, but unless something radically changes, it ultimately means that either A: Israel agrees to let Hamas stay in power in Gaza and doesn't get all the

hostages back. Or

B: Hamas agrees to give up its demand for a permanent ceasefire during the first phase of the deal, and agrees to release all hostages.

Hezbollah is now saying that if there is a cease fire in Gaza, they might stop attacking in the north. The IDF has been going deeper into Lebanon in targeted strikes to get Hezbollah leadership, and their success may also play into the negotiations.

Channel 12, the Times of Israel, and other Israeli media are reporting that the Israeli defense establishment is expecting a major attack from Gaza in order to set back a cease fire hostage deal. Each day, IDF soldiers are still discovering and destroying Hamas tunnels and weapons caches, and again today, Hamas shot rockets at 5 different targets around Sederot.

This war has now been going on 275 days, and although it is easy to forget what happened and is still happening in Israel, we cannot allow ourselves to get war weary... in the same way that Israeli citizens are tired, but carrying on. We must always remember Am Echad, that we are one people... and all of Israel is family to every one of us.

We also need to be conscious of two truths that most people were aware of in October, but all too many have forgotten during these painful months:

1: Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran are not now and have never been interested in the land of Israel. In their own words, this is about obliterating every Jew first in Israel and then worldwide; and their goal is to establish a worldwide Islamic caliphate governed by Sharia Law.

And 2: Hamas is the modern incarnation of Amalek, who brutally killed, raped, beheaded, and tortured over 1200 Israelis, and committed the heinous acts of kidnapping civilians...many of whom are still being kept as hostages and sex slaves. We need to remember this is truly a war against evil, and never lose the passion that so many of us felt on Oct. 8.

Tonight is Rosh Chodesh Tammuz..the first of the month of Tammuz. Many things happened to our people historically during this month (most of them painful, such as the Golden Calf), but we need to enter this month with a joyous

teaching from our history...

On the third of Tammuz, Joshua was leading the ancient Hebrews in battle against the Emorites in Givon. A long summer day, the battle had been going back and forth, but as the day was starting to close, the Hebrews were close to victory. The challenge was that if it got dark, the Hebrews would lose their advantage during the night of rest. But a miracle happened that broke all the rules of nature: the sun did not set, there were 12 more hours of daylight, and the Hebrews miraculously won the battle.

Our ancient mystics focused a lot on this miracle. In any and all wars, it is God that is our greatest ally. No matter the odds; no matter how it may look... God will always keep His covenant with the Jewish people. Tammuz is a special month for the kabbalists as it is deemed a month of great light (summertime) and a time to embrace miracles. There is never a reason to despair... and this month of miracles is a time to welcome the unexpected triumphs that God can create for our people.

Simply put... we are Jews, and we accept that God will always create miracles for our benefit.

I have often said that I'm in the miracle business, and business is good! The simple fact that our synagogue, a temple with no mandatory costs for anything is still thriving is a testament to God's blessings and the hard work and generosity of every member of our community. As Yogi Bhanan Khalsa (the man who brought Kundalini Yoga to this country) said, "I do not believe in miracles...I rely on them."

Or as David Ben-Gurion z"l said, "In Israel, in order to be a realist you must believe in miracles".

To help us all not just believe, but rely on miracles, here is a song by Naomi Shemer (performed in a beautiful and unique way by 12,000 people).

I dare you not to cry when seeing this celebration from Israel's 70th anniversary, but tears are an expression of God in the world. The chorus translates to:

"Dont uproot what has been planted
So our bounty may increase

Let our dearest wish be granted
Bring us peace, o bring us peace"

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=oxzR9Z-kG6Q&pp=ygUNS29vbGFtIGFsIGtvbA%3D%3D>

May we, and all of Israel be blessed with miracles in this new month; and may the miracle of a lasting peace be seen by all of us in our times.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 6, 2024

1st of Tammuz, 5784

July 8th 2024 at 6:15 am PDT

Talks and a Wall?

Chevre,

Once again, Israel representatives are in Cairo for hostage "negotiations", but little is different this time. Hamas is demanding that the "mediators" will guarantee that Israel leaves them in power, and are still insisting on a multi-phase plan over many months before hostages would be returned. For Israel's part, the government released a statement that they are holding to the four basic points of

A: Any deal will allow Israel to return and fight until all the goals of the war are met.

B: It will not be possible to smuggle weapons to Hamas from the Gaza border to Egypt.

C: Thousands of armed terrorists will not be returning to the north of Gaza.

D: Israel will maximize the number of live abductees that will be returned from Hamas captivity.

As these talks go on, Israel is still cleaning out terrorist cells in Gaza and discovering tunnels and weapon caches; Hamas still is sending rockets at Israel;

Hezbollah is daily launching rockets at north Israel from civilian neighborhoods in Lebanon (3 people were seriously injured today from a rocket attack); and Israel is counter-attacking deeper and deeper into Lebanon.

There is one new piece to these talks. It is being reported that Egypt will join with the US in building an underground high tech wall to prevent weapons going from Egypt to Gaza if a cease fire is agreed upon. Other than that, it would seem that this is just another repeat of past "talks".

And the larger piece that needs to be repeated over and over is that as Diaspora Jews, we must choose faith and combine it with deeds. The seemingly small things we do (adding a daily prayer for the hostages, giving a little bit of daily charity into a tzedaka box, lighting Shabbat candles, not eating traife, putting up another mezuzah inside our house on a door that is currently empty, etc.) actually have a large influence in the fight for a lasting peace for Israel and the Jewish world.

Here are two of my favorite quotes to remind us of how powerful small actions can be when they are focused:

"Water wears away stone" (Job) Even the smallest drop of water can make a hole in a hard rock with just one drop at a time...and our small persistent actions can cause miracles.

And from Theodor Herzl, "If you will it, it is no dream. And if not, a dream it is and a dream it will remain." By acting on our faith, again, miracles can be accomplished.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 8, 2024

2nd of Tammuz, 5784

July 9th 2024 at 5:30 am PDT

Who is "Negotiating"?

Chevre,

"Negotiations" have been happening in Cairo, and it is getting more and more messy in so many ways.

The Israeli ministers are tearing each other apart as some want to just stop the war, let Hamas stay in power, and hope that another Oct 7 never happens... and some want to destroy Hamas, eliminate the tunnels (there are still untold miles of tunnels in Gaza), and force Hamas to give back any hostages out of fear of what Israel will do.

Who are the others involved in "negotiating"? The US, which has repeatedly demonstrated that it is more concerned with political optics than with protecting Israel. Egypt, which makes demands upon Israel as the neighbor to Gaza, but will not do their own work (they are also an adjacent neighbor of Gaza). And Qatar, the home of the actual leaders of Hamas, many of whom are excessively wealthy (some are even billionaires).

On Monday, the world found out even more ugliness about Qatar. The U.S. State Department's Report on International Religious Freedom released information about Qatar. The report condemned Qatari anti-Semitism for many reasons, but especially for promoting anti-Semitism in their schools and textbooks. It highlighted that progress had been made until 2021, and now Qatar has become a very problematic country as it has reverted back to Jew hatred in the last three years. Schoolbooks in Qatar now teach that Jews are evil; rewriting the actual history of the region; encouraging Jihad and martyrdom; teaching that Jews are evil and should be exterminated; and that there should never be a nation of Israel.

This is the Qatari policy that is part of their political and educational system... and is the polar opposite of the persona they attempt to portray when speaking with Western nations. While they portray themselves as "modern" and moderate Moslems to the world, even our State Dept. has now recognized that modernity is a smoke screen, and that Qatar's national values include an intense level of

anti-Semitic vitriol that is pure hatred for anything Jewish.

And this is the negotiating team???

Hezbollah and Hamas are still launching rockets; and the IDF is having firefights with Hamas terrorists that are seeing more violence than we have for months. A large battle was fought on Monday at a Hamas base inside an UNRWA facility. Moreover, the Gaza concrete building is now being restored... which is also disturbing since the only purpose of that concrete plant was for the manufacturing of Hamas tunnels.... so why is it being restored right now?

The war continues, and we need to continue as well... our prayers, words, and actions. With strength and blessings

Chazak u'baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 9, 2023

3rd of Tammuz, 5784

July 9th 2024 at 7:00 pm PDT

It's Getting Hotter All Around

Chevre,

As we deal with the heat here in Southern California, there is a different and more intense heat growing in Israel.

The Foreign Affairs and Security Committee of the Knesset voted unanimously to define UNRWA as a "terrorist organization", and it will be going to a general vote shortly. This is a major step as it is the first time that Israel is officially saying "no more" to the anti-Semitism that the United Nations has demonstrated for decades. Israel has more hard proof than anyone can deny about UNRWA being a pro-Hamas organization that has been actively involved in

Hamas and was aware and part of Oct. 7.

US Intelligence head Avril Haines made a statement on Wednesday that admitted that Iran is "using Gaza as a way to undermine America", and commented that they have seen "elements associated with the Iranian government impersonate activists" and "seek to encourage demonstrations and even provide financial support to the demonstrations". The White House officially followed up on his statement to warn Iran to stay out of the conflict.

Things are getting even more intense in the north, as Hezbollah launched 6 more rounds of rockets at northern towns. Hassan Nasrallah, the head of Hezbollah, made a speech on Wednesday after the assassination of his personal guard, intended to incite more aggressive violence; which should be expected in coming days.

In Gaza, the IDF keeps finding more tunnels, including three of the major tunnel thoroughfares under Rafah and between Rafah and Egypt. It is a priority for Israel to close and destroy as many tunnels as possible in order to preserve safety in Israel for the future.

But today is the anniversary of Joshua leading the ancient Hebrews to victory over 3200 years ago because of God making the daylight last an extra 12 hours so that the victory could be sealed.

God has always taken care of the Jewish people; and we need to choose faith that He always will.

We each can strengthen our own personal faith through being actively involved with other Jews in Jewish communities. Am Echad...We Are One People... and as we see the many challenges in the world, now is the time to remember that truth.

May we all always know that we are one, and that we will always be safe and protected by God's holy love.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 9, 2024

3rd of Tammuz, 5784

July 10th 2024 at 5:30 am PDT

When It Gets Dark, Find the Light Together as Jews

Chevre,

Each day seems to be bringing more concerns. The UK is now discussing how to arrest Netanyahu and Gallant; the IDF is calling for "everyone in Gaza City to evacuate"; there are currently 6 wildfires in the Golan as a result of yesterday's barrages from Hezbollah; and 15,000 pro-Iranian militia fighters arrived in Syria. And as an aside, the "US Aid Pier" that cost us 230 million dollars broke again, will be repaired for a few days, and then permanently removed.

A lot of seemingly dark news...so how can we have faith with such gloomy information?

A year ago today, my family and I arrived in Israel. As we landed, I had the flight attendant give me a cup of warm milk with honey. At the time, all of Israel was lively and filled with joy. There were the small challenges of court protests, but the entire atmosphere was one of love and faith. As we arrived in Tel Aviv, the energy was palpable: no matter what the dangers were surrounding Israel, the people were committed to living fully, passionately, and with a zest for every moment in the shade of God's holy blessing of Israel. The air itself seemed to sing "We are one Jewish people, always protected and loved by the Holy One and His Presence".

In times of challenges we need to remember this truth. This is not blind faith. We have over 3000 years of God proving over and over again that He is our partner... and He always will be.

I invite each of us to remember the joy found in Israel; feel the

support of God for all the Jewish people; and trust that the "Land of Milk and Honey" is both Israel proper...and every place and time that Jews gather together in faith.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 10, 2024

4th of Tammuz, 5784

July 10th 2024 at 10:32 pm PDT

Lies and Statistics

Chevre,

We have all been bombarded with the statistics of famine in Gaza, how it is to blame, and how awful it is. So I thought it might be worth just having a short look at the actual challenges to the Gazan people

In 2022, with billions of dollars of aid being given to Hamas for the people of Gaza, 14% of the population faced hunger. However, according to the UN on May of 2022, only 3% of people in Rafah experienced hunger, and in Khan Yunis, the figure is that 6% are still hungry.

Gaza is better fed by Israel than when they were taken care of by Hamas...yet Israel is accused of genocide.

Contemplate that fact the next time you hear anyone condemning Israel for defending herself. We treat our enemies better than their own leaders do.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 10, 2024

5th of Tammuz, 5784

July 11th 2024 at 10:11 pm PDT

More of the Same, and Each Of Us Must Get More Involved Politically

Chevre,

We are now 280 days into this painful war in Gaza. 681 soldiers and 68 police officers have died in this war so far, z"l. When Jew haters accuse Israel of "genocide", we all need to be clear that 744 people have died because Israel is committed to avoid as much collateral damage as possible. Israel holds itself to the highest code of ethics of any armed force in the history of the world... if this were not true, Israel would (and still could) carpet bomb Gaza and end the war in days.

But thank God, we hold ourself to a higher standard, despite the reality that all of Gaza has been held hostage by Hamas, who uses children and innocents as human shields, since 2007.

One would think that this type of over the top ethical behavior would be admired and supported by the world, and especially the United States... but again we see that the opposite is true.

President Biden reiterated himself today, doubling down on his commitment to withhold the 2000lb bombs that Israel already purchased months ago. His reason? He is scared of "creating great human tragedy and damage".

He went on to say that "it's time to end this war"; and that Israel should just go after Sinwar directly. This was all said in a speech where he referred to Vice President Trump", and introduced Pres. Zellensky of Ukraine as "President Putin".

The situation in the Middle East and Israel has been complicated

and filled with subtle nuances for decades. Since the 1970s, it has been one of, if not the most difficult situation for our elected leaders to understand and to navigate. We are all Diaspora Jews, and the survival of Israel is a foundation stone for all of us. Whether you are on the left or right, Republican or Democrat, I implore you to be involved politically in the elections in the next four months: the decisions from the upcoming elections will determine the fate of Israel and our people. We must each be involved through volunteering our time; donating our funds; standing together as a diverse Jewish community (I am personally so grateful that our synagogue is composed of people from all political spectrums), and making sure that we support candidates who are unconditionally pro-Israel (remembering that 'pro-Israel' does not necessarily mean pro-Israeli government).

If you are a Democrat, please get involved in supporting local, state, and national candidates who are pro-Israel, and working against the anti-Semites like Tlaib, Omar, AOC, Jayapal, et al. Pressure every candidate in every way you can to back Israel in this time when we are truly existential threat to our very survival.

If you are a Republican, you must do the same. While it may seem that there are currently more Democrats that are anti-Israel, that is a fallacy, especially when we look at local and state elections. If a school board wants to describe Israel as "colonizers" in text books, then support their opponents. Representatives Bob Good (R-VA, and Chair of the House Freedom Caucus), Chip Roy (R-Texas), and Thomas Massie (R-KY), although quieter than Omar have been equally unsupportive of Israel...hiding under an excuse that the US should not help any foreign country.

And there are "influencers" on both sides of the aisle that seek to destroy Israel and perpetuate Jew hatred. Nick Fuentes openly worships Hitler, and directly copies the Nazi playbook of Hitler Youth with his "groyper" followers. Candace Owens has now repeatedly increased her Jew hatred; denying the evils of Joseph Mengele, suggesting that Hitler had some good qualities and wasn't the worst of the 20th century; and repeating ancient blood libel trope. Far left

commentator Richard Medhurst proudly says that "Zionism makes you believe that a Jew is worth more than any other human being". Christiane Amanpour of CNN is a virtual mouthpiece for Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. While we cannot influence pundits, we all need to let others know of Jew hating celebrities; and refuse to support their work and "entertainment".

It may seem as if there is little that one person can do, but our tradition repeatedly teaches us of the power of each individual's actions. Nachshon, who through his individual action led to the parting of the Sea of Reeds; Rabbi Akiva, who inspired our ancestors to stand united against the Romans; Oskar Schindler, who was personally responsible for saving over 1200 Jews during the Holocaust... we are a faith that is committed to the understanding that the actions of one person can change the world.

And so I ask that each of us choose to act. Support whomever you feel called to on either side of the political aisle... but act.

The United States has a history of being the best nation for Jews in history other than our own homeland of Israel. It is up to each of us to make sure that it remains that way.

The Book of Proverbs teaches that "the soul of the human being is the candle flame of God". One candle can light a room. One candle can light other candles and light the world.

We all need to be those individual lights that gather together and make the world a better place.

May we all choose to light ourselves up and act... supporting others who support Israel in this difficult time.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 11, 2024

6th of Tammuz, 5784

July 13th 2024 at 8:15 pm PDT
A Shabbat of Anything But Rest

Chevre,

Shavuah Tov, may the coming week be filled with peace.

This Shabbat was anything but peaceful on so many levels...

Israel attacked with targeted bombing an area of Khan Yunis in an attempt to eliminate the #2 and #3 leaders of Hamas in Gaza. It is not yet clear and there are mixed reports as to whether Muhammed Def was killed or escaped; but much damage was done to Hamas leadership. The head of Hamas internal security and funding, Hassam Mansour was killed; as was the commander and deputy commander of the Hamas Shajaya Battalion, and numerous other Hamas leaders. We will be hearing about excessive "collateral damage" from world media, but film footage clearly shows the area filled with young Hamas soldiers; and that the collateral damage was done by secondary explosions: which means there was a hidden weapons cache at the site, which killed others.

Nonetheless, Egypt, Qatar, and the Palestinian Authority are "demanding" international action to prevent Israel from defending herself as a result of this action.

Netanyahu publicly said that Israel would accept the "outline that President Biden welcomed", but Hamas wants 29 additional substantial changes. I spoke with some friends in Israel today who were clear that despite what we read in Western media, Israel is united in wanting to "finish the mission" and never let another Oct 7 happen again.

A busy Shabbat overseas, and as most of you probably know by now, a disturbing day domestically as well.

Donald Trump was shot at today, in an attack that hit his ear but missed being a head kill shot as he turned at exactly the right millisecond to avoid a full head

shot. His campaign has issued statements that he is ok; and the local police have said that there were seemingly two shooters, one of which was killed and the other is at large and unidentified (if there was a second). May the One who healed our ancestors heal Donald John, son of Mary Anne; and May the Holy One and His Presence keep a covering of safety and protection over Donald Trump, Bobby Kennedy, President Joe Biden, and all political candidates in this nation.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 13, 2024

7th of Tammuz, 5784

July 14th 2024 at 10:05 pm PDT

Military Pressure Seems To Be Leading To Change B"H

Chevre,

With the successful attacks on Hamas leadership this past Shabbat, there was concern in Israel that there might be a series of attacks, which thank God have not happened so far.

In fact, the opposite is true. There was only one round of rockets launched by Hamas on Sunday, and Hezbollah launched 7 rockets and suicide drones. While still horrible, it is less than it has been happening daily (isn't that a profoundly sad statement).

Moreover, a significant statement came out of the Palestinian Authority on Sunday. P.A. President Abbas blamed Hamas for the ongoing war in Gaza, and P.A. official Al-Jaghoub said, "Hamas is actually hiding between the residents to protect and save itself". Although Al-Jaghoub was forced to retract his statement a few hours later; this is showing that a wedge is starting to be driven between Hamas and the P.A... a good thing for Israel.

This comes in conjunction with the statement coming from Chief of the General

Staff, Gen. HaLevi that the military pressure is creating conditions favorable for the return of the hostages; and that the mission of eliminating and dismantling Hamas is working: the pressure is B"H leading to a greater possibility of the hostages return.

May we all soon see the pressure work in a way that results in the hostages being returned, Hamas being completely destroyed, and a lasting peace spread over Israel and the region.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 14, 2024

9th of Tammuz, 5784

July 15th 2024 at 8:39 pm PDT

Politispeak is the Order of the Day

Chevre,

Thank God there were limited physical attacks on Monday in Israel (4 rounds from Hezbollah and 2 round from Hamas), but politicians seemed to be unable to control their own verbal double-speak.

President Biden actually said in one sentence that he is "the guy that did more for the Palestinian community than anybody", and then continued to say "Hamas -they're a bunch of thugs". He went on to say that he "identifies as a Zionist"; that he continues to supply Israel with weapons; and that he is not delivering the 2000 lb bombs that were promised to and paid for by Israel. All of which sort of confused much of the Israeli press, some of whom just looked bewildered at the seeming inherent contradictions.

Biden also said that he spoke with Saudi Arabian leadership, and that Saudi Arabia is willing to recognize Israel if the United States builds a civilian nuclear facility, which the US Army would theoretically operate. This has not been said by Riyadh; and such a deal is impossible in any event because of the upcoming

election and the impossibility of Biden getting congressional approval for such a deal before the November election.

On the other side of the aisle, Trump announced freshman Senator JD Vance from Ohio as his running mate, which was also covered extensively in Israel as Vance is simultaneously pushing an "America First" (and only) agenda but also saying that he ardently supports Israel and Netanyahu, and thinks America should stop micromanaging Bibi. "Let them prosecute this war the way they see fit."

In Israel itself, government negotiators for a cease fire/hostage deal informed the Egyptian mediators that "Israel does not intend to cease military activities as long as no agreement is reached and that the elimination of senior Hamas officials in the Gaza strip will continue at the same time as the negotiations". As has been discussed in recent days, it is Israel's position that increased military pressure (especially the elimination of Hamas leaders) is the best way to get Hamas to actually release hostages.

On a different topic, Google is in talks to buy the Israeli company "Wiz" for \$23 billion...which would be Google's largest acquisition and Israel's largest hi-tech exit.

As we hear politicians say so many things, we must remember the Jewish belief that "everything is in the hands of God except being in awe of God". It is our job to choose faith, and know that the ultimate future of Israel and the Jewish people is safety and protection in our own land. This may sound like a dream, but to quote Mickey Rourke in the movie "Diner"... "If you don't have good dreams, you got nightmares". Or put more eloquently by Theodor Herzl "If you will it, it is no dream. And if not, a dream it is and a dream it will remain."

May we will it hard enough that a lasting peace and prosperity become the reality of Israel and the Jewish people.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 15, 2024

10th of Tammuz, 5784

July 16th 2024 at 11:15 pm PDT

A Day Of Attacks; Debates, and Victories

Chevre,

Tuesday was filled with sirens as Israel was attacked with rocket barrages much of the day and into the night through early Wednesday morning from Lebanon towards the Galilee and surrounding areas. So far, thank God, there have been no serious injuries reported, with many of the rockets landing in open areas. Close to 100 rockets were shot from Lebanon, and the IDF has mounted counter operations deeper into southern Lebanon.

The last two days have seen a lot of internal strife in Israel as the IDF has started to send out conscription notices to the ultra-Orthodox communities; and a number of the rabbis in those communities are telling their students to ignore the notices. Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef (a major rabbi in that community) said, "Whoever in the community receives a conscription order - let him tear it up". Part of the challenge is that there is no clear definition of who will or will not get a notice, and the legal issues are still undefined. An urgent meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee of the Knesset has been called to receive clarifications and explanations from the IDF.

The IDF discovered another UNRWA "school" in Khan Yunis that has actually been a terrorist launching and planning site, adding to the overwhelming evidence of the corruption and conscious intent of UNRWA staff to work against Israel.

On an upbeat personal note, tryouts finally finished and the USA National Golf Teams were selected for the 2025 Maccabi Games. Four out of the six members of the USA National Junior team are from Southern California, including Moshe Mendelowitz, Max Margolis (whose family, although now living in the desert, has been involved in our temple community for years), and both Jonathan and Benjamin Barclay, who are obviously both deeply involved in our temple (sorry for the non-war news..but a father is entitled to share some nachas).

The Maccabi Games are important to remember for all of us as we continue to face challenges. Sometimes called the "Jewish Olympics", they take place every 4 years in Israel, and are the third largest sporting event in the world (behind only the Summer Olympics and the World Cup). They are a commitment of Jews to excelling and to embracing a love for Israel... and in these difficult times we must remember that we are all like the ancient Maccabees: we must all personally choose to be spiritual warriors who defend each other, Judaism, God, and Israel in every way we can. (To know more about the Maccabi Games, just watch this 2 minute video:



We are Jews... and we choose to stay strong and have faith!

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 16, 2024

11th of Tammuz, 5784

July 18th 2024 at 9:58 pm PDT

Israel is Getting More Pro-Active, and An Attack in Central Tel Aviv

Chevre,

The last 24 hours have seen more assassinations of Hezbollah leadership in one day than any time before, with at least three and possibly 5 top Hezbollah leaders targeted and killed.

An attack was launched at Tel Aviv today, with an armed drone exploding and killing one Israeli and wounding several others. It is believed that it was launched by Hezbollah, although the Houthis are also taking credit.

It appears that Israel is becoming more pro-active in the north with hopes of stopping Hezbollah...but this activity is also causing Nasrallah (the head of Hezbollah) to be "sabre rattling" and threatening more launches against central Israel. We are surrounded on all sides by enemies who want to kill all Jews and destroy Israel, and who are backed by Iran. As Israel gets more active, we can expect more Arab civilian casualties, which will result in more hate thrown upon us by the world. But given that they continually demonstrate that they hate us already, more Israelis are quoting Golda Meir, who said that "given the choice between being dead and pitied, and being alive with a bad image, we would rather be alive and have the bad image"

May the time not be distant when we are alive with a good image; respected and protected by our neighbors and the world

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 18, 2024

13th of Tammiz, 5784

July 20th 2024 at 9:14 pm PDT

War On Another Front

Chevre,

Shavuah tov, may this week bring safety and lasting peace to Israel and the Jewish people.

The Jewish people have pledged "Never Again", and Israel has consistently said (no matter which party is in control) that they would respond with force to any attacks on Eretz Yisrael. And so, Israel responded to the Houthi attack on Tel Aviv that killed a man and injured others.

The Israel Air Force performed its longest mission, traveling over 1800 kilometers (over 1100 miles) and destroyed a key Houthi port in Yemen. This port was the main entry point for Iranian weapons being delivered to the Houthis.

The Houthis have been attacking not only Israel, but the United States, Great Britain, and other nations over the last months. While the world should be grateful for Israel's attack on the port, we should all expect that there will be protests and condemnations against Israel for attacking in Yemen. The Houthis and Hezbollah are now threatening that they will attack Haifa, God forbid. Defense Sec. Lloyd Austin and Defense Minister Gallant spoke publicly today, with Austin reaffirming the United States' commitment to Israel, and discussing the months of Houthi attacks... possibly indicating that the US will stand with Israel on the Houthi issue.

US Sec of State Blinken said today that "we are in the last yards towards a deal with Hamas". That has not been announced by Israel nor Hamas, so who knows what that really means. He also said that Iran is one or two weeks from the "breaking point" of producing nuclear fissile material for nuclear weapons. Again, there is no reason to believe that he is accurate or inaccurate, or why he would say this. If, God forbid, it is true; we should expect that Israel and/or the United States will work towards removing that capability.

May we all see a time when nations do not seek to destroy Israel; when "nations no longer lift up swords against nations neither do they learn war anymore"; and when Israel and the Jewish people are safe, with a lasting peace and prosperity.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 20, 2024

15th of Tammuz, 5784

July 22nd 2024 at 6:33 am PDT

Expect Chaos To Grow

Chevre,

A small earthquake (3.7) centered by the Dead Sea and was felt in Jerusalem on Sunday night, but Israel was dealing with the larger earthquakes from American politics most of Sunday and into Monday.

Biden's exit from the Presidential race dominated Israeli news commentaries, especially with Netanyahu on his way to the US for his speech to Congress. While some believe this is ultimately good for Israel and some think it is bad, the resounding majority feel that the chaos in America is dangerous for Israel. With Iran supposedly on the verge of being able to create nuclear weapons, it is a dangerous time for Israel not to have a strong and unified ally of the United States. Whom should Bibi focus his talks with? Who is in a position to help Netanyahu convince Congress about supporting Israel? Biden is withdrawn, Harris is trying to cozy up to Islamic voters in Michigan (just a few hours before Biden's tweet, Kamala's husband announced that he was going to be leading a commission to combat islamophobia), and the Democrats in Congress are focused on how to win elections with the top of the ticket being contested. The meeting between Biden and Netanyahu is said to be going on as planned, although the content will now probably change.

This American chaos is happening while the IDF is evacuating more areas of Gaza that are currently "humanitarian aid" areas. There is substantial proof that there is a lot of Hamas military action being launched from these areas; so the IDF is dropping flyers, etc. before going in to destroy more Hamas bases. As of early Monday morning, there had already been 35 attacks from the Israeli Air Force on Gaza terrorist targets.

Hezbollah launched three rounds of rockets at the Golan on Monday morning, which followed over a dozen drones and rockets that they had launched Sunday night. With the chaos here in the States, the Iran proxy has been clear that they will continue to attack Israel, which has now moved Vulcan anti-aircraft guns along the northern border.

While there are hopes for Harris/the new Democratic nominee to be pro-Israel, there is little confidence that the new nominee won't instead be controlled by the extremist members of the party who are virulently pro-Hamas. But again, hope springs eternal as the President of Paraguay announced today that they will unconditionally support Israel, and that they are moving their embassy to Jerusalem.

Monday night begins the Jewish holiday of the 17th of Tammuz, a fasting holiday that commemorates some of the darkest times in Jewish history. But Jewish history shows us that in the midst of darkness and confusion, the light of the Jewish people is preserved and protected. As Israel goes through these troubling times of war without the benefit of a unified America, we must choose to have faith that once again we will be safe and protected.

We are one people, and together, Israel and Diaspora Jews are strong.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 22, 2024

16th of Tammuz, 5784

July 23rd 2024 at 12:40 am PDT

Our Hearts Are Broken, Foxes, And Repairing Our Broken Faith

Chevre,

The IDF has identified that two more hostages are actually dead: Yogev Shokhev, 35, and Alex Danzig, 75. Both were murdered by Hamas while in

captivity in December in Khan Yunis, may their memories be for a blessing.

Today is the Jewish holiday of the 17th of Tammuz, and begins the three week period of mourning that culminates on Tisha b'Av (the 9th of Av). But what is this holiday about, and why is it important, especially now?

Imagine...

You are of the generation that came out of Egypt with Moses. You have seen more overt miracles than could be dreamed: the 10 plagues, the parting of the Sea of Reeds, the giving of Torah at Mt. Sinai, and most importantly you have been released from slavery and are on your way to the Promised Land.

But Moses is with God at the top of Sinai already for a day longer than you expected. Do you suddenly believe that God has abandoned you? Or do you have faith, based in what you have already experienced, that you are protected, Moses will return, and you will be on your way to Eretz Yisrael?

For too many of our ancestors, the answer was the latter choice. They pressured Aaron to build a golden calf, they worshipped around it, and they betrayed God and themselves with their lack of faith. When Moses did come down, the Tablets were broken.

The Sages of the Talmud taught that on the 17th of Tammuz we broke God's heart with the sin of the golden calf; and that on that same day of the 17th of Tammuz centuries later, God broke our hearts by letting the walls of Jerusalem be breached, leading to the destruction of the Temple (according to the Yerushalmi Talmud, the walls of both the 1st and 2nd Temples were breached on this day).

But what does it even mean "to break God's heart"?

On Passover, God "betrothed" Himself to the Jewish people, making it clear that there was a special relationship that transcended the physical world. On Shavuot, God gave us the Torah at Mt. Sinai, which in actuality is the ketubah, the marriage contract between God and Israel. But only 40 days after accepting the ketubah from God, we broke the relationship (we committed adultery so to speak with a foreign god as represented by the golden calf). Our

ancestors let go of their deeper values, and took in the values of another culture (the calf had symbolism in many of the surrounding tribes as a "god"). In betraying that ketubah of the Ten Commandments, we "broke God's heart". And so, centuries later, he broke our hearts and let Jerusalem be breached.

Traditionally, we do not have haircuts, parties, weddings, or celebrations during this time; similar to when someone is mourning a loved one. While we traditionally fast on this day from dawn to dusk, it is customary in some communities to have no meat during these three weeks, some have no meat for the first nine days of Av, and some only fast on both holidays. On the 17th of Tammuz, we fast and contemplate how we betray ourselves, our values, our religion, and God.

Today, our hearts are also broken. Our brothers and sisters in Israel are in jeopardy; some are still held captive; others are dead or wounded; and Israel is facing a 7 front existential war. Jew hatred fills the world from Europe to the Conejo Valley, and we need to be honest, especially on this day, how our hearts are broken.

But the 17th of Tammuz is not the end of the story for our ancestors, nor is it the end of the story for us.

After the breaking of the Tablets, symbolic of our breaking the relationship with God, Moses goes back up Mt. Sinai to get the second Set of Tablets. This second set is a renewal of the special relationship between God and Israel. The giving of those second set of Tablets to the people of Israel is another wedding: a recapitulation of our commitment to God and God's vows to us.

And when are those second Tablets given to the people? On the 10th day of the month of Tishrei... Yom Kippur! This is one of the many reasons that Yom Kippur is unanimously considered a joyous day by our Sages, and why we observe it so passionately in our community. I hope you will join us in our High Holiday services at the Canyon Club, especially on Yom Kippur (you can register at <https://www.nersimcha.org/high-holy-days-2024> ... and if you live out of town and would like to stream the services, that option will be made available if you notate your registration)

After a wedding, there must be a honeymoon; and this is the holiday of

Sukkot... an intimate time where we dwell in "God's summer house" and deepen our relationship with God.

Right now, we are all feeling alone, lonely, sad, angry, scared, and/or betrayed by the events of the world which have caused such pain to Israel and the Jewish people. But in the same way that the 17th of Tammuz actually is a predecessor for the joy of the wedding and honeymoon with God; we need to choose to have faith that this pain will also pass, and we will soon see a time of peace and prosperity in Israel and for Jews worldwide.

There is a story in the Talmud (Makkot 24b) that reminds us of the future joy and peace we will experience. Rabbis Gamaliel, Elazar, Yehoshua, and Akiva came upon the ruins of the Holy Temple Mount, and saw a fox emerging from the site of what had been the Holy of Holies. The first three began to sob, but Akiva laughed. They sobbed in sorrow, for the prophecies of the destruction of the Temple had come true. But Akiva laughed as he pointed out that it was a two-part prophecy. The first part (by Uriah) was that the Temple Mount would be plowed as a field, and have foxes that would walk in the rubble. But he second prophecy (by Zecharia) was that the Temple would be rebuilt only after the first prophecy of Uriah's was fulfilled. Akiva shared with his colleagues that since they saw foxes, the first prophecy had been fulfilled, and that they could now all count on the second one coming true as well; and the other Rabbis were comforted.

The pain of the 17th of Tammuz is also a promise that the joy of a renewed relationship with God will also come true. The pain we feel right now as Israel is attacked on all fronts is a preface to the future reality of a strong and safe Israel in the future.

Be honest...does that comfort you or make you think it is the silly ramblings of a Rabbi not "based in reality"? (It's ok..I've been called worse.)

I would like to add one other piece to your experience of the pain we all feel, and the choice to have faith it will get better...

In 2019, between the 17th of Tammuz and Tisha b'Av, a fox was spotted for the first known time walking near the Western Wall

<https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/foxes-seen-walking-near-the-western->

[wall-fulfilling-biblical-promise-598053](https://m.jpost.com/israel-news/article-752819)). Last July, on the eve of Tisha b'Av last year, another fox was spotted on the Temple Mount (<https://m.jpost.com/israel-news/article-752819>). On the darkest day in our calendar last year, a fox gave the Jewish world hope that although there is great pain, there will be great joy coming.

I choose to have faith that pain will change to joy. I choose to believe that this war will end, Israel will have a lasting peace, and that Jew hatred will dissipate in our time. Ani M'Ameen... I believe....

To help all of us choose faith, here is a short video from a week and a half ago of IDF soldiers singing "Ani Ma'ameen...I believe in perfect faith". If in their situation they choose to believe, maybe we should try it too...to choose to have faith that our pain will turn to joy, that war will change to peace.

https://m.youtube.com/shorts/lxJ46ap_8yl

I invite you to join me in that hope and faith... and in choosing to have faith that the darkness will give way to a light of peace.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 23, 2024

17th of Tammuz, 5784

July 24th 2024 at 12:05 am PDT

Israel in America

Chevre,

Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is in the United States to speak with American leaders, but who is he actually going speak with?

Netanyahu came here to speak with the President, Vice President, Republican Presidential candidate, and before a joint session of Congress. Although his

meeting with Biden has been on and off again, it was reported on Tuesday evening that the meeting is back on. He is also to meet with Trump on Friday morning at Mar-a-Lago, and then flying back to D.C. for Shabbat. The Prime Minister has a history with both men: Trump was very supportive of him as President, but has criticized Netanyahu for allowing Oct. 7 to happen and not being more prepared. Biden and Netanyahu have had a tumultuous relationship; and the Prime Minister has been harsh about Biden's waffling support for Israel, his holding back of promised weapons, and his making statements on behalf of Israel in ways that tried to insert himself inappropriately in Israeli politics. Vice President Harris was not there to greet the Prime Minister (normally the President or Vice President greets foreign leaders at the airport), and will be in Indiana at a sorority fundraiser/campaign event instead of meeting with Netanyahu, nor will she be at the speech before Congress.

And Congress is already exploding with controversy. Numerous Democrats are refusing to attend Netanyahu's speech, and others are promising to disrupt it in the Chamber. Speaker Johnson has made it clear that any disruptions will be immediately escorted from the Chamber and arrested; and has promised to arrest any demonstrators as well who get out of hand in the fenced off area of the Capitol Building. Extra Sergeants-at-Arms will be on the Congress floor, prepared to remove any disturbances, and the Capitol Police will be outside the building protecting that area.

What does it all mean and show? That there is more anti-Israel hatred in D.C. than ever before in our lifetime; and that these haters have little respect for boundaries, decorum, or their positions as national leaders. Whether Americans like it or not, Israel is a democratic country and Netanyahu is the elected Prime Minister. America has always officially respected elected foreign leaders, and this behavior is a shame on our nation's leaders.

In Israel, the attacks from Hezbollah continue; and the IDF continues to work on making Gaza safe for Gazans (and unsafe for Hamas terrorists)

We shall all see what Netanyahu says. The last time he spoke before Congress, he was called the "Churchill of his generation" by pundits on both sides of the aisle... but the atmosphere is decidedly more unpleasant now. Let us hope and pray that he stays safe, and that he inspires Americans (and Congress) to

realize how important it is for the United States to always support Israel... our only true ally and the only democracy in the region.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 24, 2024

18th of Tammuz, 5784

July 24th 2024 at 11:18 pm PDT

Netanyahu and Warnings

Chevre,

P.M. Netanyahu addressed a joint session of Congress today. You can easily see the whole speech online (it is just under an hour long) Some highlights include:

---Thanking Biden for his support early in the war, and Trump for moving the embassy, the Abraham Accords, and his constant support of Israel.

---Giving a history of anti-Semitism; Oct 7 tragedies; Israel's right to defend herself; and that this is a war between barbarism and civilization, good and evil, and that Israel and the US are partners.

---A condemnation of anti Semitic universities; pointing out that the supporters of Hamas are just "useful idiots for Iran"; and that Israel means it when we say "Never Again".

---An introduction of some IDF heroes in the audience, including a Muslim IDF hero; and a discussion about how Israel is actually the most moral military in world history according to expert John Spencer of West Point.

---A post-war plan for Gaza that would involve an international alliance and be based upon the plans that succeeded in post WWII Japan and Germany... he suggested calling it The Abraham Alliance.

---He quoted Winston Churchill: "Give us the tools and we will finish the job."

He received many standing ovations during the speech, which was considered inspiring by even his most passionate detractors.

Hezbollah is launching more rocket, and the IDF keeps finding weapons caches in Gaza, mostly in places like under children's beds, schools, and hospitals. Pundits' opinions based on credible threats is that there may be violence against Israeli athletes at the Olympic Games in Paris, which commence on Friday. Israeli athletes were held today at the airport because of security concerns.

The Olympics are a time to bring people together and bond through athletics... not for political demonstrations of any sort, let alone violence. May the delegation from Israel, and all the athletes and spectators stay safe and protected.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 24, 2024

19th of Tammuz, 5784

July 26th 2024 at 5:28 am PDT

US Chaos Is Hurting Israel

Chevre,

There are multiple signs being reported that Israel and Lebanon are about to be in a full war. Both sides of the border have been warned by their respective governments; Hezbollah is increasing attacks; Hezbollah drones are swarming northern towns (8 drones in 7 minutes); and after Biden and Netanyahu's talk, Biden is now expected to issue a "Deferred Enforced Departure" order for Lebanon on Friday... which would allow non-citizens from Lebanon to remain in the US indefinitely due to unsafe conditions in their home country.

The IDF has been finding hostages' corpses in underneath areas previously defined as "Humanitarian Area". Hamas moved hostages to those areas to avoid being discovered, and the corpses are being found. Across the board, the idea of "aid to Gaza" has been an abject failure...with Hamas keeping the aid from Gazans, and using the areas as their bases

On the international stage, Olaf Schultz, the Chancellor of Germany said, "We will not stop military support for Israel, and we reject calls to boycott its companies and institutions".

The American meetings did not go as well. Biden is still withholding weapons that Israel has purchased. As disturbing were the words and actions of VP Harris, who did not even attend Netanyahu's speech yesterday. Harris made a series of comments that disturbed both liberal and conservative Israelis and politicians. As she has done many times, Harris made comments about how Israel should stay out of the West Bank and Gaza, and "expressed her concern" about Israel's actions and pressing Israel to leave Gaza under Palestinian control. Israeli negotiators were shocked and upset, saying that her comments undermine negotiations and that she was "harming chances for an agreement with Hamas". Her lack of understanding of the complexities and nuances in the Middle East was painfully on display in Israel, where both sides of their aisle were disappointed.

But we must remember that Israel and God are always and will always be partners in making the world a better place... and we need to have faith and act towards that goal.

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 26, 2024

20th of Tammuz, 5784

July 27th 2024 at 1:09 pm PDT

Children Just Killed

Chevre,

In an event that IDF Spokesman Hagari called "the most serious incident since Oct 7", Hezbollah launched a rocket attack at the North Golan Druze city of Majdal Shams. It was a single rocket launched directly at a children's soccer field. At least 12 children, aged 10-20 were killed, and at least 34 injured. Sheik Tareef, the leader of the Druze city has said that if Israel does not respond

quickly (within 4 hours), the Druze will respond directly (they did so during the Syrian civil war when Druze towns were being attacked). Netanyahu will be flying back to Israel at 1am Israel time on Wings of Zion (Israel's version of Air Force 1), which also serves as a military command post.

The UN's response to this is that they "are in contact with authorities...in an effort to keep the peace". The American response to Israeli media is "The Biden administration is very concerned that what happened in Majdal Shams in the Golan will lead to an all out war between Israel and Hezbollah". Hezbollah has launched THOUSANDS of rockets at Israel...we are already at war. Their statement betrays their continued obliviousness...there is and has been a war going on, and they should be concerned that it will get more intense.

The IDF has apparently already approved counter measures. Ministers on opposite sides of Israeli politics are in agreement that this demands immediate strong action, with both Gantz (opposition) and Gvir (coalition) having the exact same attitude about what this means and what Israel must do. Iran is making clear threat that if Israel goes after Hezbollah in Lebanon, then "there will be a decisive and united response" against Israel.

Minister Gvir made a statement that voices how the majority of Israelis feel at this moment. "Since October 8th, I have been saying that we are at war in the north and the enemy must be defeated. Groups of decision-makers have, for 10 months, avoided acknowledging that we are fighting Hezbollah. Today, no one, including the Secretary of Defense who sought only to contain Hezbollah, can escape the bloody reality that we are at war."

May the memories of the children killed be for a blessing, may their families be comforted among the mourners of Zion, and may we see the protection of all innocent children. May the Holy One and His Presence protect Israel, her soldier, her people; and destroy her enemies in order to create a lasting peace in the region.

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 27, 2024

21st of Tammuz, 5784

July 27th 2024 at 8:43 pm PDT

El Malei Rachamim

Chevre,

Shavuah tov. The Jewish world is still in shock and pain about the Hezbollah rocket at a soccer field that killed at least 12 children and injured at least 34 others. There will no doubt be a great deal more news in the coming hours as Israel determines its reaction, but for now, let us all just take a moment to mourn...

El Malei Rachamim

O God full of compassion who dwells on high, grant perfect rest beneath the sheltering wings of Your Divine Presence among the holy and the pure who shine as the brightness of the firmament to the souls of those who died in Israel these past hours, who have gone to their eternal resting place. Author of mercy, protect their souls in the bonds of eternal life. May You be their inheritance, and may their repose be in peace. And together we say, Amen

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 27, 2024

22nd of Tammuz, 5784

July 29th 2024 at 6:11 am PDT

High Tensions...

Chevre,

The Israel ministers have given Netanyahu and Gallant full authority to decide in "the manner and timing" of a response to Hezbollah. This has led to a Middle East that is at high alert in every nation, and the tensions are high. Some of the reactions to this stress include:

- test sirens throughout Israel, especially in Haifa, the north, and Tel Aviv.
- a call for medical personnel to go to the north of the country in preparation (this includes Bnai Zion Hospital in Haifa, which our community has significantly helped over the last 9 months)
- Many countries, including the US, France, Belgium, Canada, and UK requesting citizens to leave Lebanon and return home
- Iran evacuating many of their military from Syria
- The British Navy moving several vessels to the eastern Mediterranean, ostensibly to be able to evacuate British citizens
- Numerous airlines stopping their flights to the region
- Hezbollah headquarters and facilities in Lebanon and Syria being evacuated
- GPS jamming in Lebanon

And lots of threats...

---Turkey President Erdogan has threatened to invade Israel, saying that Turkey "could enter Israel just as we entered Karabakh and Libya". This has promoted Netherlands to call for the expulsion of Turkey from NATO. (We must always be aware of the potential craziness out of Turkey. Turkish President Erdogan has had dreams of a world domination by Turkey and a renewal of the greatness of the Ottoman Empire since he became Prime Minister in 2003 and even more so upon becoming President of Turkey in 2014.)

---Hezbollah is threatening "If you hit Beirut or the southern suburbs, we will target Tel Aviv and other areas". And Al-Husseini, the military spokesman for Hezbollah came out with the following threat: "If Israel dares to escalate operations against any member of the resistance, the new rules of engagement will not be in its favor, nor in the favor of its patron America." *(There has been a great concern among the US Intelligence community that many terrorists have come through the southern border of the U.S., and that Hezbollah/Iran does the ability to increase terror domestically if called upon by Iran)*

There are also reports from Qatar that a deal has been closed regarding Israel. Given that Israel may be actively fighting a multi-front war, this may or may not be true, and no one will know until Israel responds.

The synopsis: parties on all sides are clearly preparing for war.

And so, as Diaspora Jews, we must pray for the safety and protection of Israel, her people, and her land. In whatever way you choose to meditate, pray, chant, dance, or any method that brings you a deeper awareness of your relationship with God... I ask that you do that and pray for Israel in this time of need and existential threats. It doesn't matter if you like or hate Bibi. It doesn't matter what your opinions are regarding Israel's foreign relations or the possibility of a palestinian state. It doesn't matter if you believe in an omnipotent God, an infinitude of the Universe, or if you believe in nothing.

Please pray with all your intention (kavannah) and focus to keep Israel safe and protected. We must always remember that whether we live in the Diaspora or have the merit to live in Israel...

We are all one people. Am Echad and Am Yisrael Chai

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 29, 2024

23rd of Tammuz, 5784

July 30th 2024 at 6:34 am PDT

Which Way Will Israel Move?

Chevre,

The US is making it very clear (over and over again) that Israel should demonstrate "restraint" and not go after Hezbollah nor go into Lebanon nor Syria. The US (and France) are repeatedly telling Israel to only respond with a "one-off" attack and not "escalate the situation into a war"

Hezbollah has launched over 7000 rockets at Israel since Oct. 7. Over 100,000 Israelis are currently evacuated out of their homes in the north because of the daily attacks. If this isn't already a "war", then what is the US definition of the word?

In Pirkei Avot, we have the following words from the great Rabbi Hillel:

If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I?
And if not now, when?

Israel is wrestling with Hillel's questions, as we all must.

Let us all pray that Israel finds the best answer to these questions...

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 30, 2024

24th of Tammuz, 5784

July 31st 2024 at 5:01 am PDT

A Busy Day...

Chevre,

Tuesday night into Wednesday morning has been busy in the Middle East...

Once again Hamas leadership has refused to honestly negotiate about a cease fire for hostage deal. The deal, which according to Qatar and US sources was nearly done, has new hiccups. Hamas is demanding 29 additional changes. At the same time, the IDF has discovered new evidence that leads to the belief that many of the hostages may have been dead for months. The IDF, based on information from captured Hamas terrorists, have located hidden rooms in deep tunnels where hostage corpses have been hidden. There is no way to know how many are dead, and have been for many months.

One of the commanders of Hezbollah, Fouad Shukr, aka Sayyed Makhsan has been confirmed dead from Tuesdsy's targetted strike in Beirut. This caused threats to come from Iran, Turkey, Hezbollah, Houthis, and Hamas. But on Wednesday morning, another leader of the Iran proxy was eliminated.

Ismail Qaani, the head of the IRGC was killed. And then a targeted precision strike in Tehran killed Ismail Haniyeh, the political leader of Hamas, who has resided in Qatar for years but was in Iran on Wednesday.

One of the challenges of tracking down and killing terrorist leaders is that these attacks happened outside of Israel. Killing the evil of Haniyeh in Tehran has already gotten the Iranians to assemble at the President's house... something that is extremely, extremely rare in Iranian political history. The success of these missions has placed the rest of the region on alert as they now remember that Israeli officials were stating last fall that they would find and kill every terrorist; and now we see it happening

... and there is no way to know what the immediate future holds: peace, war, the release of any hostages still alive? Although Israel targeted these evil political players with very limited if any collateral damage, we do not know if and how Iran is actually going to act.

There will probably be some sort of action taken by Iran given that the Hamas leader was assassinated in Tehran. One way or the other, Israel has not said that these assassinations of Hamas and Hezbollah leaders are the completion of Israel's reaction to the soccer field bombing a few days ago that killed 12 children. There may be more upcoming attacks both by and against Israel.

May Israel's leadership be strong and blessed, and may our opponents become friends in the near future.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

July 31, 2024

25th of Tammuz, 5784

August 1st 2024 at 12:16 am PDT

Iran Commit To War

Chevre,

Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has officially ordered a direct strike on Israel, and Israel is getting prepared for a war on 7 fronts:

Iranian militants in Iraq

Iranian militants in Syria

Hezbollah in Lebanon

Houthis in Yemen

IRGC/Iranian Army in Iran

Hamas in Gaza

Hamas and PIJ in the West Bank

Pentagon officials have given a 72 hour timeline during which they expect Iran and its proxies to launch a full scale attack on Israel, with potentially other attacks here in the United States (or at least the threat of them to keep the US from supporting Israel). Hezbollah expressed to the French mediators that "Our response is not subject to any rules." In other words, while Israel always tries to avoid civilian casualties, the goal of Hezbollah is to attack civilians (as it has been with Hamas and all the Iranian proxies)

Something that has not been reported however is the state in Iran.

Apparently, the people of Iran are suffering right now as it is nearly 100 degrees each day, and the government is only allowing 4 hours of electricity per day. While the heat and suffering populace is extremely sad, it also means that the Iranian people will have anger at their government, which could serve to the advantage of Israel and to possibly significant challenges to Khamenei.

We are currently at day 300 in this war, which Israel has been fighting alone as the world has condemned her. We are in the midst of an existential threat; for the survival of Israel and the Jewish world. But what can we Diaspora Jews do to help?

When Jews have been faced with these challenges throughout history, we have repeatedly miraculously survived... using one powerful tool. Prayer

Do you want to see Israel survive, thrive, and have a lasting peace? How badly do you want Israel to survive? How much do you want America and the world to be safe for Jews? For our Jewish children and grandchildren?

Then feel that desire for a safe and peaceful Israel deep in your soul... and cry out to God in whatever way you feel. Scream, cry, dance, sing, come to Friday night Shabbat Under the Stars services this week, deeply meditate, go to a yoga class or 12 step meeting... but pray! Open your heart and soul, and I beg you to call out to God and add your prayers to the generations of Jews throughout history whose prayers saved our people.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel z"l said: "Prayer may not save us. But prayer may make us worthy of being saved."

May our prayers make us, and all of Israel, worthy of being saved.

Here are two brief videos to help us access the deepest and most powerful parts of our soul, and to make our prayers a true reflection of our souls' desires:

From "The Chosen", the art of expressing our passion to strengthen our prayers beyond words (watch and feel the power of prayer with each breath of the Rebbe)

<https://youtu.be/gAoMiZxQcSI?si=vcJUJNGNWWYwiFIX>

And from "Ushpizin", the power of calling out to God from the depths of our souls:

https://youtu.be/NPIPrQAtIz4?si=dTEEwH6j4n_KcOQs

Aba, ten lanu nes, b'vakesha, nes
Father, give us a miracle, please, a miracle

May we all receive the miracle of a safe and protected Israel

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 1st, 2024

26th of Tammuz, 5784

August 2nd 2024 at 6:34 am PDT

It Wasn't a Missile... But Is An Excuse For War

Chevre,

Israel is waiting for an attack, the country is tense, and we are on the edge of a multi-front war. The "cause" is the death of one of the most evil men of this century... one of the main people behind Oct 7, one of the tacticians who planned the kidnappings and hostages, a billionaire who lived in Qatar making promises on a daily basis that Oct 7 would be repeated over and over until every Jew dies.

Although Israel was immediately blamed for sending a missile to kill him (and they have committed since Oct 7 to his death, so that was a good first assumption), multiple reports are now claiming that the initial reports were wrong. Domestic and worldwide reports are now saying that it was not a missile that killed him at all, but rather was a bomb that had been planted two months ago with a remote detonator. Nurses who were there, as well as examinations of the building itself (which was not destroyed) back this up.

The assumption is that this was actually a joint effort between Israeli intelligence (Mossad et al) and Iranians who desperately want freedom and have been working on an Iranian revolution. Either way, Israel is at least partly responsible, but there is a large difference between a bomb and a missile.

Whatever and whomever caused it, Israel is now at the precipice of war, and the nation is buckled down and ready. From all reports, it would seem that this is the opportunity the other Arab nations have been waiting for: the chance for them to be rid of Iran through the efforts of Israel (in other words, without getting their own hands dirty by having Muslim kill Muslim). Both Jordan and Egypt have made multiple statements that they will defend their countries and airspace from anyone who crosses their borders... Israel or Iran. As one of the leaders of Jordan said. "We will not let anyone to turn Jordan into a war zone" ..

Because the mourning period for these Hamas leaders ends today, Israel is expecting Iran and its proxies to act this weekend. Biden has claimed that the US will back Israel against any attack from Iran. The US currently has 12

warships deployed in the Middle East. The USS Theodore Roosevelt is in the Persian Gulf along with 6 other destroyers, and the rest are in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Without a miracle, it appears that we are on the edge of war. Iran is also rattling its sabres at the US, threatening to bring attacks to the United States.

So let us all pray for a miracle. God has always saved us for over 3000 years, and we need Him to intervene now... and we must choose to have faith that He will.

I have said over the years, We Jews are in the miracle business, and business is good.

We must also never lose our own values. Israel must do what needs to be done, and B"H will be successful. But we must never rejoice in the defeat of our enemies... or God forbid we become no different from them. We were all disgusted and mortified by the cheering in the streets of Gaza and Tehran after Oct. 7... let us never become like that. We are Jews, and we mourn even the deaths of our enemies. There is no joy to be had in the deaths of any human being, even those bent on killing us. If we succumb to that hate, then we lose the real war against the Yetzer Hara, our own evil inclination.

May the Holy One keep us and all of Israel safe and protected; and May we see a time when enemies become true friends dedicated to a real long-lasting peace.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 2, 2024

27th of Tammuz, 5784

August 3rd 2024 at 9:51 pm PDT
Shavuah Tov, Olympics, and War

Chevre,

Shavuah Tov, May the week bring safety and protection to the land of Israel and the people of Israel, including those of us who live in the Diaspora.

The last 24 hours have brought some much needed smiles to Israel as we won three more medals in the Paris Olympics, including a gold medal in windsurfing (bringing the total to 6 so far, surpassing the record of 4 in Tokyo). If you have ever been to the beach of Tel Aviv in the summer, you have seen the Israeli windsurfers and know their strength. President Herzog called the medalists, and made it a point of saying how, "you brought us a great light... you caused our national anthem to be played at the Olympics in Paris".

I wish all news had the same light tone, but that isn't the state of the world.

Over 50 rockets were launched from Lebanon towards the Upper Galilee; it has been reported that the US is supposedly sending more F22 fighter jets to the Middle East; and Iran and its proxies of Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthi, have announced the establishment of a "war room" along with Iranian proxies in Iraq and Syria. There are rumors of Israel considering a pre-emptive strike, and announcements have gone out from the Home Front that there may be a much shorter early warning than the Iranian attack in April 13: 9 hours for drones, 2 hours for cruise missiles, and only 12 minutes for ballistic missiles. As a result, Israel citizens have been asked to stay close to shelters.

It is also interesting news that Israel is in direct discussions with Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Bahrain to create a coalition to defend against potential Iranian attacks, according to Channel 12 in Israel.

Much of the Western media keeps putting out misinformation about Netanyahu, the War Cabinet, Hamas, and a cease fire/hostage deal. Here are the simple and clear facts:

---An outline was structured under the guidance of the US for a cease fire/hostage return deal. The terms were hammered out and agreed upon by Netanyahu and Israel on May 27

---The May 27 outline adheres to basic provisions for Israel's safety; including maximizing the release of hostages still alive, control of the Philadelphi border corridor, and prevention of the passage of arms and terrorists to the north of

Gaza

--- Hamas has attempted to change that outline, most recently last week with 29 significant changes

--- Hamas is now demanding an immediate end to the war or any future war; limited release of hostages; the ability to flood Gaza with weapons; and the assurance that Israel will accept Hamas as Gaza leadership.

Let us all be honest: this would be a guarantee of more events like Oct. 7.

While Western media castigates Israel for political reasons, we all need to support her in not accepting those demands by Hamas as they would be an invitation for more events like Oct. 7.

No one wants a lasting peace more than Israel and the Jewish people, but we all need to remember that it is not Israel that has vetoed the May 27 outline, but Hamas. Moreover, let us never forget the horrors of Oct 7 that started all of this. If the hostages were released and Hamas out of power, this war would be over without more casualties on either side...

And let us please all remember that every death, of a Jew, an Arab, or even a terrorist is profoundly sad and to be avoided if at all reasonably possible.

Let us pray that Iran realizes the value of all life, and that a miracle occurs which leads to a lasting peace for Israel and the world.

We are Jews and for 3500 years we have been in the miracle business, and business is good... the miracles will come now as they always have.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 3, 2024

29th of Tammuz, 5784

August 4th 2024 at 2:57 pm PDT

Are We On The Eve Of War, God Forbid?

Chevre,

An Israel/Arab nations/US coalition approached Iran to de-escalate the situation from a full blown multi front war. Iran rejected any discussion, and said that they "will set an example" even if it leads to war.

As Israel prepares for upcoming attacks from Iran and its proxies, many Israelis, led by some of the Israeli ministers, are pushing for a pre-emptive strike on Iran. MK Liberman said, "A situation in which an entire country panics and waits for a multi-arena attack must not be allowed. The initiative must always be in our hands".

We know that this entire situation is on a precipice, as the US Centcom commander arrives in Israel on Monday to help coordinate for a possible Iranian attack; and Prime Minister and the Cabinet have been moved to a nuclear proof bunker in Kirya. The bunker is equipped with satellite communications, provisions for a month, and the ability to run the government during emergency war times.

Pray for Israel. Pray for the world. Pray for our children.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 4th, 2024

29th of Tammuz, 5784

August 5th 2024 at 10:43 am PDT

We Wait...

Chevre,

Israel is waiting... as we all are

I waited all night and morning for significant news to share with you; but tensions have been kept high with little to share. The head of US CENTCOM

is in Israel; Iran has rejected all dialogue; and war seems inevitable without a miracle. Nothing has really changed in the last 24 hours; and we wait...

For those wondering why Israel is waiting and not sending a pre-emptive attack on Iran, the answer is the U.S. Biden has apparently made it clear that if Israel attacks Iran pre-emptively, the US will not support Israel. Reports are that Biden has said that unless/until there are injuries, Israel is to not attack.

May Israel, her land and her people, be safe; and may every Jew support her unconditionally in this time of need.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 5th, 2024

1st of Av, 5784

August 6th 2024 at 6:41 am PDT

Will War Lead To Peace?

Chevre,

Tensions continue to increase (if that's psychologically possible) in Israel as both US and Israeli intelligence have confirmed that Iran is mobilizing rocket launchers, a clear sign of preparation for war. News has come that Russia may be getting involved in helping Iran. Sergei Shoigu, Putin's national security advisor has been in Tehran, and according to two Iranian sources, Russia has started to supply Iran with radar systems and air defense equipment. At the same time, "Nashana", the Iranian tracking system used by Iranians has apparently stopped working, and there is GPS jamming throughout the country.

Biden and other US officials are publicly making it clear in Israel that if Israel either does a pre-emptive strike and or responds to any Iranian attack in a way that the US thinks is too harsh, then the US will not stand with Israel.

Biden and other military officials have "sternly warned" Israel, and this follows Biden's statement to Netanyahu in which he "emphasized that this is the last time the US will intervene on Israel's behalf. (This, despite the fact that there was another attack on the US base in Iraq, that injured 4-5 US personnel, including one critically injured American.) The US is publicly demanding that whatever Iran does, Israel is to "limit its response".

The death of anyone because of war is a tragedy, no matter what their religion or nationality. But are not the horrific deaths of Oct. 7 and beyond also tragedies? Deaths that Iran and its proxies have vowed to repeat until every Jew is dead. Should Israel allow herself to be mutilated again? Or should Israel protect her people from ever having to go through another day like Oct 7, God forbid? What even is a "measured response", and who determines that measure? Is it determined by the Israelis who lose their children and risk losing their nation, or is it to be determined by politicians thousands of miles away in D.C. who are more concerned with acquiring votes than they are with preserving Jewish lives?

And the real question that needs to be asked is, "what path will lead to a lasting peace with the least loss of any lives"? This is a question that we all need to wrestle with. This is war, and war is ugly... and it is not a football game with fans cheering their team and booing the other. War is not a game... it is about the lives of children and their parents; families and friends.

What ultimately will save the most lives and accomplish the goal of preserving and safeguarding Israel... and create a lasting peace in the region?

The word "Israel" means "he who wrestles with God". We are Jews, and I pray that all of us are constantly wrestling with these types of questions as we proceed down a path that looks as if many human lives, God forbid, will be lost.

May God guard Israel and keep her safe, and may the people of Israel and the land of Israel be protected as we wait for the next moments.

This song by R. Shlomo Carlebach and sung by his daughter Neshama (based

on words from our liturgy) expresses the prayer that we all need to sing from our hearts in these difficult times. The words mean "O Guardian of Israel, let no harm come to Israel, who still whisper Shema Israel"

<https://youtu.be/Agi56fq0mV4?si=j9eyUYGckKCnNjNF>

And may we all constantly remember the teaching of Rabbi Hanina from the Talmud (Berachot 33a, b) that "everything is in the hands of Heaven except being in awe of Heaven".

May we always stand in awe of God, and may He bring us the miracles needed in this challenging time while He protects Israel and the Jewish people..

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 6, 2024

2nd of Av, 5784

August 7th 2024 at 6:40 am PDT

"War and Peace" or "War Or Peace"?

Chevre,

As we all go through the journey of feelings, fears, sadness, joy, rage, and every other response to what is happening in the world, let's keep in mind that teaching from the Talmud that everything is in God's hands except being in awe of God. So many things are swirling uncontrollably in the world, and the only sane emotional reaction is to surrender to faith in God (given that nothing seems to make sense).

A few highlights of the last 24 hours;

---India committed to helping Israel; Pakistan committed to supplying Iran with missiles; and Turkey is joining South Africa in attacking Israel in the International Court.

---Sinwar, the main planner of Oct. 7, is now the leader of Hamas. An

international war criminal for many years, he is now to be the head of Hamas.

---The US and UK are sending fighters and weapons to their respective bases in the Middle East; including the US sending a squadron of 16-24 F22s to Middle East bases.

---US analysts are reporting that Iran may back down and not attack; while we are seeing Iran's forces moving in ways that seem to be preparation for war.

Is there a peace that can be foreseen after this war? Which will lead to a lasting peace: a no holds bar war? A negotiated cease fire?

None of these are easy questions, but they are questions we should all constantly be wrestling with.

We are "Yisrael"... our very name means "to wrestle with God". Faith and action in these times is difficult. But it will serve us as individuals, as Jews, and as Human Beings. If we consciously wrestle inside ourselves with these issues of war and peace, of how and when to go to war, and what does that mean; and of the real stakes involved... then that is our action to be matched with faith... a choice to be in awe of God.

Tonight, we will be discussing these specific issues in our monthly Talmud & Tobacco session at The Stonehaus at the Westlake Village Inn at 7:30pm. I hope you will join the community in studying together with food, drink, and cigars.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 7, 2024

3rd of Av, 5784

August 8th 2024 at 6:10 am PDT

Israeli News Filled With 2 Items

Chevre,

With all of Israel filled with increased tension over the possibility of a 7 front war, it seems that Iran is following Hezbollah leader Nasrallah's strategy that, "Waiting for a response is part of the response". Despite, or possibly because of the tension, Thursday morning's news in Israel was dominated by two things, neither of which honestly is really all that telling.

Wednesday night, the IRGC said that they were doing "military exercises", which included prohibiting any air traffic over Iran. Many thought Iran would turn the exercises into an attack, but thank God, that didn't happen... but none of this relieves the tension in Israel. But given the coverage that this non-action got in Israeli media, it is clear that since war preparations are ready, Israel's media are looking for any story to share.

Thursday morning also saw a lot of articles on another issue happening in the U.S. According to the NY Times, which has now been repeated in every Israeli media source I looked at, Kamala Harris had a meeting with two Arab American leaders immediately prior to her rally in Detroit. The two Arab Americans, Abbas Alawieh and Layla Alabed, are leaders of the Uncommitted National Movement. These activists asked her if she would be willing to promise to place an embargo on Israel, and she replied that she is "open to that". Israel's media had had a field day with this, including multiple reports about this semi-commitment. But in the same way that the news about Iran's military really doesn't tell us a lot about the future with Iran; this news about VP Harris really doesn't shock anyone. That comment pandered to pro-Hamas Arab Americans in Michigan, and her campaign walked it back a few hours later. In other words, there was a lot of "non-news" in today's Israeli media as the people of Israel...

...As we wait

May Israel, her land and her people be safe and protected now and always.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael.Barclay

August 8, 2024

4th of Av, 5784

August 9th 2024 at 5:00 am PDT

Evacuations and War...

Chevre,

Friday morning in Israel brought Ministry of Health ordered evacuations of patients with special needs such as those with ventilators from the area 5-10 km from the Lebanon border.

This comes as more F22 fighter jets arrived in Israel; as the 98th begins operations in southern Gaza to eliminate terror targets both above and below ground; and as the Mayor of Haifa told public broadcaster Kan that Hezbollah is much more advanced than during the 2nd Intifada, and that they expect Hezbollah to launch 4000 precision missiles PER DAY (God forbid). Minister Gallant had missives in Arabic dropped in Lebanon warning that if Hezbollah increases their attacks, Israel will "fight with all its might" in ways that will dwarf what happened 18 years ago.

Israel is sending negotiators to meetings at the behest (pressure) of the US, Qatar, and Egypt. All three nations are demanding that a hostage/cease fire deal be reached by August 15. Given that Iran has been threatening to attack on Tisha b'Av (Aug 12, 13), this is all interesting timing.

Iran has been releasing statements that they may not end up fully attacking Israel, but instead attempt to assassinate the Israelis responsible for killing Haniyeh. This would put Israel in the position of "starting a war" with Iran if they retaliate in the eyes of world opinion (even though all of this has been instigated by Iran and its proxies of Hamas and Hezbollah). In other words, it would spark an Israel/Iran war either way, but it would give the world the opportunity to again blame Israel.

We are in the midst of the three weeks between the 17th of Tammuz and Tisha b'Av... the saddest time in Jewish history. Let us pray that more tragedies do not happen to the Jewish people in these days.

One way to fight the evils of the world is to gather together in joy; and I hope you will join us tonight at 7:30pm at Deerhill Community Park in Oak Park for Shabbat Under the Stars, as we welcome the Sabbath with joy as a community in the beauty of nature. Prayers as a kahal, a holy community, make a larger difference than anyone may realize. Darkness is fought with light, and the light of the Sabbath can penetrate even the darkest realms of hate and war.

Shabbat Shalom

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 8, 2024

5th of Av, 5784

August 11th 2024 at 7:53 am PDT

Psyops

Chevre,

There are many different types and aspects of psychological warfare or "psyops": actions to attack the psychological well being of an enemy. Using videos of the hostages might be an example, but so is what has been happening in Israel since the assassination of Hezbollah leadership and Iran's repeated promises of retaliation.

The populace of Israel, whose mental and emotions wellness have been under extreme stress since Oct. 7, has been on especially high alert for ten days. Iran and its proxies have been doing all the things that would be done if they were about to heavily attack Israel. Again, over this weekend, Iran is moving troops, Hezbollah is sending rockets, protests have increased within Israel to make any deal that might bring home any hostages are being financed through unknown sources, GPS disruptions, etc. are all taking a large psychological toll on Israelis. The government has constantly been

sending out high alerts, especially in the north. Everyone in Israel has family members fighting, and all of Israel knows that this is not a skirmish, but a threat to Israel's existence by enemies who loudly claim that they want every Jew obliterated .

There is seemingly little we can do as Diaspora Jews about this stress level in Israel, but we can do one thing that makes a quantifiable difference; and we must do it...

Pray

Fervently, we all need to spend a little time each day praying for Israel and her people to be safe and protected. If petitionary prayer is uncomfortable for you, then meditate upon the image of Israel and her people being surrounded and infused with God's holy light of protection, healing, and peace.

I am constantly told by people that prayer is a nice idea, but we need to do things "in the real world". We must always act through charity to Israeli causes as well as domestic Jewish causes as well. We must have the courage to speak up, and not let Jew hating propaganda go unanswered. These types of actions make our prayers even more powerful.

And we must pray. Because prayer is not a fantasy, it is a crucial part of "the real world". Spirituality is the foundation of the physical, and every Jew needs to affect their spiritual reality so that it will manifest as a physical reality.

And to give strength to Israel and her people during these difficult times.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 11, 2024

7th of Av, 5784

August 12th 2024 at 12:15 am PDT

Negotiations, and Why?

Chevre,

As we prepare for the holy day of Tisha b'Av, beginning at sunset tonight; Israel is in a waiting pattern...

Waiting on Iran, which has been sending out mixed messages in their words and actions as to whether they will be attacking Israel in the next few days. Their movements seem to indicate that there will be a coordinated attack on multiple fronts against Israel, and let us all pray for the safety of the land of Israel and the people of Israel.

Waiting on any possibility for a cease fire in Gaza. Although every Israeli would love to see whatever hostages are still alive come home, the vast majority realize that is foolish to do anything that would allow Hamas to stay in power and/or re-supply their weapons. On Sunday night, Hamas said that they again would not be sending negotiators to the meetings on Thursday.

Waiting for the world to recognize who and what Hamas is: a terrorist organization who, by their own words in their charter, will only sit down for peace as a ruse; desire the obliteration of every Jew; and seek to have a worldwide caliphate ruled by Sharia law.

But as we prepare for this painful and contemplative holy day, we need also to remember one of the main reasons that caused the destruction of the Temple: *sinat chinam* - baseless hatred between Jews and Jews... something we have been seeing too much of for too long in the Diaspora.

We are taught that the Second Temple was destroyed specifically because of *sinat chinam*; and even further, that *sinat chinam* is the equivalent to all three sins of idol worship, forbidden sexual relations, and murder together (Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 9b). And we see this baseless hatred clearly on a daily basis through the political rhetoric of hate that envelops this nation not only during this election year, but for over a decade.

We are Jews, and we must be able to disagree without being disagreeable with each other. Many of us have lost relationships with family or friends

because of political leanings to the right or the left. We are Jews, and we must embrace dialogue over debate, and trust our relationships more than our politics. We are Jews, and we must be conscious that Hamas, Hezbollah, CAIR, etc don't get care if we are Jewish supporters of Democrats or Republicans: in the eyes of the Jew haters, we are all to be killed. The Nazis did not ask our ancestors' politics or level of observance; and the terrorists on Oct. 7 didn't ask their 1200+ victims if they were Orthodox or Reform, or if they supported Trump or Harris. Their hatred of us as Jews transcended everything else.

Mark Twain said in Letters From the Earth that everybody hates the Jew (a line repeated by Tom Lehrer decades later). We MUST choose to be able to coexist as Jews without "hating our brother in our hearts" (Lev 19:17), for that *sinat chinam* caused great destruction in the past that we do not want repeated in the present or the future. We need to remember this in all aspects of our lives: we are Jews.

There are Jews who love Harris and those who love Trump (or Kennedy or any other candidate). There are Jews who believe that CNN is the best source for objective news, and those who go to Breitbart with the same feeling. There are Jews who desperately want a ceasefire in Israel at any cost, and those who want the exact opposite and seek the complete destruction of everything and everyone in Gaza.

But as we disagree on these and other issues, we must remember the deeper truth: that as Jews we are all part of the same family. We must support each other as Jews especially when we disagree. We must listen and respect the perspectives of Jews with contrary opinions especially while disagreeing with each other. We must come together in study and prayer without the extra burden and pressure of focusing on politics rather than our relationship with God and each other.

If we focus on where we disagree, we easily fall into *sinat chinam*, and the sad results that will come from that. We must be careful of how we say things, of what we say, and be willing to be corrected so that Diaspora Judaism can somehow miraculously come together in our time. As an example, a week ago I commented on the news that Kamala Harris had said that she would be open to discussions about having an embargo against

Israel in conversation with pro-Hamas voters in Michigan. I found out today that although she has not personally denied saying that, her staff and aides have repeatedly said that she is committed to Israel and will always protect Israel. When we learn any new information that can build bridges between ourselves and other Jews, we must share it; and I hope that this new information builds bridges that were incomplete before.

Prayer and study are so valuable in Judaism; in part because it brings Jews together in communities without the influence of the outside world. In prayer and/or study, we come together as Jews deepening our own personal awareness of our individual relationship with God in a communal setting. Prayer and study are... clean.

The Biblical book of Lamentations is called in Hebrew "Eicha", which means "why". It is a double entendre. The question of "why" are all these bad things happening? And the answer of "this is why it happened". This is the book we study on Tisha b'Av; and especially this year as we are 10 months from the horrors of Oct. 7 we must not only question why these horrors and this war are happening to us, but realize that at least part of the reason why we are in such pain is because of sinat chinam... baseless hatred between each other.

Let us always remember that we are in actuality Am Echad, one people... and may we act with the caring for each other that can be found in a healthy family.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 12, 2024

8th of Av, 5784

August 14th 2024 at 12:23 am PDT

Propaganda and Nukes in Iran

Chevre,

War still seems on the horizon, and Israel is a nation filled with anxiety, but also with determination and confidence. Multiple daily reports are coming from the government to the citizenry about preparations, shifting news about the movements of Iran and its proxies, and physical needs for Israelis, especially in the north where there has been so much fighting. There was also a news report from Iran that the country is actively developing and testing an explosive device for the warhead of a nuclear weapon.

Iran is now saying that they "may" not retaliate and attack Israel if an immediate ceasefire happens. Sinwar, the new head of Hamas who is as evil and duplicitous as any villain in history, has echoed that Hamas will not discuss anything until there is a complete ceasefire.

Diaspora Jews thought they heard uplifting news on all media today. We were told that the U.S. has committed 18 billion dollars of weaponry to Israel! All the media outlets were repeating this, and there is only one problem...

It is entirely untrue.

I am including an actual copy of the DoD statement today at the bottom of this email. Read it thoroughly and you will see that this is no commitment to Israel. You need only look at the first and last lines to see that this statement is a publicity stunt to attract Jews to support Biden and company. As Jews, we are taught to look deeply at texts, and a brief review of this statement is sorely disappointing.

There is no commitment to selling (not giving) weapons to Israel. The document says that "The Sec. Of State has approved a **possible** Foreign Ministry Sale to the Government of Israel. " Translation: it is possible that the US might sell weapons to Israel. It is by no means a commitment in any way...just a statement of possibility to be used as a publicity stunt.

The last line of the document is equally telling. We all know that Israel needs weapons now to withstand the multi-front assaults of her enemies. But what does this document say? "Deliveries are estimated to

begin in **2029**." Israel's survival is threatened right now, and the Sec. Of State is saying that "it is possible" that Israel might be able to purchase weapons in five years. This is nothing to rejoice about. And it is moot...

Israel has already committed to building weapons in Israel, and the production facility is supposed to be delivering weapons for the IDF in two years. So not only is the DoD statement meaningless in content, it will be useless by the time it comes into effect.

Is there a lesson in this? Yes. Just like when we study Talmud or any subsequent text and we always go back to look at and check the original sources; we should do the same prior to accepting what the media tells us about anything regarding Israel.

The world is a powder keg, and the Middle East the fuse right now. Let us all pray that the fuse is never lit, and that God keeps Israel safe and protected in these challenging times.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 14th, 2024

10th of Av, 5784



Defense Security Cooperation Agency
NEWS RELEASE

On the web: <http://www.dsca.mil>

Media/Public Contact:
pm-cpa@state.gov

Transmittal No. 24-01

Israel – F-15IA and F-15I+ Aircraft

WASHINGTON, August 13, 2024 - The Secretary of State has approved a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Government of Israel of F-15IA and F-15I+ Aircraft and related equipment for an estimated cost of \$18.82 billion. The Defense Security Cooperation Agency delivered the required certification notifying Congress of this possible sale today.

The Government of Israel has requested to buy up to fifty (50) new F-15IA multi-role fighter aircraft, as well as Mid-Life Update modification kits for its existing twenty-five (25) F-15I multi-role fighter aircraft; one hundred twenty (120) F110-GE-129 engines; ninety (90) Advanced Display Core Processors II; seventy-five (75) APG-82(V)1 Active Electronically Scanned Array radars; fifty (50) AN/AAQ-13 LANTIRN navigation pods with containers; three-hundred twenty (320) LAU-128 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missile launchers; twenty-five (25) M61A Vulcan cannons; and one hundred eighty (180) Embedded Global Positioning System/Inertial Navigation System devices with M-Code. Also included are Cartridge Actuated Devices and Propellant Actuated Devices; Joint Helmet Mounted Cueing Systems; APX-119 Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) systems; KIV-77 Mode 4/5 IFF cryptographic appliques; AN/PYQ-10 Simple Key Loaders; impulse cartridges, chaff, and flares; integration and test support and equipment; aircraft and munitions support and support equipment; secure communications equipment, precision navigation, and cryptographic devices; classified software development, delivery, and support; spare parts, consumables and accessories, and repair and return support; major and minor modifications, maintenance, and maintenance support; facilities and construction support; transportation and airlift support; classified publications and technical documentation; personnel training and training equipment; warranties; studies and surveys; U.S. Government and contractor engineering, technical, and logistics support services; and other related elements of logistics and program support. The estimated total cost is \$18.82 billion. Deliveries are estimated to begin in 2029.

August 15th 2024 at 1:10 am PDT
Israel and the US

Chevre,

Israel is still in a waiting pattern of tension, but there is also some disappointing news coming from the Holy Land

The Jerusalem Post has reported that in order to calm escalations, the US revealed the names of those responsible for the elimination of Hamas leader

Haniyeh in Iran. It is hard to believe that they would report this without proof, but even more disappointing if it is true. All sources are "anonymous", so it is questionable; but if it is true, it is sad, and if it is false, it is still sad as it will affect Israelis' opinions of America when they read that in a major Israeli paper. Either way, having something like this puts another wedge between Israel and the US

Also in Israel, public estimates have come out about how many hostages, are still alive. The number is 33. There are no words for this sadness. Delegations are arriving in Qatar for a "last ditch attempt" to negotiate a cease fire, but given that Hamas is not even sending any representatives, this seems as another stall/waste of time...but Israel is sending a delegation nonetheless.

In other parts of the region, Iran's Khamenei has said that Iran will attack and destroy Israel, but that only Allah and he know when. US mediator Hochstein arrived in Lebanon yesterday, and Lebanese papers are calling him a "crook" and "the godfather of fraud". Hamas asked Turkey and Russia to join as mediators... Israel rejected the suggestion for obvious reasons. There was also a lot of chaos in Tehran over the last 36 hours as there was a cyber attack and many ATMs were not working, affecting the lives of more Iranian civilians.

Here in the US, there has also been news...mostly about college campuses. The President of Columbia has resigned her position as a result of her behavior towards anti-Israel terrorists on her campus. UCLA just lost a case in Federal District Court. and is ordered to take more decisive actions to protect Jewish students, and guess what? UCLA officials are protesting the judgment and saying its not fair to anti-Israel protestors. And the Young Democratic Socialists of America have announced that they are planning and organizing demonstrations on campuses nationwide as the school year is about to start. For parents of rising high school seniors, at this time, the safest schools for Jewish students are more religious based colleges like the Jesuit institutions (Loyola, Santa Clara, etc); BYU, SMU, Cal. Baptist, etc. If you have a college bound child, please look at how the colleges they are considering reacted to the encampments and campus terrorism before deciding on a school.

It has been said that Jews are the canary in the coal mine. What happens to Jews soon happens to others in the nation: We are usually the first attacked, but never the last. The hopeful news is that in the same way more and more Jewish families are recognizing the dangers of colleges that facilitate encampments, the

rest of the country may so be waking up to the craziness that needs to be stopped.

Let us pray that the time comes soon when all college campuses are safe for Jews, and Jewish students can have a great college experience without worrying about their safety and wellbeing.

For the children's sake Lord, we pray that you spread your covering of peace and protection over the campuses nationwide.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 15, 2024

11th of Av, 5784

August 16th 2024 at 12:22 am PDT

Updates, why, and Personal Answers

Chevre,

Shabbat shalom, may it be a sweet Shabbat for you and your family. Sometimes it's easier to just share a few updates in bullet points, so...

---The US Treasury Dept. announced that it is finally (after 10 months) imposing economic sanctions on Hezbollah and Houthis by targeting companies, organizations, and individuals who are part of the trade network that funds these groups from Iran. The Treasury said that it is to put economic pressure on Tehran and its affiliates. Am I the only one who would like to know why this wasn't done 10 months ago if they think it will pressure Iran and its proxies?

---John Kirby repeated to multiple news outlets on Thursday that an attack from Iran could happen without warning or with very little notice". It is disconcerting that he made it a point to say it repeatedly throughout the day.

---The talks in Doha continue to be confusing. Two of the "mediators", Qatar and

Egypt, are also the 'representation for Hamas', who did not attend (isn't that the definition of conflict of interest?) Biden said that a deal is close, while the delegation from Egypt said that "significant differences remain between Israel and Hamas". In other words... who knows?

---And in a less impactful but a positive statement, Papua New Guinea is moving their embassy to Jerusalem next week.

I have recently gotten a lot of emails thanking me for these daily missives. I am glad so many people are reading them. But honestly, the reason I try to send out information to everyone is multi-faceted. The first reason is that I believe strongly that all Diaspora Jews need to keep what is happening in Israel in the front of our consciousness. Orthodox Jews discuss Israel every morning at the Shaachrit service; but for Reform and Conservative Jews who do not daven every morning, I have found that all too many have forgotten the horrors of Oct. 7; forgotten the thousands of rockets that have attacked Israel in the last 10 months, have forgotten our dead and wounded, and are ignoring the reality that Israel is facing an existential threat. I do these emails each night partially because other rabbis don't, and I feel it is important to keep us all connected as Jews... I do them so that we don't forget the realities of the situation, so that we don't get war weary, and so that we retain the passion for Israel that we all felt in those first weeks of October.

On Oct. 8, all Jews were unified in supporting Israel unconditionally; aware of the horrors perpetrated and conscious of the danger to Israel's very existence. Sadly, by Dec. 8, the vast majority of non-Orthodox Jews had put the events of October in their rear view mirror, and just wanted to sing Kumbaya and make any peace deal so that they wouldn't have to continue to face the difficult and exhausting task of staying aware of pain and danger.

The other reason is to strengthen our own sense of community. Like most synagogues, over the years we see a few people regularly; lots of people at special events like Hannukah and Sukkot; and everybody at the High Holiday services. Each year at the High Holidays everyone is reminded that we are a full service temple all year long, and that synagogue life doesn't have to be relegated to just two days per year. Unintentionally, these emails have demonstrated this, as over 700 people read them every day. It is a reminder for all of us that we are a Jewish community... whose souls are connected to each other in ways that

may be subtle, but are deep. Am Echad... We are one people.

I hope that you share these emails, and that we all do everything we can to keep all Diaspora Jews unified in support of each other and of Israel. And I hope to see you at the High Holiday services at The Canyon Club.

If you haven't yet registered for your tickets for the High Holiday services, please do so asap at www.nersimcha.org/high-holy-days-2024 to reserve your tickets. Tickets will start being mailed out next week.

Whatever happens in Israel or at home; we will be here as a kahal, a holy Jewish community committed to serving each other, Israel, and the Jewish people.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 16, 2024

12th of Av, 5784

August 18th 2024 at 8:48 am PDT

More Questionable Information, and a Reminder

Chevre,

Shavuah tov. Sometimes it's amazing how many US media reports are diametrically opposite of what is said in Israel. The Wall St Journal reports that Israel is willing to withdraw from the Philadelphi corridor, but the Prime Minister's statement is the exact opposite. Leaks from "an anonymous American source" give details about negotiations, but some of those "leaks" make no sense and guarantee that there will be attacks like Oct. 7 in the immediate future, so it is difficult to believe that this source is being honest... more likely they are using the press to apply pressure on negotiators. (A reminder: no one from Hamas is even at these negotiations... yet Israel is being pushed by the US, Qatar, and Egypt to keep making concessions to satisfy the perpetrators of the most heinous acts of decades, who keep successfully manipulating the US in this election year.)

The Philadelphi corridor is the strip of land between Gaza and Egypt, and is an important part of preventing Hamas from re-arming through Rafah. Israel has found 184 tunnels there, 9 of which were confirmed crossings with Egypt large enough to drive truck convoys in. It is crucial that Israel keeps control of the area as a buffer zone, or weapons will again flow freely to Hamas.

Much sabre rattling is happening; with Hezbollah showing films of their precision missiles, Iran releasing video of their weapons being moved underground, and Israel showing their fighter jet squadrons. Blinken is back in Israel by tomorrow, and reports are that within a few days, a third of the US naval forces will be in or on their way to the Middle East. This sounds extremely difficult for me to believe for a number of reasons, but is being reported through multiple sources.

We must never allow the world, and especially the US to forget what Hamas did on Oct. 7, what they continue to do, and what they have promised to do. I remind everyone again to please read their Covenant of 1988, and their written commitment to obliterate every Jew and destroy Israel. Never forget that this is Amalek, and the many discussions and emails from 10 months ago... the evil has not changed, and their commitment to our destruction is the same today as it was 10 months ago.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 18, 2024

14th of Av, 5784

August 18th 2024 at 10:14 pm PDT

Still No Deal Yet

Chevre,

In what has been a repeated scene for many months, the US, Qatar, and Egypt pressured Israel to accept even more conditions that are dangerous to the future

of Israel... and in what has also been repeated for the same amount of time, Hamas made an official statement that they are not accepting the US proposal. Hamas reiterated that they will only accept "permanent ceasefire", "total withdrawal from Gaza", and "occupation of the Netzer corridor, the Philadephi corridor, and the Rafah crossing". They are also insisting on new conditions of prisoner exchange.

And again, they are blaming Netanyahu for "the failure to reach a deal". Netanyahu keeps getting bad press in the world media, with implications that he is not interested in making any hostage exchanges. As Hamas blames him, we need to remember that Netanyahu actually has a history of making the most lopsided hostage deals in Israel's history, and has never used hostages as political pawns. In 2011, Netanyahu pushed through (against the objections of many Israeli politicians) an exchange deal of 1027 Arab security prisoners in exchange for the release of Gilad Shalit, an IDF soldier who had been abducted five years earlier. There are many things that people can take Netanyahu to task for, but he has repeatedly demonstrated his willingness to do almost anything to save even one Israeli hostage. The issues with the proposed deal are that the terms that keep getting thrust on Israel are practical guarantees that Hamas will stay in power, re-arm, and fulfill their promises to repeat the horrors of Oct. 7... something that must be avoided at all costs.

This evening begins the Jewish holiday of Tu b'Av, the 15th day of the month of Av. The Talmud teaches that this is one of the two happiest days in the Jewish calendar (the other being Yom Kippur): a day of intimacy and love. And it is a way to actually help our brothers and sisters in Israel.

Make it a point today to do something extra special for your spouse or partner. Dedicate your love together on this day to bringing safety, protection, and peace to the people of Israel, the land of Israel, and the Jewish people. Darkness and evil are fought with light and love... and the love between partners is a powerful force according to our Sages. Let your love come out and bless the world.

...and may those blessings of love bring peace in Israel, and May the One who ordains peace in the Universe make peace upon us, Israel, and all the world.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 18, 2024

15th of Av, 5784

Erev Tu b'Av

August 20th 2024 at 6:38 am PDT

Israel, Internal Conflict, and Hostages z"l

Chevre,

The bodies of 6 dead hostages were recovered by Shin Bet and supporting agencies in a daring and dangerous operation in the Hamas Tunnels in Khan Yunis, may their memories be a blessing and their families comforted among the mourners of Zion.

Hezbollah has publicly said that "the waiting is over", that they have picked a target and will be attacking shortly...whatever that may mean. They continue to launch rockets at Israel on a daily basis (over 8000), including another 55 on Monday. Hamas continues to launch missiles daily, while the IDF keeps finding more tunnels... including a 1.5 kilometer one in Khan Yunis that was destroyed on Monday.

According to Channel 14 in Israel, IDF Chief of Staff HaLevi has said in closed conversations that if Israel enters a deal that leads to weeks of pause in the war, he will resign. He has been leading this war with both arms tied behind his back, and like the vast majority of Israels, wants to finish this mission... and does not want to see the many Israeli deaths of the last 10 months be in vain.

It is easy for those of us in the safety of the Diaspora to view this war either as a football game (cheering for one side and forgetting that every life on either side is a sad tragedy...even while knowing Amalek must be destroyed); or to just want to sing kumbaya and make any deal to stop the war... forgetting that if the mission is not finished, we have every reason to believe that Hamas and Iran's other proxies will fulfill their promises to repeat the attack of Oct. 7, God forbid.

It is said that war is hell, and it should be... and we should all always be wrestling

with the tension of knowing what needs to be done against the pain of having to do it.

If we only think of one side or the other, we either can lose our conviction or lose our compassion.

The 18th century Hasidic master Reb Simcha Bunem is said to have carried two pieces of paper in his pocket. On one was written a quote from the Talmud: "for my sake the world was created". In the other, words of Torah from Avraham Avinu. "I am but dust and ashes". He would take out each piece of paper as necessary for the moment.

May we all have the strength to be "Israel"... "those who wrestle", and to hold both conviction and compassion at all times... and to know which one to focus on at the proper time.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 20, 2024

16th of Av, 5784

August 21st 2024 at 6:45 am PDT

Threats and Escalation

Chevre,

Hamas and Hezbollah filled the day with threats to Israel. There were repeated threats trying to intimidate Israel, but they tried something new today. Hamas called the families of hostages (we don't know if those hostages are alive or dead) leaving messages on voice mail or talking to family members, threatening their kidnapped loved ones. The psychological torture is horrific, and we all need to pray for those families to stay strong and be comforted in the hell of 10 months that they continue to suffer through. The calls came from Hamas, and also directly from Iran.

There were more intense barrages of rockets fired, including over 50 rockets at the Katzrin area of the Golan, as well as a barrage of 10 suicide drones.

Hamas also kidnapped the bank manager of the Bank of Palestine in Nuseirat in the middle of the Gaza strip. No one is quite sure the reason, and we taken to an unknown location.

Sec of State Blinken made multiple public statements to pressure Israel, saying in one that the US "will not accept Israel's long-term occupation of the Gaza Strip". Hamas has refused to even sit at a negotiation table; and so Blinken is trying to force Israel (the only party he can communicate with) to buckle to all of Hamas' demands. Politico has reported that "senior US officials say the ceasefire deal is in the verge of collapse".

It was also reported in Israeli media that in March, "President Biden ordered US forces to prepare for possible nuclear confrontations with Russia, China, and North Korea". This is extremely disturbing on so many levels, but I have only seen it reported in Israeli media... so there's no way to know if it is true or coordinated Israeli media.

As we approach the High Holidays in only 6 weeks, we need to prepare our own souls with prayer and self-reflection while we pray for our brothers and sisters in Israel.

I do not remember a time in my life when it was more important for Jews to prepare, pray, and gather together for the High Holidays. On that note...

If you have not yet registered for our High Holiday services at the Canyon, please do so asap... and please invite all Jews that you know to attend as well. If you have a Jewish friend or friends who have not been to High Holiday services for years or have no place to go, please invite them to join... even if they only come on one day. All Jews need to focus their prayers within a community... it has never been more important since the Holocaust.

To register for High Holiday services, please go to www.nersimcha.org/high-holy-days-2024. In this crucial time for the Jewish people, we need to join our prayers together. We have some special things planned for these services, and will hopefully cleanse, laugh, cry, and make a difference for the world, one Jew

at a time.

I also would like to invite every Cohen or Levite to please email me directly at RabbiBarclay@aol.com if you would like to be an active part of the services. We will be training in our responsibilities, and B"H (b'ezrat HaShem---with God's help) will all be prepared to perform the blessings that our ancestors have for over 3000 years. If you would like to be part of the important rituals of Cohanim and Levites, please email me directly and we will be gathering together in a week or two for study and a deeper understanding of our heritage.

May we all fulfill the duties, responsibilities, and privileges that we have been blessed with as Jews: to be a light to the nations, and to be seekers and pursuers of peace.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 21, 2024

17th of Av, 5784

August 22nd 2024 at 6:12 am PDT

More Escalation

Chevre,

Actions are getting more intense again as representatives of Hamas and Islamic Jihad met in Qatar and announced that the ceasefire talks have collapsed. Hezbollah had said multiple times that they would escalate attacks if it became clear that there would be no ceasefire, and that is starting to happen. They have announced that as soon as talks are officially declared over by Hamas, they will view it as a green light for a response for Shukar's assassination.

---Hezbollah has launched over 115 rockets at northern Israel.

---Israel has sent a large wave of air attacks at Lebanon, striking terror targets in 10 different areas in Lebanon.

---the Washington Post has reported that Sunwat is still interested in a deal as he

is "imprisoned" underground, and Hamas needs to resupply its weapons which are getting short.

---IDF leadership is saying that the main war front is moving towards the north.

We should all be emotionally prepared for an intensifying of attacks from Iran's proxies, and intensified responses by Israel. At the same time, unless patterns change, the US will keep trying to pressure Israel to accept more and more onerous terms as they are unable to affect Hamas in any way.

...and we all need to continue and constantly pray for the safety and protection of Israel and our people. Prayers really do make a difference, and I implore us all to open our hearts multiple times per day and pray from the depths of our emotions. We have 3500 years of experiencing God's miracles, but we must take the first step of honest prayer.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 22, 2024

18th of Av, 5784

August 23rd 2024 at 5:00 am PDT

Negotiations, and Our Last Outdoor Service of the Summer is Tonight!

Chevre,

"Negotiators" are heading back to Cairo this weekend, with one of the big issues being the Philadelphi corridor, the strip of land as a border between Gaza and Egypt. Israel realizes that they must control it, or weapons will again flow freely into Gaza, and Hamas will repeat another Oct 7 event as they have promised. Egypt and Hamas insist that A: Israel withdraws entirely from the area, and B: it is agreed that even if Hamas violates any terms of a ceasefire, Israel will not go back into the corridor.

In simple language: the US, Qatar, and Egypt (the "mediators", even though

Qatar and Egypt are supporters of Hamas and/or Iran) will work tirelessly to force Israel to take a deal that will keep them in existential jeopardy.

The six bodies of hostages recovered this past week show that all six were executed by guns during their captivity. Both Hamas and Hezbollah have announced that they are going to now attack Israelis living around the world in an attempt to apply more pressure on Israel.

These are the enemies of Israel, who have vowed to destroy Israel and obliterate all Jews around the world (in their own words), that the "negotiators" expect Israel to trust with a ceasefire. The executors of the horrors of Oct. 7, choreographed by the Sinwar, the new top Hamas leader, are the people that Qatar/Egypt/US want Israel to trust.

Think about it.... If you were a negotiator, what would you actually do, remembering the lies they have told and the horrors these people have done: desperately wanting the hostages returned, yet knowing the behavior that will almost certainly continue if Israel allows itself to be take what these "mediators" are proposing.

Given an honest understanding of the circumstances and risks, what would you actually do?

It's not an easy decision. We all need to pray for guidance for ourselves and the Israeli leaders; and let us all continue to pray for the safety and protection of the land of Israel, the people of Israel, and for all Jews worldwide

I hope you will join myself, Mat, Benny, and other community members at our last outdoor Shabbat Under the Stars Service of this summer tonight, August 23 at 7:00pm at Deerhill Community Park. It is our last outdoor service of the season, and a wonderful way to welcome in the Sabbath and prepare ourselves for the upcoming High Holidays. Plus... Mat and Benny are planning some fun ways to celebrate this outdoor event... so come join us tonight at 7:00pm for a joyous Shabbat to heal, rest, and rejuvenate from the challenges of the week.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 23, 2024

19th of Av, 5784

August 24th 2024 at 11:33 pm PDT

Israel Declares Emergency; War Cabinet is in the Pit

Chevre,

At approximately 5am Israel time on Sunday (7pm pst on Saturday) Israel identified Hezbollah launchers that were aimed at Tel Aviv. They destroyed these missile launchers, which were consciously placed in Lebanese rural neighborhoods. Hezbollah has continued to attack, including drones, one of which hit a highway, and Israel is under emergency declaration. Gallant and Netanyahu are in "the pit", a nuclear proof underground facility; and the war cabinet started meeting there at 7am sunday morning (9pm our time) to decide how Israel will respond to Hezbollah's coordinated and precision attacks.

Rear Admiral Hagari released the following at 8am Israel time:

"In the past hour, we identified extensive preparations by the Hezbollah terrorist organization to fire toward the Israeli Home Front. After thorough identification, the IAF and Northern Command began proactively and broadly striking Hezbollah targets to eliminate the threats aimed at Israeli citizens. We are removing threats against the Israeli home front. Dozens of IAF jets are currently striking targets in various locations in southern Lebanon. We are continuing to remove threats and intensively strike against the Hezbollah terrorist organization."

There will probably be many developments throughout the night; and rather than sending out multiple emails throughout the night, I will send out one in a few hours.

Let us all pray for the safety and protection of the land of Israel and the people of Israel.

Am Yisrael Chai!

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 24, 2024

21st of Av, 5784

August 25th 2024 at 8:16 am PDT

A Busy Sunday in Israel

Chevre,

It was a busy Sunday in Israel for the last ten hours, but as of right now (6am pst), the Haifa and Galilee beaches are scheduled to reopen, and the Hime Front Command has removed the emergency restrictions. Here is a brief rundown of what seems to have occurred:

---Hezbollah declared that they were about to start their retaliation for the death of Shukr.

---Israel identified specific threats of thousands of rocket launchers in Lebanon.

---Israel launched a pre-emptive strike on those launchers, destroying many of them prior to their launch.

---Israeli leadership went to "the pit", planned what to do, and Netanyahu and Hagari both made public statements from there while the whole country was put in emergency lockdown; Home Command sent out text messages and calls to Israelis telling them to stay close to shelters; GPS signals were jammed; and Home.Command started sending out regular precautionary messages.

---Either hundreds or thousands (depending on which Israeli news source) of rockets, drones, etc were simultaneously launched at Israel from remaining Hezbollah launch sites.

---Some got through, but the majority were intercepted by Israel's defenses, including the IAF. Footage shows over 100 Israeli jets shooting down the Hezbollah attacks as well as attacking southern Lebanon where the launchers were.

---Hezbollah claims that some targets were hit, including an Israeli ship and military sites, all of which Israel denies. Israel claims there were some highways

and northern homes hit.

---Israeli media is saying that Hezbollah had intended on simultaneously attacking both military and symbolic sites as well as homes, rural areas, and civilian infrastructure sites such as airports, seaports, and power plants at 5am Israel time. But Israel's pre-emptive attack destroyed over 200 targets with thousands of rockets, severely thwarting Hezbollah's plot to create their own "Pearl Harbor" on Israel.

---Hezbollah announced in their media of the Al-Arabi channel that they were not thwarted; that their operations were "not disrupted"; and that Nasrallah will be discussing in a few hours how two targets were hit in Tel Aviv.

---There have been no successful attacks in the last three hours according to Channel 12 in Israel; followed by most of the restrictions being removed by Home Command.

---The BBC in Beirut is reporting that Israel is waiting for Nasrallah's press statement, and then that Israel is expected to carry out wider preventive strikes throughout Lebanon.

Other things have been going on both in and outside Israel; including more "deal" talks; crazy institutionalized anti-Semitism in Australia; and increased Jew hatred by social influencers and on college campuses... but those will be left for other missives this week.

We must all thank God for keeping Israel safe over the last 12 hours, and protecting her people and land; and pray that this protection will continue, and that our brothers and sisters remain safe. Am Echad - We are all one people, and every Jew must remember that at all times.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 25, 2024

21st of Av, 5784

August 26th 2024 at 6:49 am PDT

A quieter day, but still no deal

Chevre,

In comparison to Sunday morning, Sunday night and Monday morning have been significantly quieter (although still ugly, as Hamas and Hezbollah continue launching rockets and drones daily... Hezbollah launched 230 rockets and over 20 drones on Monday morning).

The Cairo negotiations continue to be a dud. While the US keeps saying that a deal; two Egyptian officials said that negotiations ended without an agreement. Hamas senior Osama Hamdan said, "The American administration is planting false hopes and talking about an imminent agreement for reasons related to the election campaign." Senior Hamas official Izzat al-Risheq said that any deal would need to include: permanent ceasefire no matter what Hamas does with remaining hostages; a full withdrawal from the Gaza Strip; the return of the displaced to their homes; the restoration of the Strip; and a serious prisoner deal.

It is again clear that Hamas is living up to the words in their charter, and only using peace talks to further their goals if rebuilding to attack Israel again. (Look at the Hamas Covenant of 1988 and you will see that they specifically say this about ever discussing peace with Israel...it is a feint.)

In a bizarre piece of news being printed first by UK Express and reposted all over the world, Sinwar has apparently left the terror tunnels and been running around Gaza in the disguise of a woman to avoid capture. I wonder if anyone mentioned to him that doing that is punishable by death in a world controlled by Sharia Law, which he desire.

If seems that both sides are recovering from the early Monday morning attacks. May Israel continue to stay strong, safe, and protected.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 26, 2024

22nd of Av, 5784

August 27th 2024 at 12:47 am PDT

Jew-Hatred Down Under

Chevre,

Monday was another day of rhetoric in Israel, with Nasrallah claiming Hezbollah was successful on Sunday; the IDF claiming the exact opposite; promises of more attacks on Israel by Iran's proxies; and Israel trying to pressure the US to be more pro-active against Iran.

We have kept up to date with the war in Israel, and the war against Jew hatred here in the States. But our domestic news has been extremely quiet about significant Jew hatred in Australia, and I believe it's worth looking at briefly while the rhetoric flies in the Middle East.

According to the 2021 census, 0.4 percent of Australians are Jewish (including my father of blessed memory). There has always been a certain amount of anti-Semitism in Australia as there is in every country; but Australia has traditionally been a nation in which Jews could build successful lives.

...and then there was October 7.

Through the lens of anti-Israel sentiment, Australia has become a country that many now consider unsafe for Jews.

Many of us saw the pro-terrorist rally on Oct. 9 at the famed Sydney Opera House. Organized by the Palestine Action Group, "Gas the Jews" was chanted by rally members. On Oct 10, Jews in Melbourne received death threats, and a rabbi and his son were "hunted" by anti-Semites; and Oct. 11 brought death threats to Jewish teenagers who had an Israeli flag draped on their car in New South Wales. Jenny Leong, a member of NSW Parliament, publicly attacked "the Jewish lobby and the Zionist lobby" and their "tentacles" for infiltrating and controlling Australian culture; and government officials continued their Jew hating slurs around the country from then to now.

The insidiousness of the Jew hatred has grown exponentially in the last ten months. Jewish leaders have been doxxed, pro-Hamas rallies have increased under the guise of protecting Gaza, synagogues have been threatened and

worse, and Australian Jews have been progressively become less safe in the land down under.

Earlier this month, the CFMEU (the largest trade union, in charge of construction in Australia) threatened to "drag the Gaza war" into Australian construction business, and encouraged pro-palestinian activists to join a rally outside a Jewish club in Sydney. Labor issues in Australia were now to be determined by race and Jew-hatred. In the last week, the Australian government has made moves to take control of the union because of corruption and organized crime; and today, tens of thousands of workers put down their tools and marched in capital cities across the country (estimates were of 50,000 in Melbourne alone).

While it might at first seem that labor unions should be autonomous and these marches are appropriate, we must look at a deeper issue going on.

While these demonstrations are being couched as union rights, it is clear based on past behavior that there is already an anti-Semitic tone to the CFMEU. We are only a brief moment from these pro-union rallies morphing into full-on Jew-hating. The union will not only continue to express Jew-hatred, but will increase it by blaming "the Jews" for the union problems (as opposed to taking the responsibility for corruption in the union). Given the dynamics of the last months, especially the last weeks, it is a credible prediction that union members will soon be turned even more towards blaming Jews. It is possible (and even probable) that there will soon be in Australia an alliance of some government officials and the unions against Jews... and "hunting season" may increase from being targeted at a rabbi towards targeting any Australian Jew.

I recently spoke with a good friend in Australia (who has actually attended our High Holiday services) and was saddened to hear that after building a career of over 50 years in Australia, he is looking towards getting a different citizenship: he is that concerned for where the country is heading in its institutionalized anti-Semitism.

Why should we all care about this new flowering of the old hatred against Jews half way around the world?

The first reason is because all Jews are family. What is happening to our Jewish brothers and sisters in Australia concerns all members of this global family.

The other reason is as a warning to us here in the US. If pro-palestinian bullies can transform Australia to a land of Jew-haters in less than a year; we must be aware how that can be (and is being) reflected here. If those who hate Jews can co-opt the unions in Australia to their hatred in less than a year, is it really far-fetched that the same thing could happen here? Although many union founders and leaders a century ago were Jewish, few are today (maybe none outside of SAG, AFTRA, DGA, and the other entertainment unions). If the Jew haters in the US can infiltrate and guide American unions into blaming Jews for union problems actually caused by corrupt leadership, illegal immigrant workers, economic downturns, jobs becoming automated, etc., then we could, God forbid, find a whole new population of blue collar workers who "blame the Jew".

While Australia may seem a far away and distant land, it also can serve as a warning to us all to always immediately combat any Jew-hatred that we see around us. To quote Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l, "Anti-Semitism is a virus that mutates". We must be vigilant to not let the Jew-hating mutation that we see in Australia happen here in the United States.

May our awareness of the challenges facing other Jewish communities guide us to keeping our own American Jewish communities safe, protected, and thriving.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 27, 2024

23rd of Av, 5784

August 28th 2024 at 5:59 am PDT

Always Optimistic And Miracles Happen!

Chevre,

With all the challenging news that we see each day, it is important to follow the words of Rebbe Nachman and NEVER let ourselves fall into sadness.

That can be hard when we read again today of how Iran's proxies are working in creating another war front on the eastern borders of Israel. Or when we hear of the daily rockets fired from Hezbollah, etc

But we must keep our faith, and treasure its rewards.

On Tuesday, in a daring rescue mission in the tunnels of Gaza, the IDF rescued Qaid Farhan Alkadi, a 52 year old hostage from Rahat. A miracle that we all must be grateful for.

We should consider side points about this miracle, and what they say about Israel and the world.

CNN reporter Gideon Levy said, "these rescue operations endanger the lives of innocent Palestinians in Gaza, this is not acceptable and they don't deserve it". This is often the world's sentiment right now: that the lives of the hostages are meaningless, especially in comparison to Gazans. For 10 months the hostages, who should never have been taken according to international law, have been held captive, but this reporter, like many, feels that is less important than any risks in rescuing them.

But one of the most beautiful aspects of this rescue is that Alkadi is a Bedouin Muslim. It doesn't matter to Israel if its citizens are Jewish, Christian; or Muslim... Israel will always fight for every Israeli, no matter their religion.

For Jews... every life is precious, and to quote the Talmud: "Whomever saves a single life is considered by scripture to have saved the whole world" (Sanhedrin 37a).

Today, an entire world was saved with Alkadi's rescue. May we continue to save many worlds and see all the hostages come home

A great and joyous miracle happened today...and we choose to have faith that more like it are happening soon.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 28, 2024

24th of Av, 5784

August 29th 2024 at 6:52 am PDT

Another Front, and a Mother's Love Can Change the World

Chevre,

The last 24 hours have seen increased terrorist attacks in Samaria, with IDF soldiers being forced to kill 5 terrorists in a mosque that was a launching headquarters for attacks, including suicide bombers, into Israel. Iran's proxies of Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthis, Islamic Jihad, et al are attacking Israel on all sides as the violence increases especially in Samaria. Hamas leader Mashaal, who resides in the safety of Istanbul, calls for more suicide bombers in Samaria; and Lebanese Hamas leader Hadi does the same from Lebanon.

As is typical for Hamas and the other proxies; the "leaders" call upon the people to commit suicide bombings and lay down their lives in battle while the leaders themselves live in safe areas with a comfortable financial wealth that should be going to their people. The Arab people suffer while their leaders live in opulence.

But despite this situation of leaders calling on their people to suffer and die for them... a situation that one would think would lead to an uprising against Hamas/Hezbollah/etc. leaders... the Arab people continue to follow their corrupt leadership. The extremist leaders have implanted such hate against Israel and Jews that they ignore the evils of Islamic leadership.

Golda Meir famously said that we will have peace when Arab mothers love their children more than they hate us. The Holy Zohar teaches that all the gates of heaven are open to the tears of a mother. The power of the love of a mother for her child is beyond physical comprehension; and we need to pray that the mothers in Gaza, Samaria, and the region recognize how they have been betrayed by Islamic extremist leadership.

I am often asked how people can pray effectively; and usually speak about prayers of thanksgiving, followed by prayers of praise, and then petition. When I

give classes on Jewish prayer, we talk about kavannah, the "intention". In Judaism, the depth of emotions that are an integral part of any prayer.

And so, I ask all mothers to feel the love for your children; and from that emotionally raw place of love to pray that Arab mothers become aware of that same love they have for their children. Open your hearts and pray that they open theirs... not to hate us, but to love their children enough to rebel against the corrupt Arab leadership that seeks to kill their children.

All the gates of heaven are open to the tears of a mother. Please let your own tears open the tears of those mothers in Gaza, Samaria, and the region... and let your prayers be answered.

Simple prayers for Arab mothers to love their children more than they hate us. Perhaps it is these types of prayers... prayers for an increase in motherly love... that can bring us the miracle of a lasting peace that we all so want for us and for our children.

So I ask that mothers pray for mothers. It's at least worth a try....

May the prayers of our Jewish mothers lead to a peace for the entire world....

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 29, 2024

25th of Av, 5784

August 30th 2024 at 5:07 am PDT

An Honest Recap About A Ceasefire Deal

Chevre,

Besides the daily rockets from Hezbollah (all of which have been forbidden by the UN, but never condemned by anyone), there were conflicting announcements on Thursday and Friday morning about a "ceasefire" deal.

Hamas is saying that there will be a full ceasefire in order to get polio vaccines to Gaza. The Prime Minister's office has said that's not happening. And an anonymous World Health Org. official was reported as saying that Israel has agreed. Most likely is that there will be momentary pauses to let vaccines in, but not a cease fire.

Hamas chief Sinwar is still demanding that Israel leaves the Philadelphi corridor and commits to a permanent ceasefire, and the Knesset voted overwhelmingly that Israel cannot leave the corridor. So the "theater" of negotiations continue...

Why do I call it "theater"? Look at the Hamas history, their own words in their own charter, and see how they have been consistent: this was and has never been about land, and always about "obliterating" Jews and creating a worldwide authoritarian caliphate ruled by Sharia law. The hostages were taken with the intent of creating long term "negotiations" as a stall technique to aid the other Iran proxies in their attempt to create a world controlled by Sharia law.

I remind us all of the words about peace talks in The Covenant of 1988, the Hamas Charter:

"Initiatives and so called peaceful solutions and international conferences are in contradiction to the principles of Hamas." (Article 13)

"There is no solution to the Palestinian question except through Jihad (a physical war in Allah's name). Initiatives, proposals, and conferences are all a waste of time and vain endeavors." (ibid)

Hamas' own charter, which also ties itself to the Moslem Brotherhood and its proxies such as Hezbollah in this charter, is committed to never having peace; to only using peace talks to further its goal of a worldwide caliphate; and is committed to the destruction of not only the Jews, but all people worldwide who do not want Sharia law (Preamble, Articles 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, and more).

As I said almost a year ago, Hamas is the modern day Amalek, and we must never forget not only what they have done, but what they have continued to commit to doing in the future (such as "repeating October 7 once, twice, even a million times" to achieve their goals). I invite each of us to read their entire charter and recognize the "theater" of these continuing "negotiations" given Hamas' own words. You can read the document

at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp

The High Holidays are just over a month away. They are a time to be brutally honest with ourselves, even if it means the pain of looking honestly at the world around us... and this truth is excruciatingly painful. The honest truth as defined by Hamas itself (along with Hezbollah, the Muslim Brotherhood, et al) is that they have no desire for peace, and will only have a peace if it is forced upon them. Their own charter in its preamble and elsewhere states that they prefer "the death of martyrs" over peace with Israel.

But we are Jews, repeatedly commanded to "seek peace and pursue it" (Psalm 34:14). So we will continue the charade of "negotiations" in the hope that it will lead to the miracle of peace. We are Jews, who believe that to save a single life is to save a world (Talmud, Sanhedrin 37a); and so we will do everything possible to save even one hostage's life.

We are a people of hope and faith...always. We know that it will take a miracle for Israel to have a lasting peace; but we are a people who not only believe in miracles, we have relied on them for over 3500 years.

We are Jews, and we are in the miracle business... and business is good.

May we all be blessed to see our hopes, faith, and prayers for peace become manifest in our time.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 30, 2024

26th of Av, 5784

August 30th 2024 at 4:10 pm PDT

Israel News and An Important and Personal Appeal

Chevre,

Shabbat Shalom, may this be the best Shabbos ever until next week.

The Israel security cabinet voted 8-1 that an Israeli presence must remain in the Philadelphi corridor to protect against another Oct. 7 type attack throughout any hostage negotiations or deal. Gallant was alone in wanting to remove the presence to try to get more hostages released (Ben Gvir abstained as he wants an even larger military presence to stay there). This is currently a hard line for Israel; which realizes that this decision forces Hamas to either back down in order to make a deal, or hold on to hostages as Israel continues with its targeted attacks on Hamas leadership worldwide. The New York Post also reported that the IDF took out Wassen Hazem, a top Hamas commander in the West Bank; and the elimination of another top Hamas commander is applying pressure as well in Hamas leadership (each of whom is wondering if they are next).

On an upbeat note, Israeli swimmer Ami Dadaon won a gold medal in swimming at the Paralympic Games in the 100 meter freestyle. This is the second gold medal for Israel in these games, following Asaf Yasur's gold in tae kwon do on Thursday.

As we enter into this Shabbat and Labor Day weekend, I have a request for everyone reading this on behalf of the temple, our staff (especially the amazing Orlando, our Executive Director), and volunteers.

I know that many of you intend on attending our High Holiday services this year, and just have not gotten around to registering yet. Some of you who are not in the Los Angeles area will be streaming our services online (please make sure to get streaming information from Orlando at Events@NerSimcha.org) Others will be attending other synagogues, although you read the daily missives to keep up on Israel as your own community does not keep you informed.

Please, please, please register for your High Holiday tickets over this weekend; and if you are not attending but read the emails, please donate to the temple. Our staff and volunteers are about to start sending out tickets, and it is a hard and labor intensive process... that is exponentially easier if people register early as opposed to registering during the last weeks. You can register at www.nersimcha.org/high-holy-days-2024 and although there is no mandatory cost to attend the High Holiday services, I ask that you make a donation to keep the temple alive and functioning throughout the year. If you

would just like to support what the temple does, you can donate at www.nersimcha.org/give.

Besides the daily emails about the war, Israel, and anti-Semitism; we provide all services, classes, events, lectures, religious school, and all programming with no mandatory costs to anyone. Our biggest fundraising is currently through High Holiday donations (although we are in the process of trying to have weekly bingo nights at The Canyon Club in 2025, which would potentially be a great income stream if it can be worked out). All Jewish communities can only survive based on the generosity of donations, and we are no different... and I ask for you to help support our community.

Orlando has been asked by many if we will again have a matching donation from the two individual donors who were so generous at the last minute last year. We have no reason to believe this will happen again this year as it was a spur of the moment act of kindness from both donors. So please, remember to be conscious and generous as you register, and not wait until the services.

Most importantly, whether you donate or not, please register asap. All Jews need to be in services these High Holidays given what has gone on this year, and what continues to go on. Jew-hatred is at an all time high in this country, and myself and other members of the community are at the forefront of battling it on college campuses, in the courts, and everywhere it rears its ugly head. But we MUST all gather as Jews during the holidays as each person's prayer exponentially increases the power of everyone else's prayers. Mat, Benny, David, and I are planning some special things that we hope will deepen your emotional and spiritual experience, and I pray that everyone reading this joins us or another community during these powerful times.

Again, please take some time over this holiday weekend and register for your tickets to the High Holiday services at www.nersimcha.org/high-holy-days-2024

I look forward to seeing everyone at an upcoming Shabbat or class; and at our High Holiday services at The Canyon Club (and yes, there will be extra armed security present at all services for safety).

Shabbat Shalom, and thank you for taking the time to read and think about this appeal to register now.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

August 30, 2024

26th of Av, 5784

September 1st 2024 at 8:54 am PDT

Baruch Dayan Emet

Chevre,

Very close to where the hostage was miraculously recovered last week,, in a tunnel less than a kilometer away and 20 meters deep, six bodies were found by the IDF. Those six bodies have now been identified. They were hostages taken on Oct 7, including American Hersh Goldberg-Polin. And they were killed right before being discovered. IDF spokesman Admiral Hagari said made a statement about this tragedy,, where he said they were "brutally murdered" "shortly before IDF forces reached them" "by Hamas terrorists". "They were cruelly murdered moments before we were able to reach them", Hagari said. Kidnapped, tortured, and held captive for nearly 11 months;, their hostages were brutally killed. When I speak and write of Hamas being a modern Amalek, this is not a hyperbole. Despite the (successful) media campaign to make Hamas look like "victims" that the world has been waging, let us Never Forget

---Hamas kidnapped,, raped, and killed over 1200 Israelis on Oct 7... a practice forbidden by EVERY military and nation for centuries.

---Hamas has coordinated with the other Iranian proxies, and together have launched over 10,000 missiles, rockets, and drones targeted not at Israeli military, but at Israeli civilians; displacing over 100,000 civilians in the north from their homes.

---Hamas has tortured, repeatedly raped, and murdered hostages... hostages who never should have been taken in the first place.

---And over the last week, Hamas has been leading terrorist attacks in Judea - Samaria, including an ambush on Saturday involving two car bombs as distractions so that they could attack the rescuers.

Hamas is Amalek, and we must never forget what they have done, what they continue to do, their commitment to destroying Israel and "obliterating every Jew", their honesty about never being willing to have peace with Israel, and their repeated commitment to "repeat October 7 again and again".

We must never forget, nor can we ever allow anyone else to forget what Hamas truly is: a group of terrorists who worship death,, have abandoned their own human souls, and have become a manifestation of evil in the physical world.

We must protest the acceptance of Hamas as a rallying cry for Jew-hatred on college campuses. The Univ of Maryland approved today that the "Students for Justice for Palestine" have been approved to have a rally on campus on Oct. 7 celebrating the anniversary of those horrific events. Expect to be hearing of other college campuses around the country allowing anniversary celebrations of that tragic day.

We must never forget, and we must commit ourselves to Judaism, Jewish communities, Israel, and to educating the world on the evils of Jew-hatred.

On October 7 every Jew around the world was committed to supporting Israel and being active in Jewish communities. By December 7, many had returned to being apathetic about Judaism and Israel. We must never forget, and all must re-commit ourselves to Israel and Judaism.

May our passions of October be reignited, and our actions committed to supporting Israel and all the Jewish people.

Chazak u',Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

Sept., 1, 2024

28th of Av, 5784

September 1st 2024 at 3:20 pm PDT

Let's Get Honest - The Most Important Teaching I Can Give Right Now For All Of Us

Chevre,

We need to be honest with ourselves... these are frightening times to be a Jew. Israel is being attacked on multiple fronts; college campuses are Jew-hating hotbeds; and anti-Semitism is at an all time high in America. A number of you have reached out to say that you are scared to be a proud Jew, scared to wear Jewish symbols, and even scared to gather in Jewish communities or come to services...even the all-important High Holiday services.

I get it. I have children, I get hate mail and death threats, and I am a "public figure"... and I understand the concerns. Which is why what I am about to say is more important than ever, and honestly may be the most important teaching I can ever give during this holiday season.

IF WE GIVE IN TO OUR FEARS...HAMAS AND THE JEW-HATERS HAVE ALREADY WON.

The entire purpose of Oct 7 was to terrorize Jews worldwide. It's why the atrocities were filmed by the terrorists themselves. They desperately want us to lose our faith... our hopes for peace; and replace it with fear.

Which is why it is more important than ever that we act on faith. Faith and fear CANNOT exist in the same place at the same time.

We need to have faith in God, in our religion, and in ourselves as we gather together as Jews. Now more than ever.

But we cannot be foolish. Faith over fear does not mean being foolish. Although we have always had armed security at every temple event, this is why for the last 11 months the temple has tripled the amount of armed security at every event and service we have. And the heightened security will be even more intense for all of our high holiday services.

We will have over 10 armed security personnel at all of our High Holiday services - some in uniform and some in plain clothes. In addition, there will be a police presence at every service. Although we are by no means the largest temple in California, I am pretty certain that we will have more armed security protecting

us than any other synagogue in the state. We will all be safer at our services than we would even be in our own homes.

Faith does not mean foolishness... not now and not ever. Although it is costing many thousands of dollars, the temple is creating a truly safe physical environment.

We can guarantee physical safety, but it is up to each of us to act based on faith and not fear.

From what Orlando and I have been told, High Holiday registrations are down at every synagogue in California... based on fear. We cannot let the Jew-haters win, and now more than ever, EVERY Jew must act on faith and not fear by attending services and praying together. Either with us or with any other temple, but we must all show our commitment to Judaism.

If we cower... if we act based on fear... Hamas has won, and all who have suffered and died in the last 11 months have done so in vain, God forbid.

You can register for our High Holiday services at www.nersimcha.org/high-holy-days-2024

Do not let fear control you... or they will have won, God forbid. Commit yourself to being part of a Jewish community in these challenging times by registering with us or any temple... but stand as a Jew.

3700 years ago, in the direct face of dangers that make our concerns seem insignificant, Moses said words that we must all emulate:

Ivri Anochi... I am a Jew!

May we all act as Moses, and each strengthen all the Jewish people through our individual commitments.

Chazak u'Baruch
Be Strong and Be Blessed

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 1, 2024

28th of Av, 5784

September 2nd 2024 at 6:54 am PDT

To Question and Analyze... Not To Answer

Chevre,

A strike of labor unions has started in Israel: it is an attack on Netanyahu led by a coalition of his opponents, some families of hostages, and other financing organizations that are not made clear as of Monday morning in Israel.

We are "Israel"... a people devoted to trying to understand all sides of an issue. Committed to disagreeing without being disagreeable. Dedicated to exploring arguments, and to understanding those who disagree with us better.

So I think it is worthwhile to explore what this strike is about; the passionate support and hatred for Netanyahu, and to try to see both sides of the issue confronting Israel's government.

Let's start with the strike activists. They have just seen another 6 hostages brutally killed. The families of any hostages care only for the safe return of their family members, not matter how slim the chances are that they are even alive. Like any parent, they don't care about short or long term politics; they don't care about the right or wrong of the kidnappings; and they don't care about future threats. They just want their family member home safe and sound. Intellectually, they each realize that there is little to no chance that their loved one has survived, but like all parents, they are grasping at any and all hope to get their loved one returned, no matter the cost. Wouldn't any of us feel the same and do the same thing if we were in that situation, God forbid?

On the other side of the table are the government ministers (with the exception of Gallant), and the majority of the Israeli people (all legitimate polls and studies show that Netanyahu is supported by more now even than he was months ago). These are their considerations:

--- Hamas et al have committed in writing, in their charter, and verbally that they

will not stop doing events like Oct. 7 until Israel is destroyed and all Jews obliterated.

--- Hamas' demands are guarantees for future Oct 7 events. They want 500 to 1 prisoner exchange: 500 convicted terrorists for each Israeli hostage. Hamas demands a permanent ceasefire guaranteed by the US and the world. They demand control of the Philadelphi corridor with no Israeli presence. The Philadelphi corridor is the area between Egypt and Gaza, and was the transportation route for much of the Oct 7 weaponry. Hamas demands unilateral control of it so that they can again import weapons.

So on the one hand are officials who are evaluating the choices and policies based on the intellectual understanding of future risks, and weighing those against potential gains. On the other hand are families of hostages who desperately pray for their loved one's return (the motivations of the allies to that side are entirely political, and will be discounted for now). These families are basing their decision based on their feelings and selfish desires.

Phrased that way, it would seem that Jewish theology supports the logic and calculations of Netanyahu's government over the emotions of the activists, right?

Wrong, its not that easy for a number of reasons.

--- Judaism does not place more value on the mind than the emotions or spirit. While much 20th/21st century Reform and Conservative Jews put intellectualism on a throne; Judaism is filled with emotional based decision making.

--- We are taught in the Talmud that, "Whomever saves a single life is considered by Scripture to have saved the world (Sanhedrin 37a). Based in this Jewish cornerstone, we must do everything we can in order to save the world. The future, the commitments of Hamas to our destruction, the future dangers to other lives are not part of the equation... this Talmudic quote encourages us to make any deal if there is even the slightest chance it might save one life as that is saving the world.

--- Saving a single life is important right now; and future risks are never really known as Judaism believes that everything is in the hand of God except being in awe of God. Perhaps by paying any price for even one live hostage, it will lead God to send the Messiah and redeem us. Judaism is very much about the present, so should we really worry so much about saving future lives at the

potential cost of even one life now?

---And yet, the Hamas Charter is clear, as are the repeated statements of Hamas leadership. They are fully committed to destroying Israel, God forbid; to having more events like Oct 7, God forbid; and to "obliterating" every Jew. And they are clear about their other commitment:

---Hamas and the other Iran proxies are not interested in only destroying Israel (based on the Islamic right of waqf). Israel is only the first obstacle to their stated goal of creating a worldwide caliphate governed by Sharia law.

And we must remember when looking at the choices that this is not a football game. War is devastating and lives are lost. Each hostage who dies; each IDF soldier who pays the ultimate sacrifice, each Israeli civilian who has lost a family member, a home, is displaced, and/or is suffering... all these factors and more must be considered.

It's not that easy of a decision when you really look it from multiple sides, is it? There is validity that we should sacrifice everything for the return of just one hostage, even if it puts the entire future of Israel in grave jeopardy. There is also validity that we should stop wasting our time in fruitless "negotiations" with Hamas and their "ridiculous" demands, and just finish the job already of militarily destroying the evil of Hamas, as well as the other Iranian proxies in order for Israel to be safe in the long term.

"These words and these words" both have validity depending on where we stand. The important teaching is to respect those Jews that disagree with our preferred path, and to be able to become closer in our relationships with each other through caring and mutually respectful dialogue.

In doing so we demonstrate one of the great strengths of our people: to find harmony even in the midst of discord. To replace debate with dialogue. To come together as members of the same Jewish family, even and especially when we disagree with each other.

May we all find that understanding for each other as we hear of any discord in Israel, and may harmony and balance keep our people unified in purpose and plan both in Israel and among all Jews around the world.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 2, 2024

29th of Av, 5784

September 3rd 2024 at 6:43 am PDT

Elul, and Intimacy With God

Chevre,

Every year, Jews around the world observe the holiday of Rosh HaShanah and the Ten Days of Awe (*YomimNoraim*) that end with Yom Kippur (Rosh HaShana begins this year on October 2). During those ten days we are to open our “Book of Life”, look at how we have behaved over the past year, clean up any messes we have created, and commit to living better in the coming year. A nice practice of self reflection for people of any faith.

As we approach Rosh HaShanah, our Sages of old are clear to teach us the importance of the month of preparation immediately preceding it. This Hebrew month, named “*Elul*”, which begins tonight, is the time of ultimate intimacy between God and humans... a time when God is closely interacting with us to see how we are preparing for the heavenly trial that is about to take place during the upcoming Days of Awe. It is a time for our souls to “wake up” (which is why we blow the Shofar each morning during the month of Elul), and to “show up” for our partnership with the Divine.

We find the key to understanding the preparations of this month in the name itself. “Elul” (אלול) is a Hebrew acronym of a phrase from the Biblical book, Song of Songs: “*Ani L’Dodi V’Dodi Li*”. This phrase is recited at Jewish weddings; and means “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine”. It is the ultimate statement of intimacy; and a reminder that we need to have the same intimacy with God that we have within our deepest of intimate relationships.

We must remember that with this intimacy comes awareness; both our awareness of God, but also God’s awareness of us. As we prepare for the self-examination of the upcoming holidays, we are to remember that each of our

actions, words, and intentions are known by the One who is totally present and intimate with us at all times. The Sages teach that “The King is in the Field”... the King of Kings has chosen to leave His Heavenly Palace and walk among us to see how we really interact with each other during this month.

What does this mean on a practical level? Since God is walking intimately among us, the verdict of the Heavenly Court will be based on God’s perception of how we *really* treat each other. How are we treating our fellow humans? Are we acting with respect and giving honor to our children... parents... teachers... colleagues... friends... and even “enemies”? Are we loving our neighbor, or are we acting selfishly and without compassion? The King is in the field, and knows what we are really doing... so we need to be especially careful not to act poorly this month, and then mistakenly think that we can get away with being less than fully honest during the 10 Days of Awe. God sees and knows what is deepest in our hearts, and Elul is a month of preparing ourselves to be aware of how we interact with others.

As a couple stands underneath the Chuppah, the Jewish wedding canopy, their lives change. Their acceptance of full intimacy into their lives together brings additional joys and challenges to their relationship. Their lives achieve levels that they could never have dreamed to attain individually. Similarly, during the month of Elul, we have the opportunity to fully embrace our intimate relationship with the Holy One. When we allow ourselves to sink into this Divine embrace, we can feel strength and joy; forgiveness and passion; peace and love.

As we enter Elul, may each of us be aware of our intimate relationship with the Divine; and prepare our souls with consciousness, awareness, and awe for the powerful holy days that are coming upon us.

This year, the month of Elul and the blowing of the shofar have additional significance. The shofar is a call to war: personally a call to war with our own evil inclination; and historically as a call to war with enemies. This year we need to remember how to integrate both calls into one. Yes, there are clear enemies surrounding us that we must be at war with: ranging from the local and domestic Jew-haters to the forces of the Iranian proxies of Hamas, Hezbollah, et al. But we each need to awaken a call to war with our own evil inclination as we wrestle with how to deal with this external war against our people. Is our evil inclination pushing us to accept a commitment to the physical annihilation of our enemies without hesitation? Is that evil inclination pushing us to accept a negotiation that

will lead to the destruction of Israel in the future, God forbid? How are we battling the forces inside us? How are we dealing with others who disagree with our passions? What is right and the “yetzer hatov” (good inclination) and what is the yetzer hara (evil inclination)? Are we using the shofar to call us to wake up as individuals and as a community?

The King is in the field. God is making His Presence known intimately with each of us... demanding that we evaluate how we act in the wars both personal and collective.

As we enter Elul tonight, may we all consider this intimate and honest question from the depths of our souls:

If you knew unquestionably that God was judging your entire life based on how you are feeling and acting with regard to this war... how would you choose to act?

When taken seriously, the month of Elul is a difficult time of self-reflection. But it is true that “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine”. God is always with each of us personally and intimately. May each of our hearts and the heart of God be unified, and may each of us bask in the intimacy of the Divine relationship as we prepare to enter these upcoming Days of Awe.

Chazak u’Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 3, 2024

30th of Av, 5784

September 4th 2024 at 6:06 am PDT

Some Updates As We Begin Elul

Chevre,

There are a lot of conflicting reports coming out of Israel over the last 24-48 hours, so there's really no way to know which news source is accurate. Here are some pieces that seem to be accurate as they are being reported similarly

throughout the Israeli media:

---While the Cabinet and Netanyahu have explicitly said that there is no deal that includes Israel giving up the Philadelphi Corridor; there are numerous "anonymous" sources saying that Israel would pull out during the second phase of a cease fire. A few of the news reports call the anonymous source "mediators", which, if true, implies that it is coming from US, Egypt, an/or Qatar... but not Hamas nor Israel. Hamas against released their "demands" on Wednesday morning, which include Israel completely withdrawing from the corridor and agreeing to a permanent ceasefire.

---At around 8am Israel time, a suicide drone was shot down by the IDF. It apparently was headed towards Haifa, and came from Iraq.

---The United States has indicted 6 senior Hamas officials for the murder of American citizens on Oct. 7. Given that this is a year late, and includes Sinwar (who is apparently hiding in Gaza tunnels) and 3 other officials who are already dead, this is more of a symbolic gesture than practical.

---More tunnels have been found and destroyed in the last two days in Gaza, including another tunnel over a kilometer long that had a transportation rail, heavy weapons caches, and electrical infrastructure. Each day, the IDF finds new tunnels that need to be destroyed.

---Multiple sources report that directions from Hamas leadership have been announced that say that if any Israelis come close to hostages, the hostages are to be killed. This is apparently (according to those same media sources) what happened to the six hostages who recently were executed.

And the month of Elul is beginning... in the midst of chaos and tragedy. This is the perfect time to remember in each moment that "The King is in the Field", and that God is watching us closely in everything we do... with each other, within our communities, and with our own souls. May we all be blessed to deserve blessings at this time, throughout the holidays, and always.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 4, 2024

1st of Elul, 5784

September 5th 2024 at 6:12 am PDT

What Would You Do?

Chevre,

A small bit of news about Israeli ingenuity: Israeli hackers broke into some of the digital currency accounts of Hamas, and have frozen the accounts of hundreds or thousands of terrorists.

We don't talk about it all the time; but missiles, rockets, and drones have been attacking Israel non-stop from Hamas, Hezbollah, and the other Iranian proxies.... as they have every day for almost a year. Over 260 rockets were launched in the north in just the last 24 hours. Anonymous US officials keep leaking that a deal is almost done, but that is not what is heard from either Israel or Hamas. And Hamas just keeps making more demands. Today they demanded an extra kilometer wide buffer zone into Israel, an area that Israel needs to protect the local kibbutzim.

So let's play a child's game of imagination... for adults.

Imagine that you are the "Supreme Leader" of Israel, and can make any decision that you would like and it will be implemented in the country. We are at war, and you understand your enemies of Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran. Sink into that fantasy... imagine that you have an almost unlimited amount of power, and can create Israeli foreign policy unilaterally.

Obviously you want peace, and there's tremendous pressure to make some sort of ceasefire deal just on the slight chance that you may be able to get a few hostages back.

But you have read the Covenant of 1988, the charter of Hamas. You know that they are pledged in writing to the total Destruction of Israel and the obliteration of all Jews. You are aware that the leaders of Hamas, most of which do not even live in the Gaza area, have vowed to repeat the heinous actions of October 7th in many more Jewish spaces,. Your memory of the horrors of October 7th have burned your mind with painful imagery of too many kidnappings, rapes, and murderers. You are aware that Hamas has broken every ceasefire that they have made since 2005, and that Hezbollah has been violating with impunity the

United Nations sanctions against it since last October. Hamas just keeps on making more demand installing out negotiations; You realize that although Israel wins every battle, we are losing the war in World opinion each day as this war and media blitz continues.

As a responsible "supreme leader" of Israel (don't get too excited, there is no such position), you are conscious every moment that this is not about war games, or politics. It is a profoundly sad military engagement in which people are dying. It is not a football game to cheer for one side or the other, but it is war.. and any and every decision you make will save and/or cost lives

You are desperate for peace, and yet realize that Hamas is an untrustworthy peace partner, and they are clear about their intention to destroy Israel completely (God Forbid).

What do you do? How do you find a strategy that can create a lasting piece with an enemy like Hamas and the other Iranian proxies? How do you act given that you are clear that if you do not create enough space between your enemy and yourself, they will return to destroy and kill, rape and torture, as many Israelis as they can? What is your plan to bring peace, and what is your contingency plan if it doesn't work

Remembering all the time that any decision that you do or do not make could, God forbid, lead to the death of IDF soldiers.

This is the scenario that is really leaders must deal with every moment of every day for the last 11 months.

Before we attack Israeli governmental politicians or policy,- we need to remember how difficult it is to make this kind of decision. We need to have compassion upon the leaders of Israel, as well as pray that they are guided into a miraculous pathway that will lead to a lasting peace

But let's make sure that we don't divide our people in these challenging times based on political needs rather than the needs of Israel and the Jewish people. May we all have more compassion for Israeli leadership on both sides of the aisle, and not be so hasty to judge the actions of any leaders... and certainly not without really contemplating the above scenario.

May the Master of the World, guide Israel's leadership into pathways that lead to a lasting peace, and may Israel, her land, and her people always be safe and protected in the shelter of God's wings

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 5th, 2024

2nd of Elul,- 5784

September 6th 2024 at 6:09 am PDT

We Remember! 52 Years Ago...

Chevre,

A gunman was killed by police as he attempted a terrorist attack on the Israeli Consulate in Munich on Thursday. It didn't make much of the western media outlets. After all, it was just another attack on Israel...

But it was much more than that, and we need to remember the past to understand, and to take lessons from history.

September 5th and 6th are days that should be remembered in all of the world, but aren't. 52 years ago, in 1972, the world experienced one of the most shocking acts of anti-Semitic terrorism in history (although it obviously pales in comparison to October 7th). It is something that is not taught in most history books today, but will never be forgotten by any of us who lived through it.

It was 52 years ago that the massacre happened at the Munich Olympics. Perpetrated by palestinian terrorists calling themselves Black September, it changed the Olympics forever. The terrorists infiltrated the Olympic Village in Munich, and went on to cause death and destruction to the Israeli athletes. Two Israeli athletes were killed there in the village, while nine others were kidnapped and taken hostage to be used as exchanges for 328 imprisoned Arab terrorists. There were two rescue attempts done by the German government

that failed, and ultimately all nine hostages were killed along with 5 of the terrorists and one German police officer. Three of the terrorists initially escaped but were captured and jailed, but were released when a Lufthansa flight was hijacked and the cost to get those airline passengers free was the release of the three Black September terrorists. The corpses of the 5 killed Black September terrorists were flown back to Libya where they received a heroes welcome and celebration for the terror they had inflicted and evil they had done

And the "palestinian" terrorists had created a new method that they have continued to repeat for over half a century: kidnap hostages, be willing to die yourself, make outrageous demands, and the world will capitulate. It is a plan that they are still using today, and will always use as long as it works for them.

The terrorism and heinous practices of Hamas did not start in 2023, or 2005 when Israel removed itself unilaterally from the Gaza Strip. These practices have been perfected over a 52 year time period. And in the course of that 52 year period, these ambassadors of evil not only perfected their despicable acts of terror and violence... they not only perfected the horrific act of kidnapping hostages as leverage... but in the last decades they learned how to master propaganda and win the culture War and popular opinion through media as well. Hamas and its cohorts, who are the direct organizational descendants of Black September, have become so adept at changing the actual narrative of history, that Wikipedia does not even now refer to Black September as terrorists, but rather as a "militant organization of dissidents".

In the last few years, we can see how their propaganda machine has really become perfected by just looking at the Olympics themselves. In the 2016 Summer Olympic Games, a joint ceremony was held with the IOC, Brazilian delegations and government, and Israeli delegations honoring the victims of the 1972 massacre in Munich. In 2020, a memorial moment of silence was observed at the opening ceremonies in Tokyo. This year, as we all know, The opening ceremonies as well as the entire Olympics themselves were vastly different. There was no commemoration to remind us of the evil of Black September, and it's descendant Hamas, which committed such atrocities on October 7th. Instead, Israeli athletes were marginalized, multiple athletes from other countries would not even compete with the Israelis, and while athletes were prohibited from wearing yellow ribbons in honor of the hostages, other athletes were allowed to wear uniforms and decorations that gave honor to

Hamas and the other Iranian proxies.

We can never allow ourselves to forget what happened 52 years ago today. We must always remember the souls of those Israeli athletes who came to Munich to experience brotherhood with athletes from other nations, and instead went back to Israel in coffins.

What we have experienced for the last 11 months is not new, and even the players are the same as they were 52 years ago. Their fight is not for land, nor has it ever been. Their expressions of evil by kidnapping hostages is a practice that they have learned is successful in achieving their goals.. so of course they continue to do those practices and will do so until they are totally stopped. When hostage taking stops being a useful methodology for terrorists they will stop using that technique.

Please take a moment today to say kaddish or to direct your thoughts and energy in prayer for the souls of those athletes who died 52 years ago. Let us all pray that these terror techniques and practices are stopped, and that peace envelops Israel, the Middle East region, America, and the world in our time.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 6, 2024

3rd of Elul, 5784

September 6th 2024 at 11:49 am PDT

Find Your Inspiration...It's the 1st Shabbat of Elul!

Chevre,

Tonight begins the first Shabbat of the month of Elul, when the King is in the field and we start really preparing intensely for the upcoming High Holidays. For 11 months we have been looking back towards October 7th, dealing with the horrors and tragedies of this war, and being conscious of our pain and hopes. It is now Elul, and we also really need to focus on looking forward... we need to

find the inspiration within ourselves to force God to bring joy to all of us and the world in this upcoming new year, especially on Shabbat!

So here are a couple of videos to hopefully start that inspiration to bring us hope and faith, and ultimately joy in this upcoming new year. Take a few minutes over this weekend and enjoy the inspiration of these musicians, and let us all prepare for a new year of peace and joy, healing and wholeness.

Koolulam | One Day - Matisyahu | Haifa | Feb. 14th, 2018

Dip Your Apple - Fountainheads Rosh Hashanah

1000 Israeli musicians sing with one voice, BRING THEM HOME!

I hope these videos are able to start the process for all of us to prepare for the upcoming High holidays. If you have not registered yet, please register ASAP at: NerSimcha.org/HighHoliday

The volunteers, staff, clergy, and myself are working hard towards creating services this year that will allow us to embrace the pain of the last year and transform it into faith and commitment.. so that we all have meaningful prayers in this new year.

I hope you will join us for what hopefully will be powerful High Holiday services B"H, so that our prayers reach to the heights of Heaven, and we all experience peace and joy in this new year. (And I hope you will join us at our first Shabbat Services back in our Sanctuary tonight at 7:30 p.m.!)

Again, please register now at NerSimcha.org/HighHoliday

Shabbat Shalom!

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 6, 2024

3rd of Elul, 5784

September 7th 2024 at 7:30 pm PDT

Transform The Pain Into Faith!

Chevre,

Shavuah tov! As we continue to prepare for the high holidays with this upcoming first full week of the month of Elul, I believe that there are lessons that can best be expressed through music.

We have spent 11 months in deep pain, which continues to fill our souls. We can take that pain and let it depress us, or we can transform it into inspiration. Some of you may be familiar with this song in this video below, but I encourage all of us to embrace the message of the lyrics, some of which include:

Singing from heartache the pain
Taking my message from the veins
Speaking my lesson from the brain
Seeing the beauty through the...
Pain!
You made me a believer, believer!



Koolulam | Believer - Imagine Dragons | Galgalatz

Let all of our pain of the last 11 months transform into belief, power, joy, and faith that God will bring peace and healing to this world.. NOW in this new year!

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 7, 2024

5th of Elul, 5784

September 8th 2024 at 6:13 am PDT

Updates; Threats; and a Plan

Chevre,

We are one month away from the anniversary of the horrors of Oct. 7. While there are undoubtedly many memorials being planned, there are clearly also many terrorist attacks that are being planned to commemorate this horrible event. A would be terrorist from Pakistan was arrested as he crossed the border from Canada today, filled with specific plans to attack the international headquarters of Chabad in Crown Heights New York. Thank God this attack was thwarted, as have been a number of them that were discovered in Europe, where again extreme terrorists are hoping to commemorate October 7th with more attacks that killed Jews, God forbid. There will also undoubtedly be violence on college campuses, as a number of them have already approved demonstrations on October 7th of this year on their campus.

As the US, Egypt, and Qatar are unable or unwilling to apply any pressure to Hamas to try to force a ceasefire and return of the hostages, instead they are consistently, continually, and constantly attempting to pressure Israel take a worse and worse deal in order to have any hostages released. Documents were discovered on a captured computer over the last 2 days that detail that this is exactly what the plot of Hamas has always been. They have always intended to keep stalling negotiations in order to apply pressure from the world towards Israel, increase hatred towards Israel, all with the intent of ultimately eradicating Israel from the map.

Announcements came from Turkey today that demonstrate how well their plan is working. Erdogan give a speech today that was barely covered in any of the domestic media, but is radically important. In it he made claims that Israel was trying to conquer Lebanon, Syria, and the entire Tiger-Euphrates area. He went on his speech to call for a coalition of all Islamic Nations to attack invade and destroy Israel now before they "seek to control Muslim lands".

Although not reported in the United States very much, we must notice what his speech did: he called for a "holy war" of Muslims against the rest of the world, beginning with Israel. Remember that the Ottoman Empire ultimately became what is Turkey today, and Erdogan since he got into power has been clear that he wants to renew the Ottoman Empire with Turkey at its head.

In the northern section of Israel by the Galilee, rockets are flying non-stop, and people have been told to stay close to shelters. School has even been closed for the beginning of the week. For those us who remember how difficult it was

when the schools were closed during covid, imagine what it is for Israeli families in the north, who are being terrorized by an enemy that wants them dead.. and this is what is the cause of the school closings. For a moment put yourself into the emotional space of a family member in the northern Galilee, where you are scared for the safety of your family, and also every aspect of life is upside down such as your children's schooling.

For almost 80 years, our people have chanted "Never Again". Never again will we allow ourselves to be abused, tortured, and killed because we are Jews. Never again will we let ourselves become so dependent on others that we are unable to take care of ourselves. We must all support Israel, and diaspora Judaism, with our words and actions, so that this phrase of "Never Again" says what it means and means what it says. We must tie ourselves to Israel with our prayers, and tie ourselves to our own Jewish communities in the diaspora with with our words and actions.

Part of those actions must be for each of us to be educated. Too many Jews are unaware of the actual history of Israel: both the land and the people. Because uneducated Jews are unable to counter fallacious propaganda of anti-semites, those Jew-haters are able to pedal their libels. So we each need to be educated, and then committed to educating others to stop these libels and propaganda attacks. After the high holidays, I will be giving some classes in these topics so that we are all able to stand up to defend Israel and Judaism. In the meantime, here is a source for you to study as well as share that gives you truths to use in this war not just of weapons, but of words:

<https://www.nersimcha.org/the-truth-about-israel-palestine>

I hope and believe that that document, which is on our website for anyone who needs it or wants to share it, can change the narrative to one of honesty as opposed to the propaganda of Hamas and the other Iranian proxies.

We must all do what we can, and that means at least do the bare minimum of being educated and praying. You can pray at services, individually, or any and every moment; and we all have those extra few minutes to study and learn, especially about a topic that is so important to the very survival not only of Israel, but of Jews worldwide.

May our studying open gateways for our prayers to the highest heights of Heaven, and the Master of the Universe answer those prayers by creating peace here in our time.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 8, 2024

5th of Elul, 5784

September 9th 2024 at 12:37 am PDT

As War Is Prepared. We MUST Remember We Are One People

Chevre,

Minister Gallant, Netanyahu, and other cabinet ministers have been making statements over the last 36 hours that were preparations should be made for Lebanon and Iran more than Gaza at this point. Galant even said that they were late on this, but will be prepared. Last night, Israeli aircraft hit at least 15 targets in two waves of air raids against specific weapons depots and air defense systems that had been placed there by Iran and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. It seems that Israel is attempting to stop the supply routes from Iran to Hezbollah in preparation for more conflict.

Although it is seemingly never talked about in the news, we should all remember that in 2006 UN resolution 1701, which was also approved and accepted by Lebanon, Israel, and Hezbollah, prohibited Hezbollah from ever attacking Israel from Lebanon. Israel honored and has kept its part of the deal and withdrew its forces from Lebanon 18 years ago, but it certainly has not stopped Hezbollah for 18 years, including over 11,000 rockets in the past year. If the Israeli rhetoric is to be believed, we should suspect that Israel will respond to Hezbollah's lack of honoring the agreement with force in the near future.

At the same time, "negotiators" are all pretty much saying that there will be no deal with Hamas. Even Representatives of the Biden Administration are saying that there is almost no chance of any sort of ceasefire / hostage deal working out

at this time

What does it all mean? That we should be prepared for whatever happens; pray fervently and with all our souls for the safety of the State, land, and people of Israel; and come together as Jews and communities wherever and whenever we can.

There is also something else that we can all do that will make a difference. Find another Jew who disagrees with your opinion on this war, what should be done, and how Israel is handling it. Have an honest dialogue realizing that you both want a long-lasting peace. You may believe there are different ways of achieving it, and you may not even have an answer, but in the dialogue and deepening of the relationship with another Jew you are actually creating peace in the heavens, which will ultimately manifest in peace here on Earth. It may sound very "airy/fairy", but your dialogue with another Jew makes more difference in this world than most of us ever can recognize or realize.

We are all one family: here, in Israel, and in our own small communities. By creating peace between two people, our religion teaches that we are starting to create peace in the world.

We must remind ourselves that we are "Am Echad"... One People... and as soon as we start acting that way, we are opening the space for miracles from God for us, for Israel, and for the world.

And since music can help bring us those feelings...

From 10 months ago, to remind us of the pain and hope that is within us all...
"Our hope is not lost, to be free in our land":

https://youtu.be/H_c2MZkpCag?si=QXRdMzuvTXEh8h2w

And we must remember a hope of all Jews throughout the ages: "One nation, one song, come my brother and give me your hand. Then we shall rejoice and dance together.":

<https://youtu.be/RYJuz8fjXbY?si=h6pg2cMUZnbcl2uF>

May we all have the courage to feel our pain; to dialogue with others and go through it to healing... and to dancing together again in joy as One People.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 9, 2024

6th of Elul, 5784

September 10th 2024 at 6:08 am PDT

Israel is Hit, and Retaliating

Chevre,

On Monday, a 10-story residential apartment building in Nahariya was hit by suicide drones from Hezbollah. There were no serious injuries thanks to the structure being built to be "missile resistant". This is in combination with attempted suicide rammings in Judea Samaria; and with IDF discovering that some UN vehicles supposedly containing polio vaccinations were actually carrying Hamas terrorists to get back into Gaza. Even the US and Qatar are saying that there's little to no chance of there being any sort of ceasefire deal, as Hamas keeps coming back with larger and larger demands: most recently being thousands (some media say 5,000 and some say 10,000) more convicted terrorists being released and exchange for 12 to 23 hostages.

It would seem that with the hit on the apartment building, which was next to a building that contained children's classrooms and other facilities for children (who were in class at the time), has prompted Israel to be more proactive in stopping the Iranian proxies. Targeted attacks killed dozens of Hamas leaders in Gaza today, and numerous Hezbollah launching sites were destroyed in Lebanon late Monday night.

On the one hand, this darkness seems antithetical to the month of Elul. And yet, it seems on the other hand to be appropriate as our Books of life are opened at the coming High Holidays. While we may not see the answer right now, the words of our Talmud (Shabbat 77b) may provide some insight (and hope...) " Such is the way of creation, first comes darkness, then comes light."

The light is coming... even if we don't know or see how.

May the light of peace shine upon us soon, bringing safety and security to the state of Israel, the land of Israel, and the people of Israel... and to all Jews around the world.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 10, 2024

7th of Elul, 5784

September 11th 2024 at 6:08 am PDT

Not the Debate

Chevre,

Tonight was the debate between Trump and Harris, and if you would like to know more, I suggest watching a replay or reading commentaries. Please remember that as Jews we must be politically active and vote not just in the Presidential election, but by being aware of local candidates and how they feel about Israel, BDS, campus anti-Semitism, school curriculum, and all things that affect both Diaspora Jews and Israel. Find out about your local candidates, and remember that Jew-hatred is best fought on the local level.

Today is also the anniversary of the September 11th attacks that changed our country forever. 23 years ago today, our nation realized it's vulnerability to terrorists. The death and the destruction from that day still haunt us, and affect our national policies and self-image. Please take a moment at some point today to say Kaddish or lift your soul in prayer to remember those many lives that were lost.

There was a huge anti-Israel demonstration in Melbourne, Australia (1200 people), with 24 police officers injured as Jew-hating terrorists demonstrated outside the Melbourne Convention Centre.

Gal Hirsch, Israel's chief negotiator, reportedly offered today that Israel would allow safe passage for Hamas leader Sinwar in exchange for the remaining 101 hostages. Interestingly, while it was reported in multiple Israeli media outlets, I did not see one reference to it in major US or European media. The IDF destroyed 30 more Hezbollah launchers today, and released a video of the horrific conditions of the tunnel the six hostages of blessed memory were forced to endure. They were 20 meters down, below a child's bedroom decorated with Mickey Mouse to hide the tunnel access. IDF spokesman Admiral Hagari released this video of where they were kept (be aware, although this is not graphic, it is very disturbing):

https://youtu.be/BmXbsne_CzY?si=Nzn_3DQ0_kVOAC57

But we must keep our hope and our faith, and always remember that in the same way our people have suffered before and been redeemed by God, we will once again be redeemed, with God's help. And so here is a different image: IDF soldiers singing "Ani Maamin"--- I believe in perfect faith in the coming of the messiah, and given pressure delay, I still choose to believe...

<https://youtu.be/fZG1GyrUDcg?si=mPv6JeWYmsL1wByz>

If these brave soldiers choose to believe in perfect faith, then how much more so should we too believe...

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 11, 2024

8th of Elul, 5784

September 13th 2024 at 5:33 am PDT

"When You Go Out To War" As We Prepare For Shabbat...

Chevre,

We are now less than three weeks from Rosh HaShana, and I pray that we are all preparing for these important upcoming holidays (and if you still haven't gotten

around to reserving your tickets that you do it now by going to NerSimcha.org/high-holy-days-2024. This week's Torah portion (which starts off saying "when you go out to war") includes the listing of 74 the 613 Commandments, and is filled with guidance for all of us... including commandments of how we are too fight in a war. In preparing for the holidays, especially in these difficult times, let us all remember the words of the Baal Shem Tov:

Crying is very bad, one must serve God with joy. The only exception is when you cry from joy and from connecting with God. That is very good.

But it is so difficult to stay joyous in these challenging times. Each day, we hear of challenges for our people and Israel...

--- A group of Israeli travelers were saved from being kidnapped while traveling in Georgia by the police and local authorities.

--- In a letter to Nasrallah, Sinwar vowed to continue the war until "the occupation is defeated"... and since in his mind all of Israel is an "occupation", it is yet another example of their total commitment to defining a caliphate of sharia law from "the River to the Sea".

--- Over 150 rockets and missiles have been launched at Israel within the last 36 hours.

--- The United States Secretary of Defense has ordered the USS Roosevelt aircraft carrier and the USS Russell Destroyer to leave the area. This removes some large obstacles to the actions of Iran and its proxies, and the Houthis are celebrating their "victory" in all Arab media.

--- Negotiations for a ceasefire are basically at a standstill, although Egypt is in discussions with other Arab nations about monitoring the Philadelphia corridor.

And yet, Israel continues to act righteously according to Jewish ethics. Wounded children from Gaza were evacuated via the airport in Eilat and sent to hospitals in UAE. A terrorist who injured himself in a car bomb attack is now being cared for in an Israeli hospital. Despite constant barrages in the North, the IDF responds with carefully targeted attacks at military targets, and avoiding civilian homes and residential areas as much as humanly possible.

The Jewish goal of war is not victory, but a lasting peace... and we must always remember that.

May that peace soon come in this new year, and may we all enjoy a lasting peace in Israel and in the world

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 13, 2024

10th of Elul, 5784

September 15th 2024 at 10:15 am PDT

The Iron Dome fails

Chevre,

Sunday morning in Israel brought a barrage of missiles and attacks from the Houthis in Yemen, at least one of which penetrated both the Arrow Defense System and the Iron Dome. The Houthis claim that it was a "hypersonic missile"-,- and that Israel should expect more "advanced operations". Apparently, at least one ballistic missile got through to Tel Aviv, but landed in an unoccupied area and no serious casualties were reported by late morning on Sunday. This is more proof about the dangers facing Israel: Israel's defenses are not perfect, and all too often we act as though they are.

The IDF went deeper into Lebanon to destroy Hezbollah launching sites, and is committing to go however deep is needed in order to stop Hezbollah. The government and IDF are making moves that imply that Israel is preparing for more action in the north. Numerous Israeli sources are saying the Home Command is getting ready for a more intense multi-front war with all of the region's at war with Israel simultaneously. It appears as if the intensity of the last year continues, and so must our prayers...

And we must pray. If you speak with Israelis at anytime during the last year, you will hear that they feel our support and prayers... and I hope everyone continues to pray for the safety and protection of the State of Israel, the land of Israel, and the people of Israel.

Prayer is a shield and a comfort... let us all be comforted and protected together

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 15, 2024

12th of Elul, 5784

September 16th 2024 at 12:04 am PDT

A Lesson For American Jews Today, From This Date In History

Chevre,

Israel has started retaliating for the missile that got through the Iron Dome, first by launching air strikes against military targets in the north;- and by announcing that Hamas has been rebuilding in northern Gaza while the IDF has been clearing terror tunnels in southern Gaza. Gallant told Sec. Austin on Monday morning that the time for negotiations with Hezbollah is past, with Hezbollah having chosen to tie itself fully with Hamas. Gallant said. "the direction is clear", so we should expect more increases in Israeli airstrikes on Hezbollah targets.

Today is the 13th of Elul, which holds special significance for American Jews, as we see how much this country has welcomed Judaism. It's 1695, the Jews of New York petitioned Governor Benjamin Fletcher to allow them to pray publicly. Their request was denied by Fletcher, who was a devout Anglican and wanted that faith tradition to be the official religion of New York.

Think how the world changed after 1776. Jews were not only allowed to pray, but became an integral part of this nation's founding and growth. For almost 250 years, Jews have been allowed in this nation to practice our faith freely, and usually without danger. Yes, we were prohibited from entering many universities and colleges; clubs and organizations; and there have always been anti-Semitic persecutions. But America has been incredibly good to the Jews who have lived here: significantly better than they were in 1695.

We are now in a time when Jew hatred is higher and more overt than it has been in any of our lifetimes, and possibly more intense since the days before the Revolution when we were prohibited from publicly praying. Most synagogues, including ours, have armed security protection. Our college campuses have lost much of their safety, and we see Jew hatred being prevalent on the streets of every major city in the country. Fletcher would probably be pleased with these displays of anti-semitism, but we must remember that this is not how the majority of Americans feel towards Jews. The Jew haters are loud, but they are a minority.

This is just one of the many reasons that we must be proud of our Judaism, our heritage, our connection to Israel, and our special relationship with God... both as individuals, and as a unified people. It is easier to hide in a corner than it is to step out and be seen, but if we do not gather together as Jews in worship, study, and socially; then the loud bigots win... and we cannot let that happen. For the sake of our ancestors who gave so much; for the sake of our children who need to grow up in a country without hate, we must all stand as Jews together in these challenging times. We need to be proud.

One of our young community members is showing us a way to be proud Jews. Max Margolis (17) is in Israel raising money for families of hostages: he played 101 holes of golf to raise funds and consciousness for hostage families. By getting friends to pledge money per hole, over \$70,000 was raised. I have spoken with his dad, Michael; and we are hoping to do something similar after the holidays here in Westlake (where Max will be joined by a pair of golfing twins as well).

This is what we ALL need to do: be proud Jews who both pray and act. We are American Jews; family to all of our brothers and sisters in Israel and Jews around the world. We must show that we refuse to accept Jew-hatred; and will fight it with acts of righteousness. Each of us have the responsibility and the privilege of doing small and large acts of goodness for the Jewish people.

One of the things that is obviously included in that is gathering together for services, especially during these upcoming High Holidays. (And there is no reason for anyone to be concerned about safety as there will be a tremendous amount of armed security protecting us as we pray, as well as before and after the services.) We are almost at legal capacity for these services, although we all

know that I will never let anyone be turned away no matter how crowded we are lol; and I hope to see everyone at the services in less than two weeks.

If you still have not reserved your tickets, please go to NerSimcha.org/high-holy-days-2024. If you have reserved your tickets, you should be receiving them before the end of this week. If you have not received your tickets by then, please email events@nersimcha.org

In this new year, may we all gather together and find strength through and with each other so that we demonstrate to ourselves and the world the beauty that is Judaism, and our pride and love for who we are: American Jews.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 16, 2024

13th of Elul, 5784

September 17th 2024 at 6:09 am PDT

New Goals, Regaining Our Faith, and Peace

Chevre,

Despite the reality of Israeli politics being filled with constant infighting, Monday and Tuesday Morning seems to be a time where there's a coalescing of goals.

Minister Gallant has made it explicitly clear that he does not believe negotiations will ever work in the north, and that there needs to be strong military presence to create a buffer zone of Southern Lebanon to have a little bit more safety for Israel. While Secretary Blinken is still putting pressure on Israel to make a deal of some sort, the vast majority of Israelis as well as of the cabinet have resigned themselves to the sad reality that this will probably never happen, and they are less and less inclined to allow themselves to be pressured by the United States into a deal that endangers Israel in the long term.

According to reports from Channel 12 News, the IDF believe that the conflict on

the Lebanon front has reached a point of no return. Defense officials argue that Israel cannot settle for a limited operation and must instead launch a full-scale military campaign, targeting Hezbollah's military centers in Beirut.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office has confirmed that Israel's Security Cabinet has updated the objectives of the ongoing war. A key goal is ensuring the safe return of residents in the northern region to their homes. Israel is determined to take necessary actions to achieve this objective. Netanyahu said, "The Security Cabinet has updated the objectives of the war to include the following: Returning the residents of the north securely to their homes. Israel will continue to act to implement this objective"

It would now seem that Israel's goals of this multi-front war include:

---Getting ALL hostages, dead and alive, back to Israel

---Creating a Gaza that is a safe and peaceful neighbor ultimately in the hands of the Gazan people, not Hamas or any other Iran proxy

---Creating a safe buffer zone between Hezbollah forces in Lebanon and Israel.

Ironically, the UN supposedly did that in 2006 with UN Resolution 1701, which called for a full cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon to be replaced by Lebanese and UNIFIL forces deploying to southern Lebanon, and the disarmament of armed groups including Hezbollah, with no armed forces other than UNIFIL and Lebanese military south of the Litani River, which flows about 29 km (18 mi) north of the border. (Yes, Hezbollah has been violating resolution 1701 everyday since October 7th, but the UN has said and done nothing to curtail them in any way)

---It is also now a primary goal for the safe return of residents of the north to their homes. Over 120,000 residents in the north have been displaced. The ministers seem to agree that the only way to accomplish this is through military means against Hezbollah and into Southern Lebanon.

This is all in juxtaposition to the goals of Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and all the Iranian proxies whose goals are simple: completely destroy Israel and obliterate every Jew; then come after the "Great Satan" of the US; and ultimately, per all of their own admissions and documents, to utilize the Islamic right of waqf to justify creating a worldwide caliphate based in Sharia law. While these goals sound horrific, and they are, we must all remember that these are the goals of the Iran and its proxies, not of the Arab peoples en masse. Israel's relationship with a number of other Arab countries demonstrates that there are

other alternatives once the extremists of Iran are no longer in power, God willing.

This war has been so devastating to not only Israel, but all of the world, especially the Jewish World in the diaspora. In our pain, we have forgotten the hopes we had for peace. We have forgotten the faith that we had that God will bring peace to the land of Israel, the region, and the world. We need to remember and recapture that Hope and Faith, especially as we prepare for the upcoming High Holidays.

To help us recapture that commitment to faith and peace, I offer these videos to each of us so that we will remember...

3000 people singing and praying for a day of peace in English, Hebrew, and Arabic:

<https://youtu.be/RjPpMXMjIj0?si=ZsNDUhMGURXsykC8>

If you feel up to having personal meditations for peace, I recommend this song for peace by Yuval Ron, my old friend that I love very much and has joined us in the past at both High Holidays and concerts for the temple. <https://youtu.be/UkVfRPftyac?si=F-b7t7xi6ITITUES>

Our Sages have taught for 2,000 years that when we dance and sing together, we birth angels that will bring peace and joy into the world. This video includes thousands of people from Mexico to Canada dancing to a song for peace in both Hebrew and Arabic (and it was what we used as the closing song for the first High Holiday services of this temple):

<https://youtu.be/DMomBbCyDII?si=JqiwxSSDEzJs1vzQ>

Rebbe Nachman teaches that the Shechinah, the Presence of God, does not rest on depression, but on joy. As hard as it is right now (and I have cried every day since October 7), we must find our faith and joy again... to strengthen our prayers and force God to save us and bring peace to Israel and the world.

May we regain our hope for peace by knowing that true peace ultimately lies in God's hand. And even though it seems impossible to fathom in the midst of our pain today, may our faith grow that God will bless us in our time with that peace.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 17, 2024

14th of Elul, 5784

September 17th 2024 at 8:02 am PDT

Israel Attacks Hezbollah in Lebanon

Chevre,

As expected, Israel has launched a more major attack at Hezbollah on Tuesday afternoon (6am-ish PST). There are reports of dozens of casualties of Hezbollah leaders, and chaos in Dahai (the Hezbollah neighborhood in Beirut).

We will all watch and see what the day brings, but expect condemnation from most of the world against Israel; calls for restraint and accusations of non-proportional against Israel: and saber rattling from Iran and its proxies. The United Nations will probably make some sort of comment as well, even though Hezbollah has been acting against you and resolutions for a year and longer.

May the Holy One bless Israel, her land, people, and the soldiers of the IDF with safety and success; and with a speedy path towards peace upon Israel, the region, and the world

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 17, 2024

14th of Elul, 5784

September 17th 2024 at 8:29 am PDT

Beeper Bombs

Chevre,

News has been coming in all morning about what is going on in Israel and Lebanon, and will no doubt continue to throughout the day and evening... although I will only send another email today if something urgent or an emergency happens.

It is now clear that there was a coordinated attack by Israel on Hezbollah, much of it through Israel somehow changing the beepers that are used by Hezbollah commanders into bombs...injuring over 2000. This includes the Iranian ambassador to Lebanon, so we should expect threats of retaliation and war from Iran.

May the Holy One protect the people of israel, the state of israel, the land of Israel, and her brave soldiers; and lead us to peace in our time.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 17, 2024

14th if Elul, 5784

September 18th 2024 at 12:12 am PDT

What Really Happened On Tuesday/Wednesday in the Middle East?

Chevre,

The world is still reeling from the explosions that happened on Tuesday in Lebanon. Here is what we know, what we don't know, and what we should anticipate...

On Tuesday late afternoon in Lebanon, there were over 300 simultaneous explosions (some reports are as low as 2700, and some as high as 4000) in southern Lebanon, mostly with Hezbollah leadership. At least 9 were killed, and over 3000 injuries as cell pagers (remember those?) went off and exploded. They were "personal" explosions, meaning that they did not hurt anyone who was not either holding the pager or extremely close to the pager. Depending on where

the pager was being kept when it exploded, injuries range from mild to critical to fatal. Reports range from 11-18 Hezbollah leaders in Damascus were mortally wounded, as were two security guards of the Iranian Embassy in Lebanon, and an Iranian ambassador in Beirut was at least wounded if not worse.

Israel has not claimed responsibility for the explosions, and all Israeli ministers have been ordered to make no interviews... although it seems pretty clear what happened. Hezbollah and Iranian proxies have been communicating with low-tech equipment, and for many months have been using cell pagers (this is also how Sinwar has been avoiding capture: using a low tech communication system developed by terrorist in prison). 4-5 months ago, 5000 pagers were ordered by the Iranian Tellerim company from a Taiwan based manufacturer, Gold Apollo, which has not responded to any queries from media so far. Based upon the size of the explosions, it seemed clear by Tuesday night that it was not a trigger that somehow overheated the lithium, batteries; but that somehow, the supply chain from Taiwan to Iran's proxies has been hijacked, and small explosive material put in pagers. When they were signaled, the pagers blew up; causing injury or death.

As a result, Hezbollah is evacuating all military headquarters and even civilian facilities in Lebanon, and many Lebanese residents are evacuating to the north of the country in preparation for a more intense war. An emergency meeting of the War Cabinet, defense officials, and first responders has been convened by the Prime Minister's office, which signals that the entire country of Israel is on high alert. According to Channel 14 in Israel, focus will be shifted from Gaza to the northern front, although they are the only media source claiming this.

Although there are multiple interpretations of what happened and why it was timed on Tuesday afternoon, the results are pretty clear, and as expected. Iran and its proxies are saber rattling, promising retaliation on Israel, and claiming that this was an unfair way to fight a war... a sentiment echoed by the UN, which will be voting on Wednesday on a resolution demanding that Israel "end its unlawful presence" in Gaza and the West Bank, withdrawing all military forces and evacuating all settlers within that year. This is the same UN that has yet to condemn the horrors of October 7, and to quote UN Ambassador Danny Danon, it "is an attempt to destroy Israel through diplomatic terrorism" that never mentions Hamas' atrocities and "ignores the truth, twists the facts and replaces reality with fiction. While the immediate reaction to the beeper bombs were a slew of memes on the internet (pictures of pagers with messages like "Mossad

Calling", etc.), we can expect that the reaction of the world will quickly follow the UN and Iranian proxies and condemn Israel for using such a subversive method to attack its enemies.

When other nations are attacked, no one asks, let alone requires, that they provide humanitarian aid to their enemy. When any country other than Israel is forced to go into war, they commit completely to the war. But Israel has always been held to different standards than the rest of the world. We are condemned for defending our borders, our cities, and our borders. We are condemned for not being nicer to an enemy that uses its own children as human shields. The villains who raped, murdered, and kidnapped hostages on October 7 are excused for their actions by the world; while targeted bombing by planes or beepers is condemned as not being fair. It has become an upside down world when it comes to Israel, and so, we must remember three teachings:

The first is by Golda Meir. "If we have a choice between being dead and pitied, and being alive with a bad image, we'd rather be alive with the bad image." When we say "Never Again", these are not just words, but a commitment. While Israel holds itself to the highest standards of any armed force in the world, and maintains practices consistent with Biblical commands about warfare, Golda was right: we will never choose to be dead and pitied again.

The second teaching is from the Midrash, and is a reminder of how to behave when we destroy our enemies. When Pharaoh's soldiers were drowning in the Sea of Reeds, the angels started to rejoice, but were stopped by God, who reminded them that there is nothing to rejoice about when the work of God's hands is being destroyed... even when it is needed. We must not allow ourselves to rejoice at the military success of today. Yes, it is useful, helps Israel, and is needed; but we cannot rejoice in the deaths and injuries of so many people. If we, God forbid, allow ourselves to rejoice at these deaths and injuries, we become no different than our enemies. This is the real battle: to retain our souls and our humanity while in the midst of having to wage a war.

The third teaching can be found in the words of Rabbi Avraham Isaac Kook, Chief Rabbi of the British Mandate of Palestine in the early 20th century. His guidance helped form the State of Israel, and these words are reminders of who we must be and how we must live as Jews.

"The pure righteous do not complain of the dark, but increase the light; they do

not complain of evil, but increase justice; they do not complain of heresy, but increase faith; they do not complain of ignorance, but increase wisdom."

Let us increase light, justice, faith, and wisdom in our own souls as approach the High Holidays, and thereby allow those qualities to increase in the world.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 18, 2024

15th of Elul, 5784

September 19th 2024 at 5:01 am PDT

Walkie Talkies..What's Next?

Chevre,

The news on Wednesday in Israel (and the world) was dominated by the explosions of Hezbollah leaders' walkie-talkies. There were at least 500 targeted explosions, creating chaos in the communication of Hezbollah and Iran's proxies. The IDF spokesman created even more chaos when he said, "We still have many capabilities that we have not yet activated."... a veiled and ominous threat to the terrorists.

As expected, the pager and walkie talkie explosions that were specifically targeted at Hezbollah leadership received the ire of the Jew-hating world. From Ocasio-Cortez screaming about the horror of attacking people that way (a woman who has not once condemned the thousands of rockets Hezbollah has sent, nor chastised them for the Druze children and other Israelis killed by their rockets) to other politicians domestically and worldwide condemning Israel for the damage they inflicted upon the terrorists of Hezbollah, to Iranian allies Cuba and Venezuela publishing condemnations of the "cyber-attacks"... the world is attacking Israel for defending herself in this surprising way.

The last two days have escalated the already challenging situation, and we can expect:

A: Saber rattling and threats from Iran and its allies. The passion of those threats will be in direct correlation to how much condemnation the world expresses at Israel.

B: Either Iran's proxies will be loud but not do anything (having both lost their communication as well as being concerned about what else Israel can do to them); or we will see an increase in attacks on Israel. Given that the Security Cabinet voted to give full authority to Gallant and Netanyahu, we can be assured that if Hezbollah/Iran retaliates, Israel will respond with force (be it military or some other new form of attack as we have seen in the last days).

On a more hopeful note, Wednesday also brought a formal statement from Paraguay that they will be opening the Paraguayan Embassy in Jerusalem in December.

May the actions of the last few days encourage Israel's enemies to stop the fighting and return the hostages, and lead to a lasting peace in the region.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 19, 2024

16th of Elul, 5784

September 19th 2024 at 3:33 pm PDT

The 3rd Lebanon War Has Started

Chevre,

Not surprisingly, but very sadly, we need to be aware that the "Third Lebanon War " (according to Israeli Channel 12) has started.

Channel 14 confirmed the launch of a large scale military operation in Lebanon, with the IDF tripling their daily attacks. " as of this evening, Lebanon has become Israel's main battlefield" according to the news station. Minister Gallant has said that Hezbollah is showing signs of weakness and that military operations will continue as planned. GPS is jammed throughout Israel, and the airspace of

lebanon, syria, and most of Iraq is completely empty of civil aviation. Guided by IDF intelligence, the Israeli Air Force destroyed hundreds of rocket launchers that were primed for immediate use against Israel... over 1,000 barrels prepared for imminent attacks on the Holy Land. This all happened as Hezbollah claimed responsibility for over double the amount of daily attacks today that they have in the past, and for launching a barrage of heavy missiles at civilian homes in Metula, which is on fire right now, of a thank God there are no reported injuries.

Let us all pray for the safety and protection of the state of Israel, the land of Israel, the people of Israel, all of the IDF soldiers and reserves, and the Jewish people around the world.

May the Holy One and His Presence keep Israel safe, and allow this pain to be transformed into a long-lasting peace between Israel and its neighbors.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 19, 2024

16th of Elul, 5784

September 20th 2024 at 5:33 am PDT

The Pain of Today

Chevre,

As the email from earlier pointed out, military operations intensified so much that Channel 12 in Israel among others said that Thursday eve began the Third Lebanon War. Besides what was already sent out, here are results that were reported by an internal Hezbollah document that was supposedly leaked (remember that this is supposedly a Hezbollah document that was supposedly "leaked", so its veracity is questionable):

879 fatalities

602 severely wounded

4431 wounded

1693 lightly wounded

We do know that a number of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps senior officials died or were seriously wounded (150-200, including one of the most senior outside of Damascus Intl Airport according to the IDF) as well as over 100 Hezbollah Commanders. It has also been reported from Al-Saudi Arabia that Iranian leadership has advised all officials to avoid using phones; and that there was an explosion at a military base in Tehran that specializes in producing ballistic missile.

I know that many people are feeling joy about the last few days, and Israel's military success against these terrorist enemies... and we all need to pray that through our continued successes against these enemies of both Israel and the United States. But it is more important than ever right now to remember to take care of our own souls. We must not allow ourselves to celebrate these deaths and injuries. Yes they are necessary, but we must not allow ourselves to rejoice, even in the death of our enemies. If we revel in their destruction and pain, then we have lowered ourselves to their level... and then, God forbid, we will have lost the real war for our souls. We must do what must be done, but protect our spiritual essence at the same time.

Israel again made a formal offer around 10am on Friday to Hamas: Israel would end the war and give safe passage for Sinwar out of Gaza in exchange for the immediate release of all hostages, the demilitarization of Gaza and total disarmament of Hamas, and the establishment of an alternative governing power in the Strip. The proposal was immediately met with rejection and ridicule by Hamas leader Ghazi Hamad. Even the US is now saying that it is doubtful that any ceasefire will be arranged prior to November election, and is blaming Hamas for constantly changing the terms each time after the US and Israel capitulate, and is not serious about wanting a ceasefire.

The last few days have shown a few things clearly. Israel has military capabilities that are beyond just the typical military weapons. We have seen again that Hamas, Hezbollah and the proxies of Iran have no desire for peace; but as is consistent in the specific text of the Koran and Hadiths that are foundations of their theology, they are only interested in the complete destruction of Israel and the obliteration of all Jews. As Israel retaliates more, and things escalate, we must always remember their words in their texts, documents, and the Covenant

of 1988 that is their Charter.

And let us never forget the heinous crimes of October 7th.

Never Again is now. We will never again let our people be massacred. But as we commit ourselves to that concept, let us equally commit ourselves to not losing our souls.. and to doing all that we can to achieve and sustain a long-lasting peace with our neighbors both in the Middle East and domestically.

As we get closer to the new year, may God bless all of us with a true and lasting peace.

I hope you will join myself and the other clergy in Shabbat services tonight at 7:30 p.m., as we observe the last Sabbath service at our temple sanctuary before the new year. Together, may we pray tonight and heal from this past year, and begin to escort in a new year of good health and peace.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 20, 2024

17th of Elul, 5784

September 21st 2024 at 7:12 pm PDT

A Shabbat Of War In Israel

Chevre,

It has been a full and painful Shabbat in Israel. So many things have happened, and it may be easier just to list them as bullet points, as this war has increased in intensity significantly over the last 36 hours.

--- On Friday night, right before Shabbat, Hezbollah launched over 100 Rockets at the Golan and Sfat in the North

--- On Friday night, 15 senior commanders , including one of the top two Chief Commanders of Hezbollah (who had a 7 million dollar US bounty on his head for

past acts of terrorism against the US) was eliminated in a targeted attack on a building in Beirut, where a group of leaders from different Iranian proxies were meeting, and it has been reported but not confirmed that Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, has left Lebanon. These were the leaders who had been the planners of an imminent Hezbollah/Iran attack on the Galilee, Golan, and north of Israel. US National Security advisor Jake Sullivan said, " It's a good result. It's good that justice was done."

--- In the hour before Shabbat, another 180 Rockets were launched at Israel, igniting multiple fires throughout the area.

--- The dangers have gotten so high, that the chief rabbis of Israel recommended carrying weapons on shabbat, including pepper spray, knives, and firearms; and recommended that every Israeli keep their computers and phones on and close to them so they could see what is happening in the news.

--- By the end of shabbat, the IDF announced that approximately 180 targets and thousands of launchers were destroyed in southern Lebanon.

---Opposition Leader MK Lapid, who had private meetings this past week with President Obama, announced that he will be meeting this weekend with other opposition Party leaders to "coordinate moves to collapse the current coalition government".

---According to Sky News, Mohammad Raza, deputy commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, was also killed in Friday's attack on Beirut.

--- Because of updated threats, gatherings have been limited in the north of Israel. The lower and upper Galilee, Haifa, Tiberius, and other areas in the north have been recommended to have restrictions of 30 people or less in open areas, and 300 people or less in enclosed spaces.

--- An IDF spokesman announced immediately after Shabbat that on Saturday, the IDF had destroyed over 400 launchers and thousands of Hezbollah Rockets.

--- On Saturday, a Hezbollah rocket landed in front of a synagogue in Bira, B"H there were no injuries.

---Israel announced that if Haifa is attacked, Beirut will burn

--- Forces in Jordan and Saudi Arabia have been put on standby by their respective countries to prevent any attacks from the Houthis on Israel.

--- Channel 12 in Israel has said that the IDF is on high alert, and is preparing for a possible large scale missile barrage from Hezbollah in the North.

---Rambam Hospital in Haifa has announced a partial suspension of services as it prepares security measures. This puts even more pressure upon Bnai Zion Hospital with its secure bunker. Everyone who donated to that hospital months ago... your donations have already saved hundreds of lives, and it looks like they

will be saving hundreds or thousands more in the near future.

--- A few hours ago, late on Saturday night, there was a massive attack from Hezbollah with over 120 Rockets being launched in a barrage against cities in the north. Casualties are still being assessed.

---Axios reported that they were underground explosions at an Iranian nuclear facility in Natanz, Iran. Unofficial sources are claiming that it was a "routine accident", while Western sources in the Middle East are claiming that it was the act of the Mossad, using advanced technology to penetrate facility's safety control system.

Let us all take at least a moment to say personal prayers for the safety of the land of Israel, state of Israel, and the people of Israel. May God protect our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land, and keep the Jewish people safe. Now and always.

Am Yisrael Chai and Shavuah Tov

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 21, 2024

19th of Elul, 5784

September 22nd 2024 at 5:38 am PDT

At 1:30am PST - Attacks on Haifa

Chevre,

It is currently 1:30am on Sunday morning in Israel, and the day has already been extremely violent. Over 115 aerial threats including 85 rockets were launched by Hezbollah at civilian neighborhoods in Haifa between 6:30 and 7am, and not all were intercepted. There have been numerous injuries, and so far one death reported of a 17 year old who died in a car accident apparently caused by his panic reaction from the explosions and alarms in his area. May his memory be a blessing, and his family comforted among the mourners of Zion. A rocket successfully hit Kiryat Bialik, injuring 5; and there have been many injuries in the

Lower Galilee.

Hospitals in the north of Israel are discharging patients if not seriously injured, and evacuating other patients to more secure sites such as bunkers and Bnai Zion. Rambam Hospital is starting evacuations and transfer of patients beginning at noon on Sunday (2am here). All elective surgeries have been cancelled, and Poriya Medical Center near Tiberias is only handling oncological surgeries and urgent surgeries. Schools in the north have been cancelled, workplaces are only open if they are within one minute of shelters, and gatherings are to be limited to 10 people in a building and 100 people in open areas.

Attacks have been directed at the Ramon civilian airport north of Eilat, a cruise missile from Shia militias, Iraq was launched at Eilat, and was B"H intercepted. Suicide drones and cruise missiles, also from Shia militias were launched at Southern Golan, and thank God, intercepted. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq has claimed responsibility for all of these.

Please say prayers for Israel and our people throughout the next days and nights. Please give some charity in the name of protecting Israel and her people today... it doesn't matter how much or to what pro-Israel charity... but donate it with the prayer of keeping Israel safe. Judaism believes (as do many faiths) that charity opens locked gates so that our prayers become even more impactful. Even if you just give a quarter to a homeless person, it opens the same gates as if you had given many thousands of dollars... but please both give and pray with all your soul.

I also ask that you pass this email on to all of your non-Jewish friends. As I said in the last email, the holy city of Nazareth has been repeatedly attacked in the last 24 hours. This is a city that has a very small Jewish population, with the city being roughly 40% Christian and 60% Moslem. The attacking of this sacred site is yet another demonstration that the attacks from Iranian proxies are not against Jews, but against Western Civilization and all people who are not Islamic fundamentalists (including/especially moderate Moslems). Please ask your non-Jewish friends to also pray and give charity.

May the Holy One and His Presence watch over the people of Israel, and keep the people, land, and State of Israel safe and protected.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 21, 2024

19th of Elul, 5784

September 23rd 2024 at 6:03 am PDT

**The War Gets Hotter & We Warn Lebanese Civilians, While Hezbollah
(Like Hamas) Hides Behind Them**

Chevre,

No matter how many times I see videos of "soldiers" hiding behind children and civilians, it still shocks me. Like Hamas, Hezbollah has hidden many of their rocket launchers inside civilian homes that have children. And as is normal for Israeli forces, warnings are given to try and get civilians out of harm's way. Israel has even gone so far on Sunday night and Monday morning as to send text messages and make phone calls to homes where launchers are being hidden... and to have those text messages come from Lebanese phone numbers so that the families will hopefully read them and evacuate. Israeli hackers also broke into Lebanese radio and broadcast the same message of evacuation.

There was a swarm of drones launched from the Shia militias in Iraq late Sunday night. These are the new Al-Arfad drones first used against Israel and the US in May, 2024 during the attacks on Eilat. They are long range attack kamikaze drones, and harder to intercept, which is why there were multiple failed interceptions over Golan and the Galilee, but thanks to God, no casualties reported. Israel has responded forcefully. First warnings were given to Lebanese citizens, and then strikes were made against Hezbollah launchers. Lebanese media counted over 150 targeted airstrikes in about 75 minutes. Videos of the airstrikes show the telltale two explosions: the first by the airstrike, and then a second almost immediately from the missiles that were hit.

Overnight, a large explosion was heard in the city of al-Shadadi, where American forces have a base that was reportedly under rocket fire. It is a reminder that this is not just a war against Israel, but against the US as well.

Tanks, bulldozers and ground forces were moved north, and reports from multiple sources are that IDF forces crossed the border fence in the Golan Heights into Syria, and started to dig a trench and establish a line of defense and observation posts about 300 meters past the fence.

It was released today that the attack that killed the many Hezbollah and Iranian commanders was a bigger blessing than most people at first realized: they were gathering together to plan an Oct. 7 type of invasion in the north. We must be grateful to Israeli intelligence for catching this, and preventing what could have been another terrible day, God forbid. May they keep preventing those types of attacks from the enemies of Israel, and may they always stay safe as they work so hard to protect Israel.

Minister Gallant had strong words in an announcement on Monday.

"In this new stage that we have entered in the war, our success also depends on the proper conduct of the home front. There are days ahead of us when the public will have to show composure." Israeli forces need full moral support from not only the civilians in Israel, but from all of us. Please say prayers for Israel, and remember to recite Psalms each day for the protection of our forces.

The US proposed another deal to Hamas, and was summarily rejected. Hamas' demands to release the hostages are: a guaranteed 5 year cease fire; the release of all of the convicted mass murderers Arab prisoners; the removal of all Israeli military from Gaza for 5 years; the control of all Gaza, including the corridors, placed into the hands of Hamas; and an entire cessation of any Israel military near Gaza for 5 years. Before thinking how ridiculous this is, it is important to understand that Hamas, Hezbollah, and the other Iranian proxies, as well as Iran itself, are fundamentalist Moslems. They believe that the Koran and Hadiths are the "perfect law given by Allah" and cannot be adapted or changed, a teaching that is directly from the Koran... which also sets the clear goal of a world caliphate for all Islamic believers. Based upon that, they completely believe that the entire world must become a caliphate and practice Sharia law; and it is vitally important to understand their utter devotion to that concept. They are not, and have never been interested in any peace with anyone who does not share their beliefs... including more moderate and modern Muslims. We all need to remember that in their theology, it is actually ok to hide behind children if it helps achieve that long term goal of a world caliphate.

All of this is so painful, and many Diaspora Jews feel helpless. But Gallant's words were not just for Israelis, but for those of us here as well. At this time of intense and active war, we must all stand unconditionally with Israel. Please make donations, small or large, to charities every day during this time. Please recite the Psalms... many of them authored by King David, the ultimate archetype of a peaceful warrior. A great warrior who would only fight in order to achieve a lasting peace; a musician; poet; and mystic. By reciting his words and teachings, we bless the people of Israel with the safety of his Shield, the strength of his sword, and with the wisdom of his perpetual quest for a lasting peace.

May that lasting peace come to us all soon, and may we all be blessed with safety, protection, and all that is good in Life

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 23, 2024

20th of Elul, 5784

September 23rd 2024 at 11:00 am PDT

Haifa Has Been Attacked - Israel in State of Emergency

Chevre,

Hezbollah has sent missiles at Haifa for the first time since 2006, and a state of emergency has been declared in the country. 300,000 Israelis have been forced to seek shelter, and Lt Gen HaLevi has announced that Israel has now initiated a proactive offensive operation targeting hezbollah's combat infrastructure, which has been built up over the last 18 years under the "watch" of the UN. Gallant supported HaLevi's statement, highlighting that Nasrallah is getting more and more isolated as entire units of Hezbollah's Radwan Force has been neutralized, and tens of thousands of rockets destroyed.

Please say prayers in your heart and mind for the safety of Israel and these challenging times

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 23, 2024

20th of Elul, 5784

September 24th 2024 at 5:38 am PDT

Update

Chevre,

Each day, by the hour, the war intensifies in the North. Hezbollah has launched over 200 extra large rockets, and Haifa, Nazareth, and the Galilee have all been under attack. By 9am on Tuesday morning a barrage was launched, and over 50 rockets had been launched at towns in the north. There are multiple videos showing that Hezbollah is consciously attacking civilian neighborhoods. Conversely, Israel has sent warnings to all Lebanese citizens to evacuate areas that they will be attacking. They have sent these warnings via text, calls, and by hacking Lebanese radio, and people are evacuating Beirut as a result, thank God. Israel has precisely targeted over 1600 Hezbollah launchers and missiles that Hezbollah keeps inside civilian homes. Apparently, Hezbollah either coerces through force or pays with money to civilian homes to allow them to put launchers in their homes... which end up making their homes targets for the Israeli Air Force. Reports are that over 50% of all Hezbollah weapons have been destroyed at this point.

Almost every news source in the region has reported that these attacks on Hezbollah, commencing with the pager and walkie-talkie explosions, have come just in time to save the nation. It has been confirmed in multiple media reports that Hezbollah had been planning to execute an October 7th type of attack in the north, God forbid. The success of the pagers, walkie talkies, and Air Force have hopefully prevented this type of attack from ever happening again, God willing.

Israel has made it clear through both public videos and announcements, and through political channels to France and other nations, that attacks on Israeli

civilians will be met with even more significant force. One of the things that is profoundly sad is that the UK, US, France, and the United Nations are all complaining about Israel's response to Hezbollah.. but none of these same entities have lifted a finger to stop Hezbollah over the last 18 years while they have been specifically and overtly violating United Nations Resolution 1701 of 2006. That resolution was that Hezbollah could not and would not attack Israel, and would not develop weaponry that could attack Israel. The resolution was to be enforced by the United Nations, but sadly, they have allowed Hezbollah to do whatever they want over the last 18 years, including digging tunnels into Israel and launching over 10,000 rockets. It is ironic that now these same entities are trying to hold Israel back, but they never once attempted to protect Israel according to their own resolution.

The Israeli government and Armed Forces are defending the people and the land of Israel. They are committed to not allowing Hezbollah to continue displacing really civilians from the towns in the north; and to preventing, B"H, Hezbollah from ever achieving their goal of creating another October 7th type of event in the north, God forbid.

What can we do? More than many people realize, and it all comes back to the Jewish concept of integrating Faith and Action. We must choose faith over fear, has strengthen ourselves with personal prayers as well as the recitation of Psalms, of which we are taught will protect the people. And we must act by giving charity in honor and for the protection of the people of Israel. Again, it doesn't matter how much, but I am imploring you to please, please give a little bit of charity every day in honor of the protection of Israel. If you don't interact with people to give charity to, create a tzedakah box in your home (if you don't already have one), and each day put a few coins or bills into it, and at the end of the week give it to some worthy cause.

During our upcoming High Holiday services, which I hope everyone will be attending (if you live out of the Southern California area, email Events@NerSimcha.org and we will arrange to stream the services to you), the liturgy teaches that tzedakah (charity) and tefillah (prayer) are powerful practices (along with tshuvah..repairing our mistakes) that "remove the severity of the decree". Praying for and giving charity in honor of a lasting peace in Israel is something that everyone of us can and must do, especially in these days leading up to the holidays.

May any severity against Israel be removed; may we all choose to integrate Faith and Action in our daily lives; and may God always protect the State of Israel, the Land of Israel, and the People of Israel.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 24, 2024

21st of Elul, 5784

September 24th 2024 at 9:20 pm PDT

Tel Aviv Attacked

Chevre,

At approximately 6:30am in Israel (8:30 pm PST), alarms went off throughout Tel Aviv and Central Israel, as drones and Rockets were being launched, including one surface to surface missile, which thanks to God was intercepted. As of now, the alarms are still going off, but there are no serious casualties reported in any of the media.

This comes on the heels of yesterday, when Hezbollah launched 300 rockets at Israel. The IDF spokesperson has said that Hezbollah's weaponry has been significantly damaged, with well over half of their launchers and missiles destroyed by the targeted strikes from the IAF on Hezbollah locations in Lebanon. Some media sources are saying that the current attack on Tel Aviv is coming from Iraq, but nothing has been confirmed at this point.

What is confirmed is that Israel needs the prayers from all of us in the diaspora. The depths of prayers come from feelings, and so I asked that each of us watch the video below and allow the prayers of the music to flow through our hearts, and into the universe to return as blessings for the people of Israel.

<https://youtu.be/yze5holvKgU?si=j03kVE9HqBQJSSHi>

Deep feelings create powerful prayers. And those prayers do make a difference.

May the Holy One, Blessed be He, and His Presence (the Ruwach HaKodesh and the Shechinah) protect and bless people of Israel with safety and protection. And may all of our hearts open up to our family in Israel, and bless them with a lasting peace.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 24, 2024

22nd of Elul, 5784

September 26th 2024 at 5:14 am PDT

Eilat is Hit; a Truce; an Important Yahrzeit, and a Little Math

Chevre,

For almost a year, I have tried to cull through multiple news and media to at least keep people a little informed about what is actually happening in Israel and the Jewish world while we are at war... and to keep the struggles of Israel and the horrors of Oct. 7 in all our consciousness. Sometimes, like today, the news is confusing and contradictory.

Eilat was attacked, and one of the rockets got through, damaging the port; while Israel launched over 150 airstrikes into Lebanon over Wednesday night/Thursday morning. Cabinet ministers have repeatedly said that the war in the north cannot end until the nearly 100,000 displaced Israeli citizens are able to safely move back to their homes in the north; but now there are discussions that a temporary 21 day cease fire might begin as soon as Thursday afternoon, Israel time. Netanyahu and many ministers have said a temporary cease fire is not an option (Bibi said that Tuesday night); but many sources say it is happening, including Macron and Biden.

In other words, it's all very unclear...other than bombs are exploding and rockets are being launched.

What is clear is today's date. The Gregorian calendar says September 23, but in the Hebrew calendar it is the 23rd day of the month of Elul... a day that we, and every American, must all choose to remember:

24 years ago, the 23rd of Elul, 5761 was the Gregorian date of September 11, 2001. Each of us who were alive will never forget that day... where we were when we heard the news... the civilian air traffic all being forced to land... the chaos and fear. Today is a *yahrzeit* we can never let ourselves or the world to forget. Today, we say *Kaddish* for what happened on that day 24 years ago...

It was one of the worst things to ever happen to this nation. A day of pain and destruction, with just over 3000 deaths. Al-Qaeda had attacked our country, based on their Islamic theology, which demands that every non-Muslim must convert, die, or be enslaved. Bin-Laden justified his attacks based on the Koran and the Hadiths, including Chap. 8 Verse 39 of the Koran ("fight them until faithlessness is no more, and until all religion is exclusively for Allah"). Bin-Laden's understanding of Islam requires the creation of a worldwide Caliphate governed by Sharia law. For him and Al-Qaeda, their religion demanded of them that they attack the US, Israel, and the West. And their understanding of Islam led directly to the deaths of 3000 people. Those of us who were alive will never forget.

The parallels to October 7 are not coincidental. Al-Qaeda is effectively the same as Hamas or Hezbollah: same goals; same beliefs, same theology, same reliance on terror. Except for two glaring differences. (ok, there are more than 2, but these are the big differences) A: if the US had known where Al-Qaeda actually was, they would even have carpet-burned an entire foreign nation that housed Al-Qaeda (the entire global War On Terrorism began as a result of 9/11); but Israel is forced to not only restrain itself in the war that started 10/7, but we are expected to supply "humanitarian aid" to the enemy that wants us dead. B: there is a huge difference in the size of the attacks. 3000 people died on 9/11 as opposed to 1200 in Israel. The US lost two and a half times as many people as Israel. Except...

The population of the US in 2001 was approximately 285 million people, meaning that the 9/11 attacks killed just over one one-thousandth of one percent. October 7 brutally massacred over 1200 people out of a population of

9.4 million, equating to twelve one-thousandths of one percent. In other words:

Proportionally, 12 times as many Israelis were massacred on October 7 as Americans were killed on September 11. Proportionally, the amount of Israelis who died on that one day is equivalent to ALL the American deaths during the entire Korean War (33,739 Americans died in Korea).

Especially for those of us old enough to remember 9/11, I ask how you think the US would have or should have responded had 9/11 been 12 times worse. How would our government have acted? How would each of us have felt, and what would we have done? I hope and pray that I would have kept a clear head, but if it had been someone close to me that day, I don't know with certainty how I would have felt or what I would have wanted to do to Al Qaeda and/or any of its affiliated groups (the closest 9/11 death to me was a dear friend's uncle who was one of the firefighters who died, and we were all devastated). Before judging anyone in Israel, let alone the Israeli government, for how they have acted and act in this war, think of this 9/11 teaching.

The Kaddish prayer is in a specific form of grammar that is "self-reflexive" (in Hebrew, binyan hitpa'el). The literal definition of the Kaddish is: The Great Name (God) has made itself larger (yitgadal); and has made itself holier (v'yitkadash) and so on. It is a recognition that the people we remember affected God. It is a commitment from each of us to live in such a way that we bring honor and pride to our deceased loved ones.

Please take a few minutes today to recite the kaddish prayer, or at least to remember 9/11; to see the parallels with Oct 7; and remember what happened on both of these horrific days.

May the One who ordains peace in the Universe make peace upon the victims of both September 11 and October 11; upon their families; their communities, our community, the United States, Israel, and the entire world. May their memories be a blessing that inspires us to act right and righteously in the world; and a source of comfort for us all in our own lives. And may we all say amen.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 26, 2024
23rd of Elul, 5784

September 27th 2024 at 5:34 am PDT

The Realities in Northern Israel: Maybe We Shouldn't Judge So Easily...

Chevre,

There seems to be a little more clarity about the "truce" that the US was talking about yesterday: it is a fallacy pushed by the US, Qatar, Egypt,- and Lebanon (with no input from Hezbollah,- which is actually the organization that has attacked Israel for almost a year). Israeli media have reported that the Cabinet, Shin Bet and security forces, Netanyahu, Gallant, and multiple other Israeli leaders are all denying that a truce or cease fire will happen until Hezbollah is fully incapacitated and the north is safe for Israelis to return home. No other nation would accept thousands of rockets being launched at its citizens, and Israel seems committed to defending the people and making it safe for the refugees to return home.

It was reported that 3 ballistic missiles were launched at Tel Aviv from Iraq and Yemen late Thursday night. One was confirmed shot down by the Arrow missile defense system. No reports nor injuries from the other two were reported, so we can infer that either there was actually only one shot, or that the other two missed or were also intercepted. Barrages of rockets were also fired by Hezbollah at both Haifa and Tiberias, including over 40 rockets in a barrage; and B"H no injuries were reported. For those of you who have been to Israel, here is a picture of one of them landing in the Galilee in Tiberias.



I'm attaching this photo from Thursday so that we all pause for a moment and realize that this a daily occurrence in Israel: rockets or shrapnel landing all too close. You can see from the image that it is as if you were driving on the 101 freeway between Lindero and Westlake Blvd., and a rocket landed on the Westlake Golf Course. Contemplate for a moment how that would make you feel; the stress that it would cause in your psyche;- how it would affect your life.

Now imagine that this happened over 10,000 times for a year... that's an average of almost 30 per day. Every day...

Really feel how this kind of constant attack affects the psyche and emotions... how it would affect every aspect of your life

Upsetting, isn't it. The constant barrage of threats; the fear for your children; the stress that would become your constant companion in every moment... awake or asleep. For a moment, look at that image and imagine you saw it multiple times per day close to your home...

If you can really imagine that, you start to have a theoretical sense of what our brothers and sisters in the north of Israel have been experiencing for the last

year.

In 2006, UN Resolution 1701 forbade Hezbollah from attacking Israel, and was to be enforced by UN forces. That resolution has been violated repeatedly over the last 18 years: including thousands of times since October 7, when Hezbollah started attacking Israel with the intent of forcing Israel into a multi-front war. Not once has the UN sought to enforce Resolution 1701 and protect Israel. Instead, the UN is again condemning Israel for defending herself, without so much as a single mention about stopping Hezbollah.

Whether you agree with the current Israeli government or not on many things, at what point is it the responsibility of a government to defend its people? How would you feel and what would you expect of your government if you had been experiencing dozens of rockets landing by the 101 freeway every day for a year?

It is easy to condemn the coalition government, but how would you actually feel if rockets were landing every day by your home, God forbid.

Look at that image again. Really imagine how it would feel to see that every day by your home... by the park where your children play. Don't just think, but really feel the fear and overwhelming stress.

And remember this feeling as you read or hear the American media and politicians condemning Israel for the operation against Hezbollah in the north and in Lebanon.

Maybe we shouldn't be so quick to judge Israel for this operation...

May God keep His covering of safety and protection over Israel and her people; over the Israeli soldiers on the ground and in the air; and over the many civilian Lebanese who are being displaced because of Hezbollah's repeated attacks against Israel... a nation that only wants a lasting peace with its neighbors. May God bring us all that lasting peace soon in our time

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 27, 2024

24th of Elul, 5784

September 27th 2024 at 11:07 am PDT

The War & The Torah Portion Are Unified On This Last Shabbat Of The Year

Chevre,

As we approach the last Shabbat of this year of 5784, the Torah portion and the events of the world coalesce and integrate almost perfectly with each other. It is a double portion of Torah reading, and the first words say, "You stand firmly today, all of you, before your God", and then goes on to describe that "all of you" includes EVERY Jew, from the leaders to the laborers, every Jew stands equally before God.. and must stand firmly (the hebrew does not mean to just stand, but to stand strongly and firmly).

At no time since the Holocaust have we needed to stand together, and to stand strong and firm against our enemies... and the last hours and days have shown this to be true.

Friday afternoon in Israel again demonstrated the Jewish commitment to survival of our nation. Israel continued and intensified attacks on Hezbollah in Beirut and surrounding areas, after texting, calling, and dropping flyers encouraging all Lebanese citizens to leave their homes if there are Hezbollah munitions in them. Hezbollah, like Hamas, hides behind their citizens and forces them to have rocket launchers and other weaponry in their homes. After the warnings, Israel destroyed numerous military headquarters and outposts of Hezbollah, and Lebanese sources that Hashim Safi al-Din, the head of Hezbollah's Executive Council and considered the number two man behind Nasrallah was killed in an airstrike on Beirut. Hezbollah is being dismantled from the top down, as Israel stands strongly and firmly in taking out these terrorists' control of Lebanon. Israel is looking forward to again having the Lebanese people being in charge of their own country as opposed to the terrorist group of Hezbollah, and to having a strong and peaceful relationship with this neighbor to the north in the future.

Today, Prime Minister Netanyahu also stood strongly and firmly in front of the United Nations. His words were honest and powerful as he described in detail the last year of war; the heinous acts of Hamas and Hezbollah; the dangers to the entire world of Iran and its proxies, who seek death and destruction; and Israel's total commitment to living in peace with its neighbors. He made clear Israel's desire for a ceasefire, and how easy it could be: all that Hamas must do is release all hostages (and corpses) and demilitarize Gaza. He described a vision for the future of a Middle East united in peace and prosperity, as opposed to Iran's vision of a future that would be an authoritarian caliphate. And he called out the United Nations for the anti-semitic organization it has become over a recent years, pointing out that there have been more resolutions against Israel than all other nations in the world combined, and how the UN has totally ignored at the same time the violations of Hezbollah with resolution 1701. It is an impassioned, fact-filled, honest speech that I suggest everyone read or listen to (you can read the entire text at <https://www.timesofisrael.com/full-text-of-netanyahus-un-speech-enough-is-enough-he-says-of-hezbollah-also-warns-iran/>).

And so, as we approach the end of this year of 5784, we see the Israeli people and leaders united in standing strongly and firmly, just as this week's Torah portion commands us to do.

Now, it is time for us in the diaspora to also stand strongly and firmly together. Jewish theology demands a dialogue in which we can disagree without being disagreeable... a quality that has been all too often rejected in 21st century American Judaism. Israel, and Judaism as a whole, are facing an existential threat to our very existence. Here in the diaspora, we need to unify together, especially when we disagree. We must take the lessons of this week's Torah portion, and realize that from the laborer to the leader we are all the same in God's eyes... and we all have the same responsibility to unify and stand firmly and strongly against the enemies that wish to destroy us... from both without and with him our own communities.

May we as Jews in America, along with all Jews worldwide, and the people, land, and State of Israel, stand firmly and strongly together in our quest for long-lasting peace with all of our neighbors. And made that peace come speedily in our time and in this new year.

Shabbat Shalom and Shana Tovah

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 27, 2024

24th of Elul, 5784

September 27th 2024 at 7:08 pm PDT

A VERY Important Reminder Before Shabbat!

Chevre,

As we are about to begin the last Shabbat of 5784, there is one more important message that I felt we need to remember....

The day has brought news of attacks on Lebanon, including the possible death of Nasrallah, the head of Hezbollah. It has brought Netanyahu giving a powerful speech at the UN. It has brought news of Hanas being declared more of a guerilla force rather than an army. And so, I understand that many people are rejoicing in "victories".

Please don't... for two reasons. We are Jews, and Judaism is committed to not rejoicing over the destruction of our enemies. We must always remember the teaching that even God stopped the angels from rejoicing when the soldiers of Pharaoh were drowned in the Sea of Reeds.

The second reason is that we must remember that the goal of war in Jewish theology is actually not victory, but a lasting peace. Yes, the military victories may be necessary to achieve that goal, but they are not the goal. Hezbollah leaders will be replaced, Iran still is committed to our destruction, and war is still constant. We must remember what our goals are: a lasting peace, and the return of all hostages. Netanyahu said it in his speech today, it is an integral part of Jewish theology, and we must keep in mind that these are the two real goals of this war that we find ourselves forced into.

To help remember those goals, I offer this video to everyone of 1,000 musicians in the Caesaria Amphitheater. I shared This months ago when it was made, and

we must remember our goals as we enter this last Shabbat of 5784. I enjoin you to watch the video, and let the words and music remind each of us of what we are fighting for.

<https://youtu.be/1alyZnFbOu0?si=oKhLnBJvVtW4cuEJ>

Home. A safe home. A home that all of the hostages will be able to return to in this new year of 5785 that begins in only a few days.

Maybe this be our prayer, and Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 27, 2024

25th of Elul, 5784

September 28th 2024 at 7:10 pm PDT

A Busy Shabbat In The Middle East & Selichot

Chevre,

It has been an extremely busy 30 hours, and the different news agencies are all reporting things through different filters. So, rather than trying to identify what is real and what is propaganda, here are the things that seem to be validated and verified by multiple sources

--- Hezbollah leader Nasrallah is dead, and his death is being reacted to differently across the region. The Ayatollah in Iran is declaring him a martyr whose death must be revenged. Many of the people of Syria seem to be celebrating, as he was partnered with Assad in much of the purging of Syrian citizens. In Lebanon, it seems to be that his cousin, Hashim Safieddine will take his place as the leader of Hezbollah.

--- Netanyahu gave a speech to Israel and the world with an update, including a statement that Iran should remember that there is no place in the Middle East that is beyond Israel's reach, and making it clear that Iran would be wise to not send a rocket or any other weapons at Israel

--- Although Hezbollah is considered a terrorist organization and not a government, and Nasrallah is a wanted criminal in most parts of the world and directly responsible for hundreds of American deaths over the years, much of the world is already condemning Israel for having killed this terrorist.

--- Israel has called up three reserved battalions to the north based upon information that Iran is going to deploy troops into Lebanon

---Blinken is publicly calling for an immediate cease fire, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Russia is publicly condemning the elimination of Nasrallah and calling on Israel to cease all hostilities immediately

--- A ballistic missile was fired by Hezbollah in Lebanon at Jerusalem. It says everything that the missile was specifically fired at the Judea Samaria area, also known as the West Bank, where the pro Palestinian Arabs of Jerusalem are living. We know that Hezbollah and Hamas do not care about their own people, and clearly they no longer care about sacred Muslim sites either. This is a different topic for a separate email, but these are the Islamic fundamentalists who view the parts of the Koran that are after Muhammad's travel to Medina as more important than his pre-Medina time in Mecca (once he gets to Medina, the text becomes much more political and oriented towards growing a worldwide military caliphate, whose only place for non-muslims is either they must be converted, killed, or enslaved... and those type of fundamentalist Muslims believe the same must be done to every other type of Muslim who does not subscribe to that political theology)

--- In what seems like a very strange move, the US embassies in Israel are prohibiting their staff from leaving the embassies in Jerusalem, Tel aviv, or Be'er Sheva

--- While Israel is preparing for any imminent attacks from Iran directly or indirectly, they have also announced that they estimate over 50% of Hezbollah's military power has been destroyed, including 90% of its top and mid level Commanders

--- In a scene that seems reminiscent of Benghazi, it is being reported that thousands of Iraqi protesters are storming the US Embassy in Baghdad in

response to Nasrallah's death.

Tonight is the customary eve (in Ashkenazi communities, it is actually not a Sephardic custom) of Selichot, a penitential service that traditionally begins at midnight on the Saturday night before Rosh HaShanah (tonight). It's a time to begin the intense personal meditations to prepare us for these upcoming 10 Days of Awe. In many communities there's a recitation of the 13 attributes of God, as well as the 13 statements of faith of Maimonides (RaMBaM). Although not technically a holiday, it is a beautiful custom that we typically like to observe in our community. But I need to be honest, and ask your forgiveness... with all that has been going on in the war, I simply don't have the energy to really lead a midnight service tonight. Please, please forgive me. It has been a challenging year for us all, and the daily emails written in the middle of the night (thank you Orlando the hero for sending them out!) have made it seem for me like Selichot every day for a year. Again, I ask for your forgiveness.

I do suggest that every one of us takes some personal time this evening either after midnight or before going to sleep, will we have intimate and personal dialogue with God. Let us each open our hearts, and pray for God's mercy us, the Jewish people, and Israel. Let us each be fully honest with ourselves and God. Have we asked with courage when it has been needed in this past year? Have we acted with strength and commitment when it would have made a difference? Have we been humble, or have we been filled with arrogance? Have we personally done what must be done to make the world a better place... for ourselves, our families, our community, our nation, Israel, and the world? Have we given charity when asked, and when we haven't been asked? Have we integrated gentleness and strength together in our own lives? Could we be kinder? Can we be better this coming year? Are we willing to open ourselves so fully to God that we can surrender to His will and become His tool to create a better world for our children and our children's children? Do we have the courage to let go of our ego and truly become who God wants us to be?

Do we have the strength to increase our faith, and act based upon it?

May we, and all of the House of Israel, be blessed to truly live the words of the RaMBaM: Ani Ma'Ameen... I believe in perfect faith...

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 28, 2024

26th of Elul, 5784

September 30th 2024 at 5:40 am PDT

Who Are The Houthis & What Happened Today

Chevre,

Sunday through Monday morning has been a busy time for the Israeli military, which responded resoundingly to Houthi attacks on Israel. There have been confirmed reports of Israel successfully attacking Houthi ports and facilities in Yemen, critically damaging their ability to move fuel and war supplies from Iran to terrorist organizations. The IDF also continued targeted strikes in Lebanon and Syria, including the home of Syrian President Assad's brother, who is now declared missing. But a lot of focus was on the Houthis, who have been working hard to disrupt the entire region for the last year.

But other than reading about Houthi attacks for the last months, it seems most people know nothing about them. Now that they are such an active part of this war, here is some very basic information.

Formed in the 1990s, the Houthis are a religious/political movement of Shia Muslims; similar to Isis, Hezbollah, Hamas, et al. Like these other groups, the Houthis are committed to creating a worldwide caliphate, God forbid. They are a proxy of Iran, who supplies them with weapons; and have been (until Sunday) an open transit channel between Iran and its proxies.

The Houthis are NOT the government of Yemen. While they, like Hezbollah in Lebanon, have gained power in a certain area of Yemen, they are not the actual government. They are part of the Shia forces that believe in a worldwide caliphate, beginning with the destruction of Israel and the US. Their official motto is, "Allah is the greatest. Death to America. Death to Israel. A curse upon the Jews. Victory to Islam"

If you have any question about Israel's actions today, please think about their motto: a slogan they have committed their lives and deaths to.

It is important to know who is actually attacking us and against whom we are acting. The Houthis are another violent terrorist group similar to Hezbollah. But the success of the Houthis is reflective of their proximity to Iran, and their absolute devotion to the creation of a caliphate.

The worldwide media and politicians are keeping busy trying to stop Israel from creating a safe environment for the displaced Israelis in the north; it would seem that the Israeli government has determined that the best way to both make the north safe and get the hostages back is to use military pressure. The Israeli public seems to be very much supportive of this practice, and the government coalition became stronger on Sunday as long time Netanyahu rival, Minister Gideon Sa'ar brought his New Hope Party into supporting Netanyahu and the coalition. Personal feelings were put aside by Sa'ar to strengthen the nation during this many fronted war.

A good piece of non-war news came out of Germany today. According to NDR (German radio and television) German courts have upheld a ban on using "from the river to the sea", and will deny citizenship to individuals who share, like, or comment of the slogan on social media. It is the first European country that is officially taking steps to stop the propaganda of the "palestine" narrative... which is a big step that will hopefully soon be repeated around the world.

May we all see a time when the prophecy of "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nor shall they learn war any more" comes true. And may the shofar blasts of this month of Elul awaken our souls to fight passionately when needed, and to embrace peace when truly possible.... both without and within... with external enemies and with our own inclinations.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 30, 2024

27th of Elul, 5784

September 30th 2024 at 3:44 pm PDT

Israel Has Launched A Ground War

Chevre,

Israel has just announced it is launching it's ground war against Hezbollah in Lebanon. Israeli forces have reached the Lebanon border from the Metula front, and tanks have entered Lebanon. Both the United States and Israel have warned Iran against launching any attack, and Israel has committed to destroy Iranian facilities if provoked in that way.

Let us all pray for the safety and protection the people of Israel, the soldiers of Israel, and the State of Israel. May the terrorists of Hezbollah be speedily defeated; the people of Lebanon be kept safe and protected; and may we soon experience a lasting peace between Israel and her neighbors in the region

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

September 30, 2024

27th of Elul, 5784

October 1st 2024 at 4:57 am PDT

War... And a Prayer

Chevre,

We can use other names like "operation", "attack", or "conflict", but as we approach Rosh HaShana, we should be especially blunt and honest: Israel is in the midst of a 7 front war... all fronts of which are tied to Iran. The IDF has entered ground operations to join the targeted attacks against Hezbollah in the south of Lebanon. The US (which had one of our bases in Baghdad attacked today by Iranian proxies) has joined Israel and been clear that any direct provocation by Iran will be met with force directed at Tehran. Hezbollah, which had over 200,000 missiles supplied to them by Iran within the last two years, has apparently had over half of their weapons destroyed by the IDF; and the vast majority of their mid and senior commanders eliminated. Erdogan is sabre-

rattling in Turkey (this is typical, as he has always had hopes of re-creating the Ottoman Empire, and claims to be the true Islamic kingdom); Syria is reporting that there were targeted attacks in Damascus; over one million Lebanese civilians have been displaced, and Bloomberg is reporting that Iran is transferring thousands of fighters into Syria towards Lebanon.

This is a difficult and complicated war for Israel's survival. By re-establishing itself as the military power in the region over the last two weeks, Israel is well on its way to regaining the peace that lasted for years while the extremist Muslim countries were all scared of it (the Koran teaches that while jihad is necessary and an Islamic Caliphate under Sharia law is required, it also instructs Muslims not to go to war with an enemy that is over two times as powerful). But Iran is also powerful now; so Israel and the US are counting on the fact that Iran would rather sacrifice its pride (and Hezbollah as a powerful pawn/proxy) than to go to a full blown direct war with Israel. It is a dangerous gambit --- but so far seems to be working as already Hezbollah is pushing for negotiations through Lebanon for a peace treaty with Israel, which would include Hezbollah backing far away from the Lebanon/Israel border. The pressure on Hamas to release hostages has also increased exponentially as they see that Hezbollah (and by extension, Iran) are not able to come to Hamas' aid. Add into the mix that the IDF is finding extensive Hezbollah tunnels that were to be used for an invasion into Israel (they go underground into Israel); the push by Israel and the US to encourage Iranians to revolt against the Ayatollah and the religious extremist regime; the relative silence of Nasrallah's successor (his cousin Safieddine, who is still alive according to all recent reports); and the reality within Israel that Israelis are tired of taking repeated attacks, and Netanyahu's popular support has skyrocketed in Israel... and we are in the midst of a chaos with a LOT of variables. Variables that could, with God's help, lead to a lasting peace; or God forbid, the opposite.

What is clear is that many of Israeli brothers and sisters are risking their lives every moment; and that all of Israel is constantly under threat. With that reality in mind, I ask that everyone who reads this take the time to say the following Mi Sheberach prayer for Israel soldiers (the language may seem harsh at points, but this is the traditional prayer that has been used historically, and has been asked by the Rabbonim in Israel... remember that "our enemies do not refer to the people of Lebanon or Iran, but to the warmongers in Iran and its proxies of Hezbollah, Hamas, et al):

"May He who blessed our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, bless the soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces [and the security personnel], who stand guard over our land and the cities of our God, from the border of Lebanon to the desert of Egypt, and from the Great Sea to the Aravah [and wherever they may be], on land, in the air, and at sea.

May the Lord cause our enemies who rise against us to be struck down before them! May the Holy One, blessed be He, [protect and deliver them / protect and deliver our soldiers / protect and deliver the defenders of our holy land] from every distress and hardship, from every plague and illness, and send blessing and success in all the work of their hands. May He subdue our enemies beneath them and crown them with salvation and victory. May it be fulfilled for them the verse (Deuteronomy 20:4): 'For the Lord your God is the One who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.' And let us say, Amen"

...and I would add, May the Holy One, Blessed be He, and His Presence keep the people of Israel safe; and protect the seekers of peace of all backgrounds who dream and work for a lasting peace between Israel and her neighbors. Our God and God of our ancestors, bless Israel and all the Jewish nation around the world with Your covering of peace; and may we all be worthy of experiencing that lasting peace come in our time. May we all see in our time the words of your prophet ring true, that Nation shall no longer lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. And let us all say, Amen.

For many, to know that these types of prayers feel like empty words, so I encourage you to watch this prayerful music video, and express your own heartfelt prayers in the way that is the most honest expression of your feelings and your soul.

<https://youtu.be/yze5holvKgU?si=xyUSoxlZbVN7R4V7>

May we all be strengthened in our faith; may we be encouraged in our actions to be right and righteous; and may we all remember that God has honored His covenant for over 3500 years, and He will continue to do so now and always.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 1, 2024
28th of Elul, 5784

October 1st 2024 at 9:29 am PDT

The World Is On The Edge

Chevre,

Our Sages have taught for thousands of years that Rosh HaShana and the Days of Awe are the days of judgment for each of us as individuals, and for the world as a whole. Based on the news from Israel of the last few hours, this seems to be more true than ever before in my lifetime.

It has been reported that the US has detected preparations in Iran to launch ballistic missiles at Israel, and the Pentagon has shown satellite images that demonstrate that Iran has prepared a large number of ballistic missiles to attack Israel. Israel has announced that it has not detected any missiles yet, but that it is as ready as it can be.

We know that the situation is extremely serious as public Rosh HaShana prayer events have been cancelled specifically because of this threat (max of 30 people gathering outdoors and 300 indoors); and Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz, the Rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Places has told people not to come to the Western Wall Plaza tonight.

The IDF has released plans that they found in Lebanon for a Hezbollah version of October 7th that would be "an occupation of the Galilee". Hezbollah, having dug many tunnels, was planning to do a similar event on an even larger scale, but the successful bombings and efforts by the IDF have destroyed much of that infrastructure and tunneling., thank God.

Three US Air squadrons are on their way to Israel, at least one of them has already arrived as of this morning, our time; and US military transport plans are landing in Jordan to transfer military equipment.

For thousands of years, Rosh Hashanah has also been known as the Day of

Judgment. Right now, it seems as if the Liturgy that we say every year about the world's fate hanging and balance is true.

I implore everyone to please say some prayers today in preparation for Rosh Hashanah. Yes, prayers for Israel's safety and protection. But our faith teaches that the balance of the world's fate lies on the actions of each individual. Let us all take some time, and take a real accounting of our souls. What have we done right or wrong in this past year, and what do we need to do in the coming year? How can we fix ourselves, helping each us to be a better version of our self and every moment?

The liturgy is clear that fixing things and making them right (tshuvah), prayer (tefillah), and charity (tzedakh) "remove the severity of the decree"... and we all must do each of these three things now and throughout the day. It may be that the survival of Israel, and of the world depends upon it.

For the first time that I can remember, the high holiday services in Israel are being curtailed because of the specific danger from Iran. It is our responsibility as Jews in the diaspora to pray for our Israeli brothers and sisters. Please make sure that you are attending Rosh Hashanah Services either at our synagogue or somewhere else, and that you are encouraging every Jew you know to be in a temple praying as a community during these services.

The Psalmist reminds us that the Guardian of Israel neither sleeps nor slumbers. God is at our right hand, our coming and our going, now and forever.

May the One who ordains peace in the Universe bring peace upon us, Israel, and the world

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 1, 2024

28th of Elul, 5784

October 1st 2024 at 10:27 am PDT

Update 9:38am

Chevre,

102 ballistic missiles were initially launched at Israel as part of the first wave of attack from Iran. There was a simultaneous terror attack in Tel Aviv, and we're not sure yet how many injured or God forbid dead from that coordinated shooting, but it has been reported at least three dead and over 20 injured. 200-300 missiles were launched by Iran by 10am, and this is now a more intense war (unlike in April, when Iran's attack was minor and ineffective). The Iranian intent is to overwhelm Israel's air defenses with hundreds of missiles across Israel.

Reports from people in bomb shelters are reporting that buildings are shaking and that explosions are going off every four seconds over Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. There are direct hits across the country being reported from Magen Adom at 10:10am pst, but no kist of injuries yet.

As of 10:11 am, air raid sirens have gone off in Tehran...

May the Holy One keep the people, land, and State of Israel safe and protected.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 1, 2024

28th of Elul, 5784

October 1st 2024 at 2:00 pm PDT

How Today's Events Affect Our Community

Chevre,

The IDF has issued official reports about the last few hours. Over 180 missiles came directly from Iran, putting millions of Israelis in danger and going to their shelters. Only a very few actually got through Israel's defenses, thank God, and no deaths and very few casualties haven't even been released. There were some casualties and deaths from individual terrorist attacks that took place; and may their memories be a blessing and their families be comforted among the

mourners of Zion.

The leaders of Israel have asked that every Diaspora Jew attend Rosh Hashanah services this year. Rosh Hashanah is the Day of Judgment, when the world's fate hangs in balance; and many Israelis will not be able to attend their own services depending on what is happening with the war with Iran. It is important that every Jew observes Rosh Hashanah together with other Jews in a prayerful community. More than ever, especially in this challenging time, we all need to support each other's prayers.

A number of people have sent me emails with questions that I think should be addressed.

The first question is about Safety and Security for our community during these high holidays. Not only will the sheriff be patrolling the areas of our services, but we will have over a dozen armed security people at our Canyon Club services. Some will be in gear showing their security, others will be in plain clothes. Our services at our sanctuary, which is much smaller, will also be having armed security. There will be armed security at all Sukkot events, as well as regular drive-bys from the sheriff. No one will be allowed into the services at any venue without a ticket. For those people who intend on registering at the door, they will need to show identification, and again, there will be armed security at each door of the venue.

I cannot make comments about other synagogues or facilities, other than I hope that all temples around the country and world are taking similar precautions

If you have not yet registered for high holiday services, please do so immediately at <https://www.nersimcha.org/high-holy-days-2024>. If you have friends who had not intended on going to services, but now would like to, please have them register at that same site. We have ordered extra chairs and will have standing room as well so that any Jew who wants will be able to pray in a Jewish community.

If you are not attending our services, please, please go somewhere on Wednesday night and Thursday to be part of a Jewish community in prayer on this Day of Judgment. If you are reading this and there's no synagogue near you, watch services online. Do something and be connected in prayer with other Jews

at this important time.. not just for our sake here in the Diaspora, but for the sake of Israel.

Shana Tovah u'Metukah and Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 1, 2024

28th of Elul, 5784

October 2nd 2024 at 5:57 am PDT

As Israel Ends This Year...

Chevre,

It's Wednesday in Israel as I write this... the day that is normally a day of preparation for Rosh HaShana services this evening as shofars are blown and a new year is welcomed. But this is a different day of Erev Rosh HaShana than in any year in our lifetimes.

Services in Israel are being restricted to smaller gatherings, and it has been recommended by the Chief Rabbis to not gather at the classic sacred sites such as the Western Wall. Torah, Judaism, and the essence of Jewish law is always about "saving a life", for we are taught that the Torah is the life and length of our days and we should live by it... not die by it, God forbid. So for many Israelis, the new year will be ushered in while they are either in or close to their shelters. And yet, Israelis, like all Jews worldwide will be eating apples dipped in honey as an action of faith that this coming year will be sweet.

But for many of the soldiers and reserves that are in the midst of war, their Rosh HaShana will be spent not with their families, but with their brothers and sisters in the IDF, as they continue the war that has been ever present since the horrors of October 7.

Tuesday evening through Wednesday early afternoon has brought heavy battles on the Lebanese front; so much so that Israel helicopters rushed to the scene. Israeli media reported, "A group of IDF troops attempted to infiltrate into

southern Lebanon, but were ambushed by Hezbollah's Radwan special forces". Fighter jets joined the fray in Lebanon, as the IAF attacked a number of munitions production infrastructures in Beirut. There has been significant rocket fire from Hezbollah along the northern border, as well as some long range rockets fired at Tel Aviv (no alarms nor injuries reported).

There are reports that Turkey is moving its air defense systems and troops towards the Idlib frontlines in Syria. This is a potentially large and dangerous move by Erdogan; but he has been demonstrating his desire to revive an Ottoman Empire since coming into power, and the world needs to be prepared that he has a consuming desire to make Turkey into a world player. As unbalanced as he is, it is important as we go through all the different battles and challenges in the region that we always keep in mind that Turkey is a loose cannon led by a dangerous seeker of power.

More information has come out about Iran's attack on Israel, which was about twice as powerful as the missile attack in April. It has been reported that on the request of the US, Israel held off attacking Iran last night. The claim is that the US is attempting to assemble an international coalition to simultaneously attack Iran and defend Israel. Different media have suggested that Israel's response to Iran's attack may include targeted assassinations of Iranian leaders, destruction of Iranian air defense systems, oil production facilities inside Iran, and other possible weapons that Israel may have but has not shown yet.

In the midst of this chaos, it was reported this evening that the American Agency for International Development (USAID, a government agency run by Samantha Power, former US Ambassador to the United Nations under President Obama) announced that it will transfer \$336 million to the Palestinians as aid "to the residents of Gaza and the West Bank who have been affected by the ongoing conflict", noting that "total announced US humanitarian aid for the Palestinian people reaches more than \$1 billion since October, 2023".

But it is Rosh HaShana, a New Year and a Day of Judgment, and we need to remember that our greatest ally is not the Iron Dome, the U.S., or any military or negotiating tactic. The greatest ally of the Jewish people is and has always been God.

One of our "weapons" of power that is used at this time is the shofar. A call to

battle, it is blown throughout the month preceding Rosh HaShana as well as during the Days of Awe. We usually teach about it as a call to war with our own inner inclinations... a wake up call for our souls to remind us of how we should act, and how we have let ourselves down through inappropriate actions over the past year. It also has an historical use as being a call to physical war; and famously was also the weapon that tore down the walls of the ancient city of Jericho. And yes, we will be using it throughout the upcoming holidays for these purposes.

But there is another purpose in the shofar blowing we will be hearing in the coming days (the commandment is not to "blow" the shofar, but to "listen" to the shofar). It is also a call to wake up God. To remind Him of his eternal covenant with the Jewish people; of His promise to us of the land of Israel; and of His commitment to always support us. As we awaken our own souls in hearing the shofar, our Sages taught that God too is awakened to remember all His vows to our ancestors.

So as we approach the New Year, let the sound of the shofar bless us all with awakening to our highest purposes and best versions of ourselves; and let the sound remind God to act on our behalf... and for God to honor His commitments by acting as promised.

May this New Year bring all of us, the Jewish people, and the people, land, and State of Israel a speedy victory over those who wish to destroy us; a blessing on those who wish to have a lasting peace with us; and healing, good health, prosperity, love, and peace to all of us in these challenging times.

Am Yisrael Chai...the People of Israel Live; and Shana Tovah U'Metukah, may we all be blessed with a good and sweet New Year.

Chazak u'Barcuch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 2, 2024

29th of Elul, 5784

October 6th 2024 at 6:07 am PDT

A New Year... What Will It Bring?

Chevre,

Gemar Hatimah Tovah, May we all be sealed for blessings in the Book of Life.

Israel survived the Rosh HaShana/Shabbat extra long Festival time, thank God. But as we traverse these Days of Awe between Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, tensions are escalating.

The IDF is taking out more Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon; has launched new operations in northern Gaza designed to stop Hamas from rebuilding (they are doing heavy recruiting through use of food and supplies that were sent into Gaza for "aid", but have instead been spent on recruiting 4000 new terrorists); and are taking out targets in Beirut, after issuing warning via calls, texts, announcements, and flyers. Hamas is sending texts, calls, and flyers to Gazans telling them to disobey IDF evacuation orders, and stay in areas that are or will be attacked in the immediate future. The IDF also attacked weapon bases in Syria in the Al Qusayr area near Lebanon. Lebanese sources say that these are places where Iran is increasing munition supplies in Syria, hence the bombings by Israel.

And the rhetoric is increasing. By Sunday morning in the Middle East (2am PST), Khomeini has threatened to destroy Israel; Netanyahu and Gallant have made it clear that Israel will retaliate at a time of Israel's choosing against the missiles sent by Iran last week; Iran is threatening Azerbaijan if Israel attacks; French President Macron has said that the world's highest priority should be to "stop arms shipments to Israel"; and the President of Azerbaijan has said that they will "burn Iran and its proxies" if Iran attacks their country in any way. Qatari reporters and "mediators" are claiming that they have had no contact with Sinwar.

There are rumors everywhere that Israel is about to strike back at Iran... with many predictions that it will happen Sunday night or Monday (its already almost 3am here, and I apologize that I cannot stay up more hours to see if these rumors are accurate). The rumors were prompted by public US announcements stating this to Jordan, which subsequently closed its airspace by Sunday morning... increasing the validity of the rumor.

As we do our own personal work of tshuvah in these times, let us make sure to include prayers for Israel, her people, and her land... may they stay safe and totally protected in these challenging times

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 6, 2024

4th of Tishrei, 5785

October 7th 2024 at 6:09 am PDT

May Their Memories Be A Blessing

Chevre,

One year ago today, we suffered the single worst day in Jewish history since the Holocaust. This morning in Israel, it has already been a busy day as memorial services are being prepared.

The enemies of Israel still celebrate October 7th and are already attempting to repeat similar horrors today. Rockets were launched from Gaza; Hezbollah terrorists came out of a tunnel from Lebanon but were eliminated by the IDF as they attempted their plan of a repetition of the terror of a year ago. Iran is threatening Israel, and the US has been putting extreme pressure on Israel to not retaliate against Iran by removing weapon facilities, nuclear facilities, and/or oil production plants.. the exact targets that Israel needs to remove to make itself safe. Rockets were launched at Haifa late on Sunday night, and the IDF is trying to investigate and see why so many got through and caused damage, including multiple injuries.

... and all too much of the world is celebrating this anniversary of terror. From the United Nations to Europe, from Washington DC to Chicago, there are demonstrations in celebration of Hamas and of what happened a year ago

We can never forget, nor can we ever let the world forget the heinous crimes committed against Israel a year ago today. When we say Never Again, we must mean it; and through our prayers and especially our actions we must live in ways that contradict and fight the evil that was demonstrated on this date.

There's an old saying that those who survive must always remember those who did not.

I do not have the words, teachings, or stories to convey the pain that has been within all of us for the last year. An excruciating pain for the last year within all of our souls that we must stay aware of.. that we cannot allow ourselves to numb or forget. On this yahrzeit, it is our responsibility to feel that pain as fully as we can, so that it opens the highest Gates of Heaven during these Days of Awe and brings a lasting peace to our people and to Israel.

The Sages of all traditions teach that music can open us in ways that words get lost.

Please watch these videos throughout the day today to remind you of what happened. We must remember. We must never forget and never allow this kind of evil to exist or God forbid to be repeated

We remember and pray for these hostages, whose fate is unknown:

[https://www.instagram.com/reel/DAYWEBxtVhC/?igsh=MTc4MmM1Yml2Ng=
=](https://www.instagram.com/reel/DAYWEBxtVhC/?igsh=MTc4MmM1Yml2Ng=)

We pray for the safety and success of Israel, who stands as the guard for all Western culture in this war being waged by extremists who worship death:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=yze5holvKgU&pp=ygURTWkgc2hlYmVyYWN oIHNoYWk%3D>

We remind ourselves that we are one people...in Israel.and here... and with God's help, we will always live:

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=H_c2MZkpCag&pp=ygUIQW0gZWNoYWQ%3D

Ose Shalom Bimromav. Hu ya'aseh shalom. Aleinu v'al kol Yisrael. V'imru Amen

May their memories be a blessing, and may the One who ordains peace in the universe, bring peace upon the souls who have died in this past year, peace upon their families and their communities, peace upon our community and our nation, a lasting peace upon Israel, and please God, in our time, for the sake of all those who died on October 7th, peace in the world.

And with the destruction of evil and the blessing of a sacred power that can only come through integrating our feelings into our faith and actions; may this prayer sung from the Tower of David in Jerusalem become true in our time... in this New Year. It may seem like an impossible dream right now, but the Prophet Isaiah taught that the time will come when all the people will go up to pray at God's Holy Mountain, and He will make us all joyful in His house of prayer. Let that time be now, in this New Year:

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=TZzK29_V8jQ&pp=ygURS29vbHV5YW0gb25lIGxvdmU%3D#

Never Forget... Never Again... Faith over Fear... May we always choose Life.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 7, 2024

5th of Tishrei, 5785

October 8th 2024 at 6:14 am PDT

Boiling Frogs & How It Started...Do You Remember?

Chevre,

A year ago the world changed for us all. We're now beginning our second year of war. To mark the anniversary of this horrible day, there were Memorial services in Israel and around the world. But more than memorials, there were celebrations by terrorists and those who support them. On college campuses around the nation; on the streets of New York and Chicago; and throughout our country and the world people cheered for the destruction of Israel and the death of Jews. Masked terrorists attacked Jews on the streets of New York and at

Columbia. People chanting for the death of Israel (and America) build the world's streets, and missiles were shot not only in the north by the Galilee, but in Tel Aviv again as well..

How did we get here... to this craziness and danger of an upside down world of Jew hatred?

There's a story, although it is apparently not accurate, that if you put a frog in a pot of water and slowly turn up the heat, he will stay in until he boils to death. This is not apparently true, but the lesson is. The needle has moved and the scale shifted as the last year has desensitized so much of the world to the hatred of the modern Amaleks of Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran. The shock and pain of the events a year ago have worn off with too many people. We have gotten so used to daily missile attacks on it Israel, that we have forgotten how evil they are, and that if these types of attacks happened to any other nation in the world, they would immediately retaliate against the enemy that keeps attacking them like that. But this past year has made us numb. It is made too many people oblivious to the horrors that are happening everyday in Israel. Too many people have become comfortable that there may only be 10 or 20 rockets launched in a day as opposed to dozens.

The launching of even one rocket on to Israel's soil is an act of war! How long must Israel be pressured to restrain itself as it is being attacked by dozens of rockets, and now ballistic missiles from Yemen and Iran every day? Have we really become so used to being attacked that we will just let ourselves be pummeled on a daily basis rather than defend our civilians? These are the type of questions that Netanyahu and Israel's cabinet must deal with every moment of every day... as they have been for a solid year.

I am not suggesting what Israel should or should not do military. Rather, I'm pointing out how many of us have become so immune to the daily pains and fears that are affecting our brothers and sisters in Israel every hour of every day for the last year. We are Diaspora Jews, and we must support Israel with our prayers and actions. In order to do that effectively, we cannot allow ourselves to get "war weary". Like our brothers and sisters in Israel, we must be aware at all times of what is happening around us and in the world: The Jew-hatred being expressed in the halls of our government, the streets of our cities, and the campuses of our universities.

We must stay awake. We must always remember. We must never forget. And we must make sure that the words "Never Again" are not just a statement, but a promise to our ancestors, the victims of October 7th 2024; and most especially, a promise to our children and their children. A promise to always seek to destroy evil, and to pursue peace.

May we always turn away from evil and do good, and may the Holy One bless us all with a lasting peace in this New Year

To help us all remember how we felt upon hearing of the heinous and horrific deeds of the terrorists who attacked Israel, at the bottom of this email our copies of the first two missives I sent out on October 7th, 2024. Made their reminders of the pain of that day, and help us recommit ourselves to a better future.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 8, 2024

6th of Tishrei, 5784

This was written at 2:04am PST on October 7, 2023... do you remember how you felt as you learned the news? Where are those feelings now, a day later?

Chevre

50 years ago almost to the day, on October 6, 1973, Israel was attacked on the holy day of Yom Kippur. Today, October 7, 2023, Israel has again been attacked on the holiday of Shemini Atzeret. Once again, our people and nation have been attacked; all reservists have been called up; and Israel is again fighting for her life.

Hamas terrorists infiltrated into Israeli communities through the Gaza strip, and launched a surprise attack in conjunction with over 5000 rockets fired into Israel. A video from Gaza showed a lifeless Israeli soldier being trampled on by an angry crowd; and Hamas is asking that all Arab nations attack Israel immediately to "set the earth on fire". The Hamas commander, Mohammed

Deif, specifically asked all terror groups in Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq; all of which are funded through Iran, to join in a war against Israel.

We must all pray for our brothers and sisters in Eretz Yisrael, that they remain safe and protected, and that they quickly triumph over these terrorists who worship death, destruction, and hate.

If you wish to learn more as it happens, accurate coverage from the Times of Israel can be found here:

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog-october-7-2023/>

I ask that you join me in your hearts, souls, and voices...

Ribbono Shel Olam, Master of the Universe; Shema Koleinu, Hear our voices. Keep the men and women in the IDF safe and protected as they defend our people and our nation. Protect the civilians, and lead our people to a speedy and safe victory over those who seek to destroy us and have attacked us on this Holy Day of Shemini Atzeret. Remember the covenant that you made with our ancestors to always protect us. Remember the promises you made to Sarah, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah; and keep their children safe now in these times of war. Keep our people safe, and let your healing light keep our bodies and souls strong and whole. Bring healing to the bodies of our brothers and sisters in the IDF; and healing to the hearts of these Arab terrorists so that they put down their weapons and totally cease their hate for us. Please God, please, bring peace and healing swiftly to the Jewish people so that we may worship and live safely in the land you gave to us through our forefathers. May You, the One who makes peace in the Universe, make peace upon us and upon all Israel. And together, let us say, Amen.

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 7, 2023

22nd of Tishrei, 5784

I wrote this email below to our community on that fateful afternoon later in the day. Where are our feelings now? Where has the pain, anger, fear, frustration, and even hope... where have they all disappeared to within the last year?

Chevre

During this celebratory holiday of Shemini Atzeret, I have spent much of the last 12 hours in tears and prayer. The terrible attacks in Israel bring back all too vividly the pain and shock I experienced 50 years ago as a child in Yom Kippur services when we were attacked on Oct. 6, 1973. We are taught that tears are some of the deepest and most honest prayers, and if this is true, I know that many of us have been praying with all our hearts.

The horrors that are going on in Israel right now are beyond comprehension. There are videos available on Twitter and The Times of Israel that Hamas has proudly put out that are beyond disgusting. Please do not watch these if you have a weak stomach, for what these terrorists are proudly doing is beyond the capability of any sane human being to conceive. The conscious attacks and kidnapping of civilians; the parading and desecration of naked Jewish bodies in the street; and the joy that is being taken at doing these animalistic acts can be easily seen, but are degrading to the soul. These terrorists have surrendered any sense of humanity in favor of barbarism. And in the streets of Tehran, which is the source of Hamas' funding, they are shooting off fireworks in celebration of these atrocities.

But we are Jews. We choose to have faith that darkness will always shift to light with God's guidance and help.

I know it is so difficult to have faith right now in anything, and this is when our faith is most important. We are a religion of faith and action, so I ask that you do both on this Shabbat of Shemini Atzeret. Please support Israel in action by giving financially to any Israel organization such as friends of the IDF. Please withdraw support for any organization that condemns Israel in any way. We need to be unified in our support of the Holy Land in this time of crisis. Even the judicial protestors in Israel have publicly put aside all protests and controversy and made it clear that everyone must step up to support and serve Israel. We must come together as Jews in acting in support of Eretz Yisrael.

And I ask that you pray. Really pray. Please take at least a few moments today and do two important steps. Think for a moment of the pain going on in Israel; of the horrors being perpetrated against our brothers and sisters there; the personal incidents that help you feel the pain. If you cannot emotionally get in touch with the pain, then watch some of the videos that Hamas has proudly

released that show them desecrating the naked bodies of Jewish soldiers and civilians. And I ask that you allow yourself to feel the pain of our people so deeply that the tears come.

And then, I ask you to pray for peace. Let the tears and pain carry your prayers to the Holy One.

When we truly cry out, God listens. We cried out to be released from the pain of slavery in Egypt, and we became free. We cried out to return to Israel from Babylon 2600 years ago and we returned. We cried out for almost 2000 years to return to Israel and have a homeland, and the modern State of Israel was born.

Please, please, cry out for peace. And with the help of the Holy One, our cries will be answered fully and quickly.

Ribbono Shel Olam, Master of the Universe, please keep the people of Israel safe and protected. Help the soldiers of the IDF fulfill their duties safely, and repel the terrorists who attack us on this holiday of Shmini Atzeret. Bring peace and healing to all of Eretz Yisrael, and allow the Jewish people to come together in this time of crisis and support each other and the State of Israel. May You bless us with your peace and guidance, and bring Israel and her people to safety, healing, and peace. Please God, shema koleinu...hear our prayer.

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 7, 2023

22nd of Tishrei, 5784

May God bless us and the nation of Israel with good health, safety, and a real and lasting peace

October 9th 2024 at 5:18 am PDT

As The World Turns...

Chevre,

It never ceases to amaze me how the world acts with regard to Israel. Tuesday night and Wednesday have seen the media in Israel report things that simply don't seem to be on the radar of most of the media here in the States... and much of it is disturbing. Some events over the last 24 hours include:

--- Attacks on both Tel Aviv and Haifa, with limited injuries, thank God. The IDF has found and destroyed more and more tunnels that led from Lebanon into Israeli territory, and had created by Hezbollah to recapitulate the terrors of October 7th.

--- A bouncing of political rhetoric that is astonishing in terms of how leaders around the world contradict each other. Defense Minister Gallant said in a prepared statement that Hezbollah is without leadership, thanks to the IDF taking out leader after leader along with their replacements. Hezbollah is claiming that they are as strong as they have ever been. The Austrian Prime Minister called Netanyahu a modern-day Churchill on Wednesday morning, while the French government is condemning him for not having an immediate cease fire with Iranian proxies. The French Foreign Ministry Office is also saying that Israel is creating ceasefire terms with Hezbollah, and Israel is saying that any ceasefire will be entirely on their terms. Netanyahu has been sending statements to the Lebanese people inviting them to rise up against Hezbollah and turn Lebanon back into the paradise of the Middle East that it was decades ago. The United States is apparently having meetings (covertly, but reported in multiple media) with different Arab Nations to structure a ceasefire, but neither Hezbollah nor Israel are involved in those discussions, so that seems sort of moot. The Wall Street Journal is reporting that Biden and Austin are furious with Gallant and Netanyahu for not getting American approval on any attacks or plans with Iran, and the US insists on "shaping the limitations of the Israeli retaliation". Israel is consistently disturbed that each time they do have dialogues with American officials, somehow the plans that are discussed end up being known by Iran and its proxies. Netanyahu and Biden are currently scheduled to have a telephone call on Wednesday late afternoon Israel time (morning in Washington). This is especially interesting given Bob Woodward's new book "War" which comes out Oct. 15, and which has now been reviewed and excerpts from the book released.. According to Woodward, Biden hates Netanyahu with a passion, calling him a "bad f****g guy", and "f*****g liar" for going against Biden and going into Rafah after Biden tried to dictate that Israel could not go there.

--- Most disturbingly, it seems clear now that Iran had an underground nuclear test this past Saturday night. Iran had declared a "closed sky", even though there was no attack from Israel. The test resulted in an earthquake in the area that has never had an earthquake before, and there was no pre-quake nor aftershocks, and experts are saying that it was similar in its destructive power to the bombs of India, Pakistan, and Korea. If these experts are correct, Iran, which has been prohibited from doing nuclear weapons development, could God forbid be close to having nukes. Given their theology, there's no question they would be willing to use them God forbid; and this is no doubt at the forefront of the Israeli leaders' consciousness.

For thousands of years, our faith has taught that the very existence of the world hangs in balance and is judged between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. We are to view these 10 days as a trial, and one good act by even one individual may make the difference in the verdict for the entire world. We all need to be self honest, take responsibility for how we have acted in this past year, and fix what we have done. Our religion, as expressed in the high holiday liturgy, reminds us that acts of charity, repentance, and prayer can remove the severity of the decrees against us. Let us all spend these few days left before Yom Kippur performing these acts, and cleaning our own souls and Books of Life. If we each view the world in this way, and do these acts of goodness, it is the Jewish belief that we will each be responsible for helping the world continue and heal. The Lubavitcher Rebbe taught that in a hall of complete darkness, one small candle can be perceived from afar by everyone... and now you know part of the reason that our temple is named "Ner Simcha" (a candle of light of joy). The Book of Proverbs by King Solomon teaches that each of our souls is a candle flame for God... and we need to light our candles especially in these dark times.

Let us each bring light into the dark world during these Days of Awe, and May our actions right now and always be for good and to make the world a better place, starting with ourselves.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 9, 2024

7th of Tishrei, 5785

October 10th 2024 at 5:43 am PDT

An Important Thing To Do While We Wait

Chevre,

Biden and Netanyahu had a call on Wednesday evening (Israel time), and this could have been expected, there have been all sorts of "leaks" in the media that may be true, or may be untrue, but leaked in order to create certain reactions. Both Israel and the White House are agreeing that Biden says he supports Israel, but little else of the results of their conversation coincide with each other. What is clear is that there will be some sort of strike against Iran, Israel is making claims that it will be swift and decisive, Biden his thing that no Israeli attacks should occur on nuclear oil facilities in Iran, and Israel is not revealing what its plans really are.

And so we wait... knowing that something will happen at some point in time, but really not knowing what or where. We do know that Hezbollah and the other Iranian proxies are continuously shooting rockets at Israel, with emphasis on Haifa, Safed, and the northern Galilee.

But as we wait, there's something that each one of us can do that is important on another front.

The UNRWA, the United Nations organization that has been actively supporting Hamas and has members that are in both groups, has been nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize. Members of this organization are directly responsible for the entry and deaths of dozens if not hundreds of Israelis; and there were even many that have been proven to have helped with the October 7th day of horror on behalf of Hamas.

You must do all that we can support Israel and every way. One of those ways is to stop the propaganda machine that could even get this organization nominated, let alone be a favorite for receiving the prize. I invite everyone to please sign a petition against UNRWA's candidacy before any sort of decision is made... and to please pass the information about this petition on to every friend

and relative that you have. There are only about 38,000 signatories so far, and we need to get this into the millions.

Please sign the petition at:

<https://imti.org.il/en/project/72033/>

We and our brothers and sisters in Israel are all one family. Any sort of public recognition for UNRWA defames the memory those who died October 7th. We need to stop being silent, and call out evil wherever we see it... and that includes demanding that this agency of the United Nations becomes chastised rather than honored. It is not only the right thing to do, it is yet another connection for each of us to create with our brothers and sisters in Israel.

Please take the few moments to fill out this petition, and may we and all of Israel stay safe as Israel prepares, and then launches its attacks.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 10, 2024

8th of Tishrei, 5785

October 11th 2024 at 5:57 am PDT

As We Approach Yom Kippur...

Chevre,

As Israel prepares for the evening of Kol Nidrei, the nation is on high alert during this holy time. The Chief Rabbinate has again made it clear that the laws of Torah are to be lived by, not to put us in jeopardy. For the first time in my memory, telephones are being left on at synagogues, people are being encouraged to carry weapons with them if they are licensed, and the nation is on edge... both spiritually (as is the case every year at this time) and physically (as we are faced right now with this existential threat). Our liturgy reads, "The day of judgment has arrived, and even the angels tremble"; and it is true.

And yet, Yom Kippur is considered a happy day by our Sages. In fact, in two

different places in the Talmud, it is referred to as one of the "two happiest days of the year". We are told that even its name - "Yom Hakippurim" should be read not as "Day of Atonement" (Yom Hakippurim), but as "Yom Ha C' Purim" ("the day that is like Purim"). Sad holidays in Judaism cannot fall on Shabbat: when Tisha b'Av (the 9th day of Av, remembering all of the pains in our history) falls on the Sabbath, we move the holiday until Sunday, the 10th of Av for this reason. Yet, when Yom Kippur falls on a sabbath, as it does this year, it only makes the day extra, extra special as it is the celebration of the Shabbat in addition to the celebration of Yom Kippur.

Why is it so happy? There are a number of reasons, but one of the simplest and deepest is that it is the day historically when God forgave the Jewish people for their greatest sin. If we track the Hebrew calendar from the holiday of Shavuot (where we celebrate the giving of the Ten Commandments), we see that our ancestors committed the most horrible sin in our people's history when we had the Golden Calf incident on the 17th day of the month of Tammuz. Moses then begs God for forgiveness, goes back up to the mountain, and eventually brings down the second set of the Ten Commandments on the 10th of Tishrei... the date of Yom Kippur. It is God's sign of the ultimate forgiveness for the evil that we did.

Look at the story this way... On Passover, God became betrothed with the Jewish people, promising a unique and special relationship with our ancestors and their descendants (us). On Shavuot, the Jewish people and God were married, with the Torah being our wedding ketubah. When Moses came down from Sinai the first time and saw the evils going on, the Jewish people had broken their marriage vows and were worshipping an idol. God forgives the people, and presents the new ketubah on Yom Kippur. This action of forgiveness makes this day such a celebration. Despite our mistakes, God forgives us as a people, and presents us with the Torah.

But if Yom Kippur is celebratory, why do we fast? It is not out of penance, but rather so that we can disconnect ourselves entirely from the physical world, and have our Consciousness totally in a spiritual realms of awareness. The fast, which includes prohibiting food, bathing, marital relations, wearing leather, and all physical actions which relate to the body such as anointing with oil or wearing makeup, is not performed to create suffering. It is the exact opposite, and when performed with intention, the fast leads the individual to a deeper awareness of

their relationship with God as they disconnect from the physical world.

If you have medical conditions, you are forbidden from fasting, and actually commanded to take care of your body by eating or drinking as necessary. Newlyweds are forbidden from fasting, as we want newlyweds to always be attracted to each other, and fasting does not always make people look or smell attractive. Pregnant mothers and those who are breastfeeding are forbidden from fasting for obvious reasons. (Yes, this means that if a woman times it, she could avoid fasting for many years by having multiple children, and constantly being in the state of pregnancy or breastfeeding.) Soldiers, like our brave men and women in Israel, are forbidden from fasting so that they keep their strength and can defend the people and nation.

And these challenging times, and after this incredibly painful year, it will be difficult to have joy this year... but we must each individually discover how to feel the pain of the past year, embrace it fully, and in so doing, consciously transform it into commitment, passion, and healing.

May we, and all the House of Israel be blessed in this holiday to find wholeness, healing, and peace; and May we all be sealed for blessings in the Book of Life

Gemar Hatimah Tovah, and Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 11, 2024

9th of Tishrei, 5785

October 13th 2024 at 1:15 am PDT

Yom Kippur Is Past, What Is The Future?

Chevre,

Gemar Hatimah Tovah, May we all be sealed for blessings in the Book of Life.

Yom Kippur in Israel was challenging, and we should all be grateful for the many IDF soldiers who protected the land and the people as opposed to observing

their own holiday for themselves. May they all be blessed with good health, safety, protection, love, and peace. Over 300 Rockets were launched into Israel during Yom Kippur. The irony seems to be lost on the world that while the Iranian proxies attacked us last year on Simchat Torah, and throughout the year on all of our holidays and festivals such as Passover, Rosh Hashanah, and today on Yom Kippur... Israel was repeatedly told by the US, UK, and the entire world that they could not attack these proxies during Ramadan. The deeper irony is that Ramadan is actually a month where Muhammad himself started two wars, and our holidays are all dedicated to peace.. yet Ramadan is off limits but attacking on Yom Kippur seems to be just fine.

The United Nations is contemplating getting involved to militarily stop Israel from any actions in Gaza against Hamas, or Hezbollah in Lebanon, and accusing Israel of genocide for defending itself. Since Yom Kippur finished in Israel, there have been many attacks by the IDF in Lebanon, including a face to face conflict with Hezbollah terrorists.

While we have all been in Yom Kippur services around our nation here, anti-Semitism has kept growing. A senior director of CBS News has instructed that CBS should not refer to Jerusalem as part of Israel any longer. That is getting some backlash so we will see what actually happens there, but the fact that this is even a discussion is extremely disturbing and scary in many ways.

Iranian news service Tasmin is reporting that Israel has struck a deal with Syrian opposition forces in the north of Syria to the rate that nation from Iranian and Hezbollah control. The opposition forces are very anti Hezbollah and anti Iran as the experience many persecutions from the Iranian proxy over the past years.

It has been reported by Arab news sites that the new commander of Hezbollah, Hussein Assili, was killed in an airstrike in southern Lebanon. Assili, prior to becoming commander of Hezbollah, had been in charge of all the drug trade that has been using to finance Iranian operations throughout the Middle East in Africa. He was in charge of Hezbollah for less than 100 hours. Hezbollah commanders and leaders maybe dedicated fanatics who desire to die for their cause, but the fact that each new Commander is quickly eliminated by the IDF will at some point, if it has not already started, force commanders in Hezbollah to contemplate deeply whether or not they want to be leaders of the terrorist organization.

French President Macron is again espousing anti-israel rhetoric. On Saturday, he expressed that there must be a cessation of military conflict, and the best way to do that is to stop any country from helping Israel with any intelligence information, and especially stopping the importation of weapons into Israel from other nations. The Yemeni defense minister said on Saturday that they are preparing for conflict with the Houthis; and the Houthis have claimed that they are going to go to war with the government of Yemen if they try to stop the Houthis in their upcoming attacks on Israeli and US Navy vessels. While there has been no commitment, different news organizations including the New York Times are reporting that Washington DC is mulling over sending top of the line advanced anti-ballistic missile defense systems to Israel, in preparation for Iran attacking Israel again.

The Talmud that teaches that the process of creation goes from darkness to light. Let us all pray that the darkness of the past year is now being transformed into light and a long-lasting and safe peace for Israel.

...and let us all remember the teachings of today at services, and the power and importance of words... and everyday, say out loud the words of power:

Am Yisrael Chai

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 13, 2024

11th of Tishrei, 5785

October 14th 2024 at 6:45 pm PDT

Updates in Israel

Chevre,

Please forgive me for not getting an email out last night, my body wanted to remind me that I'm not 30 years old anymore and needed to rest a bit.

It has been a very painful time in Israel since Yom Kippur. A Hezbollah drone got through to a military base. 4 Israeli soldiers were killed, May their memory be a blessing and their families comforted among the mourners of Zion. Additionally seven other soldiers were seriously injured, and have been taken to a hospital.

The UNIFL, which is supposedly a United Nations peacekeeping Force that is supposed to make sure that Hezbollah doesn't launch rockets or do other military attacks, has obviously been failing in its job for over 20 years. Rather than keeping the peace, their bases have been used by Hezbollah as launch sites, and yes, they have known about it. They are either being forced to, or cooperating with Hezbollah, and being used as human Shields. The IDF has repeatedly given them warnings, if they refuse to evacuate. The UN Secretary General, who is repeatedly demonstrated his Jew hatred, is now claiming that if any of these UN "peacekeepers" are injured or killed, this would constitute Israel committing war crimes. Apparently if Israel defends itself against an attacker who is using an UNIFL location as a launch site, Israel, according to the UN Secretary General, should just leave that site alone. According to the UN, Israel's only choices are either to let itself get attacked and not respond, or to be labeled by the UN as war criminals.

The UN should remember the teaching of Golda Meir that given the choice between being dead and pitied or alive and hated, we choose being alive and hated.

This is all happened since Sunday night in Israel, and the world's reaction has been predictable. Spain is calling upon the European Union to boycott Israel until Israel stops responding to the attacks from Iran and its proxies. The UK, Italy, and France are all condemning Israel for defending itself, despite the fact that none of them ever commented on the thousands of rockets that have been launched by Hezbollah. Kamala Harris made a statement that Israel needs to let aid brought to these terrorist organizations who are attacking Israel.

As has been pointed out many times before by myself and others, this may be the first time in recorded history where a nation that is defending itself is supposed to bring humanitarian aid to its enemies who want to destroy it.

According to multiple sources, Iran has stopped having any discussions with

anyone, including the United States, and have said that if there's any retaliation against them that they will respond however they desire, and that there's no red line (meaning that they would be willing to use nuclear weapons among other things)

Again I apologize for not emailing last night, I hope to see everyone in the community Sukkah this week. Every night should be fun and I hope that everyone will come with your family and bring friends!

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 14, 2024

12th of Tishrei, 5785

October 16th 2024 at 6:36 am PDT

World Politics, Israel, & Sukkot Tonight!

Chevre,

It has been said that no other country in the history of the world has ever had to fight any wars with the constraints that are put upon Israel by the United States and the rest of the world, and the truth of this statement was made extremely clear over the last 36 hours. As I write this, it is the early afternoon on Wednesday, and Israel is preparing for the Festival of Sukkot. Sadly, during this Festival where we are commanded to be happy, Israel is also physically battling seven different fronts of war, and even more fronts of political pressure from the world.

It has been announced through Blinken and Austin that the US is threatening to pull out of supporting Israel, unless Israel does what the US wants in terms of retaliation against Iran. They have made it clear that Israel is not to attack any nuclear facility, or oil and or energy facility, as it would raise the price of oil worldwide, and by their own admission, potentially hurt the administration in the upcoming election. I'm not sure which is worse, the fact that they made this threat so overtly, or that they admitted as to what the reason is. All of these

challenging issues between Israel and the United States are only amplified with more excerpts coming out of Bob Woodward's new book. The excerpts released today claim that Biden has told his aides that "18 of 19 people who work with Netanyahu are liars." Blinken and Austin have also made statements that they will withhold arms to Israel unless Israel brings in more aid to Gaza. They have given Israel 30 days to comply (right after the election), or face an embargo from the US. No country in the history of the world has ever provided constant humanitarian aid to an enemy that wishes it's destruction. Yet it is expected that Israel do just that not only in Gaza, but in Lebanon and potentially every other front.

Macron is pushing to have France stop supporting Israel in any way, unless Israel immediately creates a unilateral ceasefire. Austria has refused to pull any of its personnel from the UNIFIL "peacekeeping force", which has neither kept the piece nor prohibited terrorists from making United Nations offices their weapons bases. This is a setup against Israel. Israel's choices are left to either leaving alone the Hezbollah weapon bases that are adjacent to U.N. offices and keep getting attacked from those bases; or eliminating those bases, and being accused of war crimes for attacking a United Nations facility.

But as all this craziness continues around the world, in Israel and every Jewish community we also begin the holiday of Sukkot this evening. There is a kabbalistic understanding that every holiday in Judaism actually stems out of Sukkot, and it is the only holiday in which we are "commanded" to be happy. This year, it holds a special theological significance that we must remember in these challenging times. The holiday is a reminder, among other things, that nothing in the physical world is permanent. The Succah is a temporary structure. We can all be assured that as beautiful and green as it is today and for the next few days, the palm fronds will be dried and brittle by the end of the holiday a week from now. The entire holiday reminds us that the only thing permanent is the spiritual world, the world of relationships and love. Like the Chuppah in a wedding ceremony, it reminds us to put less emphasis on the physical world, and more on the spiritual reality. In these challenging times it is a reminder that we all need about where Israel's safety really comes from: not her political allies nor her weapons, but from the protection of the Holy One and his Presence.

As we are about to begin this holiday, let us constantly keep that teaching in mind. Our people have survived for over 3,500 years because of the Covenant

made between us and God, and we need to remember that God will always keep His promise... Am Yisrael Chai.

I hope you will come to the community Succah tonight to welcome in the holiday tonight with a pot luck dinner (please bring only dairy or parve). Or maybe you will be joining tomorrow for our "Sushi in the Succah/Pizza in the Hut" dinner. Or Friday evening for a service, pot luck dinner (again, dairy/parve) and "Rebbe Tish"... or hopefully all three! The week of Sukkot will be filled with other events every night ("Tequila Tasting & Hooka in the Succah", a class on Jewish Astrology, Movie Night in the Succah, Talmud & Tobacco on the Politics of Islam, and more) ; and if you wish to just come over and wave the lulav and etrog during any day (other than Shabbat) please reach out to me directly to schedule a time and I will help you observe this important commandment of waving the lulav. Detailed information can be found at <https://www.nersimcha.org/calendar>

So while the world may look dark, the holiday of Sukkot is a way to bring God's light into the physical world. I hope we will all be together under the shade of the Holy One and His Presence in the Succah tonight and throughout the week, and that, as we pray at every service, God spreads over the people of Israel His Sukkah of Peace (Ufros Aleinu Sukkat Shlomecha)

Chazak U'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 16, 2024

14th of Tishrei, 5785

October 17th 2024 at 9:31 am PDT

Sinwar Dead

Chevre,

It has been confirmed that Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, the leader of Hamas, was killed during an IDF operation in Rafah. DNA results confirmed it was Sinwar according to Israeli media.

Chazak u'Baruch and Chag Sameach

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 17, 2024

15th of Tishrei, 5785

October 18th 2024 at 6:35 am PDT

The Day After...

Chevre,

Many media outlets in Israel called Friday, "the Day After", based on the idea that everything changes with the death of Sinwar. It is suspected that his successor will be his brother, and the death itself of this truly evil man may ultimately be significant, or he may just be replaced with someone as evil with little to no change in the situation in the region.

But the hope of all Jews everywhere, is that his death, like the death of Nasrallah and other terrorist leaders, has so damaged the Iranian proxy terrorist organizations, that these terrorists turn upon each other. The death of these two terrorist leaders, who were always considered "untouchable", will hopefully have a tremendous effect on the remaining terrorists who are still alive. Netanyahu's speech a few minutes after the confirmation of Sinwar's death may be the opening for at least some hostages to return home. Netanyahu made two things extremely clear: Sinwar's death proves again that Israel can find anyone anywhere; and that Israel is now offering a form of immunity and safe passage out of Gaza for any terrorist who brings hostages back.

This second aspect will hopefully encourage terrorists to increase their infighting as some would rather survive, and others would rather die. By Netanyahu making that offer publicly, it will hopefully cause a rift within the organization. Given how many leaders the IDF has eliminated, many of the new leaders will need to determine whether they really want to die or not... and "the day after" will hopefully quickly include the return of hostages.

The perpetual daily question is however, when and how will Israel retaliate

against Iran? The US is pressing Israel extremely hard to temper their retaliation, to avoid all oil fields and facilities as well as any nuclear facilities. It is not clear yet what Israel is going to choose to do, nor when. What is clear and is being repeated over and over again by Israeli leadership is that the goals of the war must be met: the hostages returned, safe buffer zones on all of the borders, a change in Gaza leadership so that Hamas is not in power, the destruction of Hezbollah as an attacker of Israel so that the north is safe. There are dialogues within Israel that to meet these goals may require direct conflict with Iran, and there are other discussions that these goals can only be met through developing a working relationship with Iran (something that is highly unlikely based upon Iran's own repeated statements, but miracles can and do happen, especially when it comes to protecting the Jewish people).

Especially during the last year, there have been many teachings about the importance of combining faith and action to create our objective goals. We are now in the midst of the holiday that combines those two qualities and integrates them in every way. Sukkot is a beautiful holiday, from which we are taught every law and practice in Judaism comes out of... the Succah is that powerful. It is a womb of creation that can help every individual manifest their dreams in a way of beauty and success. And it is a perfect integration of faith and action: just by dwelling in it our prayers are deep. Just by having a meal or coming as a guest to someone else's Succah; you are acting with your body based upon the faith that this Jewish holiday is valuable.

And it is so, so valuable. There are no coincidences in life according to our faith, and it was no coincidence that Sinwar was killed on the first day of Sukkot. The man most responsible for the horrors of October 7th, which was on a Jewish holiday, died on a Jewish holiday. On Yom Kippur we are taught to look at the state of the world as if it hangs in equal balance between good and evil, and the slightest weight on one side or the other will determine the fate of the world. Based upon this, our tradition teaches that even one small good deed may be exactly what is needed to weigh the scales.

Perhaps it was because of one prayer or one deed that you did in the last 24 hours, week, month, or year that caused the Heavenly judge to allow us to continue. Maybe it was because someone observed Sukkot for the first time that we were all judged positively. And it is distinctly possible that because of one small act that you did, the leader of Hamas was eliminated (Which really was

miraculous given that the squad that found and killed him we're not even looking for him). Dwelling in the Succah is one of the few Commandments that we can still observe exactly as our ancestors did thousands of years ago.

Please make it a point to go to a Succah this year, and offer prayers of petition for Israel and the world, and prayers of gratitude for the many miracles we all have experienced this past year both in the United States and in Israel, including the elimination on Thursday of one of the heads of the snake that has so hurt our people and nation. Our Temple website has a calendar of the programs we are doing during this week long holiday, and I hope to see everyone who reads this and lives in Southern California in our community Succah at some point during the week.

Every person who dwells in a Succah for one meal or longer is participating in the movement towards peace and success for our brothers and sisters in Israel, and for righteousness worldwide.

I hope to see you in the Succah, and Chag Sameach

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 18, 2024

16th of Tishrei, 5785

October 20th 2024 at 6:39 am PDT

This Weekend in Israel

Chevre,

It is now Sunday afternoon in Israel, and the focus in Israeli media over the weekend so far has been two large events:

Suicide drones came from Lebanon to attack Prime Minister Netanyahu's home in Caesaria. They were stopped, and no serious injuries have been reported. But this type of assassination attempt on an elected official is just another example

of double standard that the world uses against Israel. Israel has been condemned worldwide for having the audacity to kill Nasrallah, one of the world's most wanted criminals and the head of one of the largest terrorist organizations in the world. But Western leaders have already been saying how Israel must restrain itself and its response to Iran both for its previous attack and for this attempt on Netanyahu's life. The Prime Minister himself is staying relatively quiet about his reaction, and Iran is claiming that Hezbollah acted as a lone actor and that Iran had nothing to do with it.

The other piece of news that is monopolizing the media is about Sinwar's death. Footage has been released of his final moments. For Israelis, confirms that he is dead. For terrorists, it is a recruiting video about how an Islamic hero should die. Hamas, as well as many terrorist supporters ranging from Palestinian Authority leader Abbas to Turkey's leadership have called him a martyr and great leader. Hamas is not claiming who their next leader will be, saying that they will keep it a secret but that they are as strong as ever. They have also said repeatedly that this will not affect any hostage releases, and inferred that it may even do the opposite.

Many Western leaders ranging from France's Macron to Biden to U.K. Prime Minister Starmer have suggested that his death means that the hostages can now be released, but Hamas is being clear that the opposite is true. Netanyahu has publicly made it clear that the current policy of Israel is now that if a Hamas leader brings hostages out, they will get free passage out of Gaza. So far, there have been no reports that this proposal has been accepted by anyone, and certainly, the statements coming out of Hamas are filled with saber rattling and commitments that Sinwar's death will not affect the behavior of Hamas.

Domestic politics in Israel have become a bit more intense since the attempted assassination of Netanyahu on Saturday. Leaders of the opposition Lapid and Gantz were noticeably quiet, and did not even reach out to check on Netanyahu's health via a telephone call. Security Minister Ben Gvir was reported by Western media to have been on the Temple Mount at around 11:00AM on Sunday, but the reports said he did not go in.. except this entire story was untrue. There's actually a lot of footage of him at the Western Wall today with his own personal lulav and etrog in prayer. While American media repeatedly publishes negative news about Netanyahu, his popularity has actually been increasing over the past year with Israeli citizens, and much of Israel considers

him a hero... an attitude that will be amplified as a result of this attempted assassination. There is a truth to the old joke the two Jews equals three opinions, four rabbis, and five synagogues. But I think it is truer to say that two Israeli politicians equals 10 opinions and 15 political parties... and at a time when the nation needs all Israeli politicians unified together, it is painful to see divisiveness.

May all Jews of all different beliefs become unified during this Festival of Sukkot, and way we all be blessed to dwell under God's covering of peace during this holy time and beyond.

For anyone who seeks to perform the beautiful mitzvah of waving the lulav and etrog, we will be doing that today from 11:00AM until about 1:00PM in the community Succah, so I hope to see people participating in this beautiful practice, and enjoying a potluck brunch in the shade of the Holy One. I also hope to see people tomorrow tonight, Monday, in the community Succah at 7:00PM as we have a class and learn together about the details of Jewish astrology, how and what the Torah teaches about the power of the constellations, and the detailed beliefs and practices of Jewish astrological readings.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 20, 2024

18th of Tishrei, 5785

October 21st 2024 at 7:36 am PDT

Israel update

Chevre,

Sinwar's death seems not to have moved things forward towards peace as much as many of us had hoped. Hezbollah launched at least 111 rockets by midday on Sunday and at least 170 by early Monday morning, the Houthis launched missiles, and the Commander of IDF's 401st Armored Brigade, Col. Ehsan Daqsa, from the Druze town of Daliyat al-Karmel was killed outside his tank in a booby

trapped site. May his memory be a blessing, and his family comforted among the mourners of Zion and the entire Druze community. Shiral Golan, a survivor of Nova, succumbed to the trauma and PTSD, and killed herself today on her 22nd birthday. May her memory also be a blessing and her family comforted. Please say Kaddish for these two heroes who went through so much over the last year.

After days of warnings and notifications to the populace of Beirut, the IDF attacked numerous financial institutions of Hezbollah. It is currently Monday morning in Israel as I'm writing this, and we are all waiting to see what the reaction will be. Both Hezbollah and Tehran had been making claims that if any financial institutions were attacked, or any other important sites in Iran, that there would be no limit to how they would respond, and that all forms of attack (implying nuclear if they have) would be options for them.

The head of Shin Bet is in Cairo having meetings with his counterpart from Egyptian intelligence about trying to structure another hostage deal of some sort.

The current mood in Israel is very mixed, and among many even suspicious of the United States at this moment. On the one hand, Israel is extremely grateful to the United States for providing THAAD missile defense systems as well as American operators for it. On the other hand, Americans are negotiating at the Swiss Embassy in Tehran for a ceasefire based on UN resolution 1701, which Hezbollah has been violating for 18 years. It doesn't help that Bernie Sanders made public statements to CNN that if Vice President Harris becomes the President, she will be open to his proposal for a total arms embargo against Israel. As Americans, we know that Sanders is not on the Harris campaign staff, nor does he speak for the Vice President, and that his statement is relatively meaningless. The challenge is that many Israelis are not aware of the subtleties of American politics, and so they just assume (totally incorrectly) that Sanders is speaking for the Vice President. It is all compounded with the information that the Jerusalem Post reported that someone or some group in the administration leaked Israeli plans against Iran; a fact that has now been corroborated by multiple sources, and has sparked an investigation in the House of Representatives. The leak may or may not have affected Israel's plans of retaliation against Iran, but there is a large question in the mind of many Israelis about where the United States really stands.

But we are in the middle of Sukkot, a time of happiness and a holiday of faith. One of the primary teachings of this holiday is that the physical world is temporal, and that only the spiritual world is permanent. It's a holiday in which we are to remind ourselves to put our faith in God. Specifically this middle day is the day of Moses, who today, leads our other Patriarchs in their spiritual visitations to the Jewish people during this holiday (called "Ushpizin"). Moses, who against all odds led our people out of the land of Egypt into freedom and the land of Israel.

And we too will be led out of this war that we have been experiencing into a time of peace in a land of milk and honey. No matter how dark it may look, we need to remember that. It may sound silly, but my suggestion to anyone and everyone who starts to feel sad or depressed, scared or anxious, is to go drink a cup of warm milk with honey in it. It really will make a difference and help your spirits become more optimistic. A reminder from the Baal Shem Tov: "By celebrating that God will come to your rescue, you have already provided the remedy." (Keter Shem Tov Appendix #234)

Sukkot is also a holiday where we get to see the stars each night through the palm fronds that are the roof of the sukkah. In honor of that, we are having class tonight in the community sukkah on Jewish astrology. While not discussed very often, the Talmud has specific understandings and instructions regarding astrology from a Jewish perspective, and what better place to study this topic than with the stars above us. I hope you will join myself and other community members as we study this topic tonight at 7:00 p.m. in the community Sukkah at 5773 Ridgebrook Dr. in Agoura.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 21, 2024

19th of Tishrei, 5785

October 22nd 2024 at 7:19 am PDT

Who Wants 500 Million Dollars in Gold Bullion?

Chevre,

Israel has known about weapons that have been hidden underneath the hospital in Beirut. And apparently, there has also been a tremendous amount of financial resources for Hezbollah hidden under the same Hospital. Yesterday, Israel took out a lot of the financial resources of Hezbollah by precisely targeting and bombing a number of the Benevolent Loan Association Banks. It is a very smart move as it directly affects the finances of Hezbollah, and therefore their ability to function efficiently. These "banks" have been recognized for years as money laundering organizations to finance Hezbollah and other Iranian proxies. On Monday, the IDF made an official statement where they said they would be bombing a hospital that also holds weapons and finances. They let the world know that there is \$500 million worth of cash and gold bullion underneath the hospital. This prompted the hospital to immediately evacuate everyone... even though they had distinctly said that they would never evacuate anyone as they wanted Israel to attack the "hospital" (aka weapons depot) and then for the world to condemn Israel for that action.

So instead, what happened? Israel announced about the gold and cash under the hospital; the hospital was entirely evacuated; and the IDF bombed it without entering any patients or doctors. Although there is no way of knowing for sure, it is also a pretty good guess that Lebanese citizens, as well as every treasure hunter in the world, is now heading to the ruins of the hospital (which was actually a weapons depot) to locate the treasure.

Is there actually 500 million in gold in the ruins? It doesn't really matter on a certain level as Israel was able to destroy the weapons depot, damage Hezbollah's financial infrastructure, and do it without creating civilian casualties.

By Tuesday morning, Hezbollah has responded with over 20 rockets and at least 5 missiles being launched towards central Israel and Haifa, and no casualties have been reported so far, thank God.

Domestically, there was also good news as pro-palestinian terrorists on the University of Minnesota campus were arrested for attempting to take over a school building, similar to what happened on many campuses, including UCLA, last spring. Given the tumultuous riots that happened around the country on

college campuses last spring, this demonstrates that college campuses may become a bit safer for Jewish students this year, b'Ezrat HaShem (with God's help). It was also a demonstration of a university choosing to act quickly, as opposed to allowing these type of demonstrations to grow and take over a campus.

Today is a day of Sukkot that is dedicated to our ancestor Aaron, the brother of Moses, and the ancestor of all kohanim. Aaron's defining quality was an unbridled sense of empathy. He exemplified it with his words and his actions. Let us all take this day and try to be more empathetic with others, especially those we disagree with. Empathy is different than compassion. Empathy is the quality of being able to really place ourselves in another's position. How do they actually feel? Do we have the ability to not just intellectually understand their feelings, but to actually feel them as well? Is the person we disagree with, or even who claims to be our enemy, going through a level of personal pain that is causing them to act in that way? This quality of Aaron's is a necessity for healthy relationships both individually; and between societies, cultures, and nations. It is something that is all too often forgotten, especially when we are in conflict. Try to take this day and manifest this lesson from our Sukkot holiday, and use it to bring more peace and understanding in personal relationships, and in understanding cultural differences.

Tonight in our community Sukkah at 7:00pm we will be having "Popcorn Under the Palms" as we watch the award-winning Israeli movie "Ushpizin". I know of no other film or book that really captures the essence of the holiday of Sukkot as well as this film, which is funny, emotional, and really beautiful on every level. I hope you will join us, and and enjoy the movie as a community under the shade of God's presence in the sukkah.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 22, 2024

20th of Tishrei, 5785

October 22nd 2024 at 12:10 pm PDT

Be Prepared and Say a Prayer

Chevre,

I just received the following notice in a WhatsApp group from Israel that I am part of:

"**!!** *ISRAEL PREPARES FOR MAJOR MILITARY OPERATION AGAINST IRAN KEPT UNDER STRICT SECRECY, WITH ANTICIPATED IMMEDIATE IRANIAN RESPONSE*

● Israel is expected to launch a major military operation within the next 4-6 days or possibly sooner, with all plans and preparations reportedly complete. The plan is so extensive that Israel's military, the IDF, anticipates an immediate military response from Iran following the strike.

To prevent leaks, Israel is keeping the attack plan on Iran top secret. Cabinet ministers will not be informed of the details before the attack, and the Air Force will only receive the exact target shortly before the operation."

There's no way to know if this is fully accurate, but it makes sense, and this particular group has often shared things hours or days before the information is made public in media.

Whether it is in a few days or longer, there will almost certainly be a significant response from Israel towards Iran. This causes challenges not only in the Middle Eastern region, but throughout the world as anti-israel protesters and terrorists will use it as a spark to ignite their own actions worldwide. The hate that has been exemplified on college campuses will undoubtedly increase upon any direct conflict between Israel and Iran. It will not just be on college campuses, but there's every reason to believe that there will be protests, riots, and other dangerous activities throughout the world, including the United States. All of this too may be amplified because of the proximity to the upcoming election.

Please take a moment today and every day to pray for the safety of Israel, the Jewish people, and for the world in these challenging times.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 22, 2024

20th of Tishrei, 5785

October 23rd 2024 at 6:35 am PDT

More of the Same...

Chevre,

Tuesday morning in Israel began with the announcement that the drone attacking Netanyahu's house, had in fact done damage to a bedroom window most of what happened the rest of the day as well as through the night and into Wednesday for recapitulations of what has been happening every day for over a year.

There were multiple attacks and dozens of rockets launched at the Galilee and Haifa from the north by early Wednesday afternoon. The IDF destroyed more launchers and Hezbollah sites. Secretary of State Blinken met with Netanyahu, and apparently tried to pressure Israel to not respond to Iran in such a way that would escalate the situation in the Middle East. And sirens repeatedly went off throughout the nation as drones and rockets were stopped by Israeli defenses.

This craziness of war is what has substituted for "normal" for the people of Israel over the last year. And yet, they are constantly pressured by the United States and the world to allow this to continue, and to not retaliate in any way that is judged as "too aggressive" by the world. A question that each of us should ask ourselves is what is "too aggressive" when you're constantly being attacked by terrorist neighbors?

And even more challenging question that needs to be asked is what will it take to have long-term peace in the region? Can peace really be achieved, or is it a pipe dream given the players like Iran, Hamas, and Hezbollah? What if anything, can each of us do to try to help create peace?

One of the things that we can certainly do is to be more educated about those that have determined that Israel is their enemy. To that effect, we will be having our last class in the community sukkah this year. We will be learning together

about the Quran, Muhammad, Islam, and can a piece be achieved from a theological point of view between Israel and its Islamic neighbors? I hope you will join in this class that will surely have lively discussion tonight at 7:00 p.m. under the shade of the community sukkah.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 23, 2024

21st of Tishrei, 5785

October 23rd 2024 at 2:29 pm PDT

Tonight's Class on Islam and Politics

Chevre,

Tonight's class in the community sukkah will be on Islam and Politics. We will be looking at Islamic texts, theology, and philosophies; and how they interact with today's political situation in the Middle East and the world.

This is a sensitive topic, but especially important as Jews as a topic to explore in these challenging times. But the class will be on learning about Islam, not about domestic politics. In order to avoid unnecessary conflict as we approach this upcoming election, we will not be discussing Trump or Harris, Democrat or Republican, liberal or conservative perspectives. It will be specifically on Islam, so that we all can have a clearer idea of what is going on in the world from the Islamic perspective.

I hope that you will come join in what promises to be a passionate topic, and that everyone will leave their domestic political beliefs at home. The sukkah is a place for peace, learning, spiritual awakening, dreams, and everything that is good in life. It is not a place for political conflict. It is a place to remember that we can disagree without being disagreeable, and that we can all learn together and from each other.

I look forward to seeing you tonight in the community Sukkah at 7:00 p.m.

tonight, 5773 Ridgebrook Drive in Agoura.

B'shalom and Chag Sameach

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 23, 2024

21st of Tishrei, 5785

October 24th 2024 at 5:47 am PDT

Shmini Atzeret In Israel

Chevre,

Today is Shmini Atzeret, "the Eighth Day of Assembly"; a holiday simultaneously connected with Sukkot, and yet a "festival in and of its own right" (the Talmud specifically calls it that in tractate Sukkah 48a). On this day we do not wave the four species and there are different prayers and liturgy, but the Talmud in the same tractate also calls this holiday "the end holiday of the Festival of Sukkot". And yes, this is all a little confusing. The simple explanation is that it is both part of Sukkot and stands on its own, and that it is a festival holy day. It often in the diaspora gets combined with Simchat Torah, and is an important day in the Jewish calendar.

In Israel, the day has been marked by a large amount of rockets being shot by Hezbollah. 135 rockets have been fired by 11:00 p.m. on Wednesday evening, and another 55 by noon on Thursday. Israel has been retaliating, and has been destroying more and more Hezbollah weapons sites. The IDF has announced that they believe that Hezbollah has less than 30% of their original weaponry.

But what has also been interesting our announcements from Hamas over the last 24 hours. Announcements that demonstrate clearly that Hamas is attempting to cozy up to Russia for support. Hamas has said that if and when there is a hostage release deal, the first two hostages to be released will be Russian citizens. They have also publicly asked Russia to apply pressure to the Palestinian Authority to make a shared government in the future of Gaza between the PA and Hamas.

Blinken is now in Qatar attempting to negotiate another hostage release deal, and pressure Israel into a ceasefire in both Gaza and the North. He is again expressing that his major concerns are not Israel's safety, but creating a ceasefire for at least 2 weeks. At the same time, IDF leadership has been very clear that they are going to retaliate against Iran in their own time and way, and that Israel is prepared for whatever comes afterwards.

On this holy day in our calendar, may we all pray that what comes afterwards is a lasting peace. May we also pray together that innocent lives are not casualties of war, and that peace comes to the region with as little pain as possible.

Chag Sameach and Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 24, 2024

22nd of Tishrei, 5785

October 24th 2024 at 6:46 pm PDT

A Prayer for this New Year

Chevre,

As we complete the High Holiday season (yes, it includes Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot & Shmini Atzeret) and begin the new cycle of Torah readings, I believe it is important that we enter this new time with hope for peace, protection for Israel, and faith that this year will bring joy.

I invite everyone to watch this amazing video of Israelis singing "Al Kol Eleh". The lyrics are in English in the captions, and may this prayer come true in our time and in this year.

<https://youtu.be/oxzR9Z-kG6Q>

Shield dear Lord, this house of mine
This garden and these walls
From sorrow, grief, and sudden fear

And from wars
Protect the little I have
The light, my children
The fruit not yet ripened, picked before it's time
Over all these, Over all these
Grant a blessing, dear Lord, please
Over the honey, over the bee sting
Over the bitter and the sweet

May God protect all of us, our children, and the land and people of Israel; and bring us safety and a lasting peace.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 24, 2024

22nd of Tishrei, 5785

October 25th 2024 at 5:44 am PDT

Both Sides Preparing, and UNRWA Makes An Admission (that is ignored in US media)

Chevre,

Iran and Israel seem to be simultaneously both preparing for war, and preparing for some sort of ceasefire deal. Iran is marshalling their troops in preparation, and saying that if Israel does anything that threatens their oil, nuclear, or military facilities, Iran will retaliate with no boundaries. Israel, for its part, is stating that they will make the decisions to do what they want to do, when they want to do it, and are prepared for any reaction. Sirens raged across Israel on Thursday to Friday morning, as dozens of rockets and missiles were launched into Israel, causing some destruction, many fires, but no loss of life reported, thank God.

At the same time, the head of Mossad has gone to Qatar for supposed negotiations around a ceasefire, which Hamas has not even talked about. There are leaks in all media around the world, and especially in Israeli media that are

saying that the deal would be an exchange of two hostages for 2 weeks of ceasefire. Many of the ministers in the Israeli cabinet are furious about that potential deal, but no one even knows how Hamas really feels, and this deal is supposedly being pushed by Blinken and the Qataris... so there is no way to know the reality.

Israel has shown absolute proof that UNRWA staff were actually Hamas military leaders (getting paid by the UN). UNRWA has admitted on Thursday that Muhammad Attawi, one of the leaders of the Oct 7 massacres, and personally responsible for the killing and kidnapping of Israelis near Kibbutz Re'im on Oct 7, has actually been employed by UNRWA since July, 2022. Israel has sent a list of over 100 UNRWA employees who are actually Hamas and Hezbollah military personnel to UNRWA, which has said that they "will investigate the situation". I searched to the best of my ability, and am saddened to say that I couldn't find one major American news outlet that even reported this travesty about the overlap of terrorists and the UN, which UNRWA has admitted (and that is on both sides of the political spectrum from MSNBC to CNN to Fox). Additionally, Israel has identified at least 6 Al Jazeera reporters who were actually Hamas terrorist and fighters.

But we dance with the Torah in faith and joy this Shabbat, as the cycle of Torah readings begins again. We are Jews... which means that we have faith, act in that faith, and know the joy of the Torah will ultimately bless the world with peace... B"H in this year.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 25, 2024

23rd of Tishrei, 5785

October 26th 2024 at 10:52 pm PDT

Operation Days of Repentance

Chevre,

Early Saturday morning, Israel began Operation Days Of Repentance, a retaliatory strike against Iran (the IDF really does come up with powerful names for what they do).

Over 100 Israeli aircraft attacked Iran, but did not attack any oil or nuclear facility. What they did attack were a tremendous amount of defensive missile and anti-aircraft systems that protect those oil and nuclear facilities.. making it clear to Iran and the world that if they want to, the IDF can and will take out those facilities. They also destroyed a number of weapons production facilities, including an Iranian solid fuel production plant that is crucial to the production of the type of missiles that Iran attacked Israel with earlier this month. Elaph, a daily Arabic media online newspaper reported that it will likely take at least 2 years for that facility to be able to resume operations.

Israel could have done much more damage, and in doing so, could possibly, God forbid, have started a war that would have swept up the region in the world. This was a well-planned strike that sent a clear message to Iran, and made Israel safer while making Iran more vulnerable.

Let us pray that the conflict does not escalate more, and that Hezbollah and Hamas, and all Iranian proxies, take a lesson from this and choose to surrender, return the hostages, and create peace.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 26, 2024

25th of Tishrei, 5785

October 28th 2024 at 5:13 am PDT

Words: Hollow or Meaningful

Chevre,

While the Middle East and the world are constantly processing what the region is doing and not doing, all sides are making statements...and there is no way to

know which are meaningful and which are just sabre rattling.

---Iran's President, Foreign Minister, and Ayatollah are all saying that Iran will retaliate and escalate attacks on Israel in response to Saturday night's air strike.

---Israel is making statements that they are prepared for anything, and Iran's best choice is to stop escalating, or Israel will demonstrate much more power next time.

---Egypt proposed a 2 day ceasefire in exchange for 4 hostages, but Hamas said they are rejecting it without a complete and permanent cease fire (but not willing to return all the hostages.)

---Netanyahu moved the negotiations to Qatar to work harder to get a hostage deal.

---The US has deployed 2 THAAD anti-ballistic batteries in Israel, to help support Israel's Arrow system.

---Hezbollah families are reported to be leaving Lebanon and heading to Syria.

---Different media sources in both Israel and Iran have released "leaks" that there will be more attacks between Israel and Iran before the US election. Other media sources are reporting that Iran has no intention of escalating things, and there will no attacks between now and our Election Day. There is no way which is actually true, and which is posturing rhetoric.

--- And Hamas leaders have all rejected returning hostages in exchange for safe passage out of Gaza.

Are all these statements, leaks, and words just posturing, or are we on a precipice of danger for not just Israel, but for the world? There is no clear way of knowing.

So we must choose faith that God will ensure protection over Israel and her people and that these challenges too shall pass.

And Israel, and the world, will miraculously transform enmity to peace with God's help.

Always remember that our prayers are not empty. We have a 3500 year history of God standing up for Israel, against her enemies... and He always will. Am Yisrael Chai.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 28, 2024

26th of Tishrei, 5785

October 29th 2024 at 6:42 am PDT

The United Nations, Iran, and South Africa

Chevre,

Monday was (in theory) the last day for South Africa to show any evidence of their accusation of genocide against Israel. The deadline has now passed with them presenting nothing, but we should not be shocked if the UN breaks their own rules when it comes to Israel.

The Knesset voted today and passed the anti-UNRWA law, prohibiting any activity by UNRWA in the State of Israel by a vote of 92-10 with 13 abstentions. This is a result of the many proven instances of UNRWA employees actually being Hamas or Hezbollah terrorists, and their both actively trying to help terrorists, and even repeatedly using UNRWA offices as weapons caches, Hamas bases, etc. The UN Secretary General, who has repeatedly and overtly worked towards the destruction of Israel said, "I am very concerned about the decision of the Israeli Knesset to adopt two laws concerning UNRWA, which, if implemented, will prevent the agency from continuing to operate in Palestinian territory. There is no alternative to UNRWA" A telling quote from a man who has expressed that he feels that Israel is occupied Palestinian territory.

The US ambassador to the UN issued a tough warning to Iran in the UN Security Council meeting in Monday, threatening that the US will act if Iran undertakes further aggression against Israel or the US.

Israel has started a gradual withdrawal from Southern Lebanon as high Israeli and Arab media are reporting that the mood in Lebanon is shifting to removing Hezbollah. In the past, groups against Hezbollah were recalcitrant to publicly oppose the terrorists for fear of Hezbollah... but apparently, now a number of groups are making it clear that they want to remove Hezbollah from Lebanon.

Iran, for its part is claiming that they knew in advance about Israel's attack, and Iranian officials are promising that Iran will be attacking Israel, and are promising "bitter, unimaginable consequences" for Israel. The Mossad chief who was in Qatar for negotiations has left Qatar as Hamas isn't responding to anyone.

...and each day, every day, 70-200 rockets are launched into Israel by groups recognized internationally as terrorist (Hamas and Hezbollah).

Many cultures believe that this week is when the veil between the worlds is the thinnest... so let us all pray in the name of our ancestors Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah that sense and sensibility comes to the region, and the steps are taken to create a lasting peace between Israel and her neighbors.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 29, 2024

27th of Tishrei, 5785

October 30th 2024 at 6:30 am PDT

International Politics and More Sabre Rattling

Chevre,

If sabre rattling were an Olympic sport, it would be dominated by the Middle East. Iran is saying that their weapons and weapon manufacturing facilities were not damaged, and that they will be retaliating against Israel. According to Sky News in Arabic, Iran is saying they will be attacking Israel in the coming few days. Israel is explicitly saying that not only would they respond against Iran, they "will attack places that were spared last time"; as well as claiming that they took out Iran's primary air defense systems, leaving Iran "essentially naked". The cabinet also announced that they will consider a pre-emptive strike against Iran if they believe that it is needed, as well as they are considering striking Iran for the drone attack on Netanyahu's home. While Israel is saying that 80% of Hezbollah's rockets are destroyed, Hezbollah continues to fire rockets every day

at Israel.

Politically, Hezbollah has replaced Nasrallah with Naim Qassem as their new leader, who was Nasrallah's second in command since 1991. A Shia cleric from Beirut, he has consistently fought against any peace, and has demonstrated for over 30 years that he is only interested in the absolute destruction of Israel. Hamas has also appointed a new leader: Sinwar's brother, who has been the military commander of Hamas since 2005, and is as violent or more than his brother.

Channel 14 in Israel has reported that 12 fighters were killed in a building that was booby trapped with IEDs. They are vocally asking the question in many Israeli's minds as to why we go building to building risking Israeli lives as opposed to just demolishing the buildings from the air or with tanks.

Internationally, Spain has imposed a weapons embargo on Israel, cancelling a 6.6 million Euro bullet purchase. Iran has expressed anger at Russia for chastising their the Iranian rhetoric; and Russia is becoming more active in negotiating a peace deal with Israel. The US ambassador to the UN stepped up at a Security Council meeting by saying the Francesca Albania, the special rapporteur for the "occupied territories" is unfit for the position due to constant and consistent anti--Semitism, and that such a person is incapable of being a UN official for human rights.

The Qatari have proposed another cease fire/hostage return deal of 11-14 hostages returned for a month of truce. Again, this is not a proposal that Hamas has commented on, and is yet another attempt to put pressure on Israel.

But sabre rattling is better than rockets, and with Russia now potentially getting involved in negotiations, many Israeli media sources are expressing more help towards getting the hostages returned and peace (or at least a detente and cessation of daily rockets).

Whomever God chooses to help, may that time of peace and safety over Israel come swiftly.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

October 30, 2024

28th of Tishrei, 5785

October 31st 2024 at 5:43 am PDT

October/November Surprise?

Chevre,

It has become a common practice to wait for the "October Surprise" during presidential election years. It seems that this year, the surprise may end up being in November, and not even in the United States directly... and actually have little to do with either of the Presidential candidates.

Instead, the surprise this year may be in the Middle East, where Iran, hezbollah, and Lebanon may each be doing their own surprise for the world.

Iran has made it clear over the last 24 hours that they will be attacking Israel before the November election in the United States. They may just be rattling their sabres again, and probably are, but they have been making clear statements and multiple Arabic media sources that they intend on affecting the US elections with an attack on Israel prior. (I am honestly not certain this kind of attack would help or hurt which party, but this is the rhetoric they are positive)

Hezbollah, for their part, has in the last 24 hours put out conflicting statements. On the one hand, some of hezbollah's leaders have said that they're looking towards a 60-day ceasefire, again beginning before the US election in November. Other statements from Hezbollah say that they will be amping up their attacks on Israel to put more pressure on both the US and Israel before the elections. And at the same time, no one really has any clear idea what kind of peace or ceasefire deal they would want.

And then there is Lebanon. Lebanon's leadership has been talking with us officials about creating a safe Southern Lebanon that would not include Hezbollah. They are discussing enforcing the UN resolution against Hezbollah, and having some sort of cease fire and peace deal. I understand is that American

attitude is now trying to create a peace with Hezbollah before the elections that includes Lebanon and Northern Israeli safety, and then trying to structure a Hamas deal afterwards. Again, everyone seems to want to get this done before November 5th, but none of the players that are actually involved seem to be leading any of the discussions?!?!

Whatever they happen in the next few days before the election is in actuality pretty unpredictable. The rhetoric is extreme, Israel has made it clear that if Iran acts, Israel will respond in a much more aggressive way than they have previously, and no one knows where any of these types of actions will lead both regionally and internationally.

What is clear from all this rhetoric is that passions are high, there are a lot of threats going on, and we must pray for peace.

That it's not pray for a peace That is actually a tool for either side in the election. Rather let us pray for peace it begins in the Middle East between Israel and her neighbors. A lasting peace that spreads from that region of the world all the way around the globe. Let us pray for peace between people of different faiths, cultures, and even political parties. May that peace spread over all of us, over israel, and over this nation so that whatever happens in elections in a week unifies our nation as opposed to divides it.

Chazak u"Baruch

Rabbi Michael.Barclay

October 31, 2024

29th of Tishrei, 5785

November 1st 2024 at 10:20 am PDT

Updates

Chevre,

By the time you read this, circumstances may have changed (in which case I will send out another email), but as of 1pm Israel time, here is a brief recap of the

last 24 hours in Israel:

--- Hamas officially rejected an idea for cease fire that came from the Qataris.

--- France is expressing its displeasure to anyone who will listen that they are not more active in a deal making process with Lebanon.

--- The Foreign Minister of Luxemborg visited Ramallah and confronted the UNRWA director about the fact that the UNRWA textbooks glorify terror and terrorist acts against Israel. He said that he wanted to defend the UN agency, but is unable to do so given the books that are hard evidence of the UN agenda. The UNRWA director would not respond when confronted with books themselves.

--- Israeli intelligence has identified Iran planning an attack, - moving weapons, etc. The US intelligence agencies have confirmed that Iran may attack as early as this weekend or before the election. In conjunction with Iran's Ayatollah's comments about attacking Israel, this has put the country on high alert, and Israeli leadership is said by multiple news sources, including the Israel Broadcasting Authority, to be preparing a pre-emptive strike against Iran.

--- It has been reported that an attempt was made on IDF Chief Halevi's life. An anti-tank shell was launched at a house that Halevi was visiting, and which he left just in time.

--- Israeli sources are saying that an attack from Iraq will be launched before the election. An Iran media source is saying that an attack will be launched after the election. Us intelligence leaked that in 5 days, Iran and all proxies will attack Israel. There is no way to know if any or all of this is true, or just rhetoric meant as psy-ops

--- The IDF made an unusual official announcement about 7 civilians being killed by Hezbollah yesterday, and that this attack will not go unanswered.

We cannot know what or even if any of these scenarios will come to pass. We do know that hundreds of rockets, missiles, and drones are being launched at Israel every day.

...and we know, and must always remember that "Everything is in the hands of God except being in awe of God. (Talmud Berakhot 33b) This is a primary foundation stone of our faith, and we must always remember this... especially when confronted with so many unknowns.

Faith means everything....if we allow it to be so.

Chazak u'-Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 1, 2024

30th of Tishrei,- 5785

November 2nd 2024 at 8:36 pm PDT

Shavuah Tov Updates

Chevre,

Although we may all pause during Shabbat, the world, and the conflicts in the Middle East, continue without a break.

There are progressively more signals that Iran is preparing to attack Israel, and numerous Iranian leaders have said that they will be attacking both Israel and the US in the immediate future. Israel and the United States have both made official statements that there will be a significant reaction if, God forbid, Iran does attack. Israel has also made it clear that if they are convinced that Iran is about to attack, they will have a preemptive strike. Israel, backed by the US, has also said that they will attack Iraq if Iraq allows Iran to launch from there. The United States has sent over B-52 bombers, and there is an Israeli Navy presence that has crossed the Suez and is in the Red Sea as of now. Jordan has made public statements that they will not allow anyone to violate their airspace or use their Nation as a launching point, and we can all hope that this is true.

Hamas and Hezbollah continue to launch rockets, missiles, and drones on a daily basis. Over 130 Rockets penetrated is really territory during Shabbat. The north is constantly under attack every single day by Iranian proxies. The IDF finally located, after almost a year of looking, a weapons production plant in Gaza, and destroyed it.

Israel captured a senior Hezbollah Commander, and are interrogating him for information in order to protect both the North, and to create the right strategy that will lead to a long-lasting piece. Hamas is saying that they are open to a ceasefire deal of some sort, but will only return a hostage after Israel has

stopped attacking them for a month, and totally removed themselves from Gaza.

In other words, there is a lot of saber rattling, threats, promises, and attempts at intimidation from both sides.

What can we do here in the United States? We can support Israeli causes such as Bnai Zion Hospital and Magen Adom. We can tie ourselves to Jewish communities, and build groups of our brothers and sisters so that we can all emotionally as spiritually process what is going on in the world together. And we can pray..

Ribbono Shel Olam, Master of the Universe, please provide the miracles needed so that Israel is protected and safe, and a lasting peace is established with her neighbors. Keep the citizens and soldiers of Israel safe, and please bless them to always be able to return to their homes healthy and whole. Remember Your covenant, and establish peace between nations, religions, political affiliations, cultures, and people.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 2, 2024

2nd of Cheshvan, 5785

November 4th 2024 at 6:05 am PST

Iran, Iraq, and Israel

Chevre,

Iraqi media made a number of statements on Sunday afternoon and Monday morning. Most notably in that there are service to surface ballistic missiles being transported from Iran to Iraq, as well as surface to surface missiles being deployed around Iran. Iran has saying that they are changing the range of their missiles to be able to hit Europe, as Europe has not supported Iran enough over Israel.

Iranian officials told the Wall Street Journal that they are planning an attack in Israel that use "powerful warheads and other weapons" not used in the previous two attacks. They also said that such an attack could be postponed if Israel just unilaterally agreed to a cease fire with Hamas and Hezbollah.

After exposing both the corruption of the UNRWA and its active support and partnership with Hamas, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs notified the United Nations of the cancellation of the agreement between UNRWA and Israel. Israel will continue to provide humanitarian aid to victims of this war in Gaza, but they will no longer allow that aid to be hijacked by UNRWA staff and given to Hamas so that the terror group can sell it at a huge profit to war victims... which is what has been happening.

Although there was a lot of rhetoric from all sides in the Middle East, all eyes there are looking towards Tuesday's election here in the United States. Each side has their own perspective and plan depending on what happens in our elections.

Let us all pray and have faith that whatever the election results, both the United States and the Middle East will move towards peace as opposed to conflict.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 4, 2024

3rd of Cheshvan, 5785

November 5th 2024 at 5:14 am PST

Assorted Updates

Chevre,

The world watches as we are about to have our elections here in the United States, but as it watches, there's much movement going on in the Middle East on Tuesday morning.

--- Hamas again rejected any sort of deal for the return of hostages. Even

Secretary of State Blinken expressed his huge frustration, and made it clear that the only thing that prevents a deal is Hamas itself. " Hamas once again refused to release even a small number of hostages, in order to guarantee a ceasefire and relief for the residents of the Gaza Strip."

--- For the first time since the Roman Empire, alarms sounded over Masada as Iraqi drones attacked the area of the Dead Sea.

--- French investigators are looking into new information that apparently demonstrates that Doctors Without Borders has been actively participating in terrorist events in Israel.

--- Two United States Pegasus tankers are currently flying over the Persian Gulf, probably to refuel American fighter jets in the area.

--- Channel 13 Israel is suggesting that if there's an Iranian attack, God forbid, it will probably be surface to surface missiles against Israeli military bases on targets.

--- Iranian military analyst and senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Dr. Perezin Farzin Nadimi, is stating that it is his belief that Iran will attack Israel on Tuesday night with at least 400 surface to surface missiles. We can and should all pray that this does not happen, for both the United States and Israel have said that Israel's response will be directed and strong, without the limitations of its last attack on Iran.

--- Numerous public Iranian accounts on X/twitter posted Nov 4 as "Day of Revenge", and if there are many stories in media all throughout the Middle East that Iran will be attacking Israel, God forbid, shortly. But rather than become scared of this, we need to all recognize two things. First, Iran is constantly releasing propaganda and psyops in order to keep the tension high in Israel, so there is an extremely good chance that this is just more of Iran's sabre rattling. Second, God has always protected Israel, and always will keep His covenant with our people. No matter how dark things seem to be, we have 3,500 years of history that demonstrates to us that God protects the Jewish people, and the land and people of Israel... and He always will.

So as we enter election day here in the United States, please remember that God

will always keep us safe, no matter how dark it seems to look. And please go out and vote! It is a privilege to live in a country where every vote counts. And whether you think your vote does or does not make a difference nationally or on a statewide level, you can be confident and assured that each vote makes a huge difference in local elections which are so, so important.

May the Holy One bless Israel and the United States with peace and safety as we traverse through these next few days of potential conflict domestically and in the Middle East. May we all be blessed to bathe in our time in God's holy light of peace, and may the leaders of both nations be courageous enough to strive for peace that encompasses our nations and the world.

(Now...stop reading this and go vote!)

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 5, 2024

4th of Cheshvan, 5785

November 5th 2024 at 11:45 am PST

Defense Minister Gallant fired

Chevre,

Prime Minister Netanyahu, with the backing of the cabinet, fired defense Minister Gallant this evening. He is being replaced by current foreign minister Katz.

There's a lot of passion in Israel on both sides right now. Apparently, Gallant is being accused of having leaked information; but others are seeing this as a political move by Netanyahu. One organization of hostages' families decried this change, and another organization celebrated it as a new opportunity for a ceasefire hostage deal. There are rumors that Netanyahu will be firing other military leaders in immediate future, but these are just rumors.

...and it all seems very confusing, but then again, Israeli politics and appointments always are very confusing and convoluted.

Let us all pray that Israel is united and safe in the presence of the Holy One.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 5, 2024

4th of Cheshvan, 5785

November 6th 2024 at 5:15 am PST

Israel on US Election Night

Chevre,

While the voting here in the US is done, and many of the elections have been called (including North Carolina electing its first Jewish Governor), there has been a lot happening in Israel and the region.

On Tuesday, Gallant was fired as Defense Minister, and there have been all sorts of reactions. Many anti-Bibi Israelis have condemned this as a political maneuver to strengthen his coalition. Pro-Bibi Israelis are celebrating the dismissal and hoping that we are more likely to get a hostage deal now with new leadership.

But all sides are expecting an attack from Iran, and the country is in preparation for a more aggressive war. Six B52 bombers have all been deployed to Al-Udeid airbase, the United States officially warned Iraq that if they let Iran use their nation as a launch pad, there would be repercussions, and there were more messages and statements from the Biden administration telling Iran to not attack Israel. And no one is quite sure how the US election results will or will not change behavior with Iran and its proxies, as well as with Israel.

I know that many people are excited by the election results, and many are saddened; but now is the time for all Jews (and all Americans) to let go of their political passions, and come together in harmony. We are Jews... and we are in a

war for the existence of Israel and against anti-Semitism worldwide. We need to stop allowing the partisanship of Democrat vs. Republican to be breaking apart friendships, families, and Jewish communities. We need to remember the Jewish understanding that we can disagree without being disagreeable (such a beautiful and succinct phrase by Rabbi Schochet), and with the end of this election, live that practice.

At our Yom Kippur services less than a month ago, we had a thousand people chanting "Am Yisrael Chai", the people of Israel live. Not that the Republican or Democratic Jews live... but all of us. Together. For over 3500 years we have been one people united through Torah and faith. Jewish history has shown us repeatedly that as long as we remember our connection as one people, we not only survive, but we thrive. Now that this election is over, let us return to our relationships and friendships without being divided by domestic political passions, and come together as one Jewish people both here in the diaspora and in Israel.

Am Yisrael Chai! May we always remember that as long as we are true with each other and true to the teachings of our faith, our people will always live. Always.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 6, 2024

5th of Cheshvan, 5785

November 6th 2024 at 2:46 pm PST

Local Fires & Community

Chevre,

The high winds are creating many fires around Southern California. If you or anyone you know is directly affected by these fires and needs to evacuate, please contact me or Orlando and we will help find a location for you to be able to stay. Please let us know if there any animals involved as some people are unable to have animals in their home.

If you are willing to host a family that must be evacuated, also please contact Orlando or I directly. Part of being a true community means supporting each other in times of need... and you might get to meet some new people who become close friends!

Orlando's direct email is Orlando@NerSimcha.org and mine is Rabbi@NerSimcha.org or RabbiBarclay@aol.com (which gets to me faster).

Although we pray each day between Sukkot and Passover that the wind should blow and the rain should fall; let the winds blow less and be more gentle, and may the fires be extinguished soon.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 6, 2024

5th of Cheshvan, 5785

November 7th 2024 at 6:29 am PST

Choose Life - Israel Prepares

Chevre,

Naim Qassem, the new head of Hezbollah, had his second television appearance on Wednesday afternoon, where he said, "only one thing will stop this war of aggression, that is the battlefield". He said that he has, "tens of thousands of trained resistance Jihadi combatants that are ready to die as martyrs". It was another in a long line of statements by leaders of Israel's enemies demonstrating their lack of desire for peace through negotiation or dialogue, and only committed to war.

This is a primary difference between Israel and Jewish theology, and the extreme Islamic theology that underscores Iran and the Iranian proxies such as Hezbollah and Hamas. While they worship war and death, our theology is committed to peace and life. As it says in the Book of Deuteronomy 30:19, "I have put before

you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life—that you and your descendants will live".

These are always extremely important words to keep in our consciousness. But in times where we are forced to be at war, they are even more important. As Jews, we must always choose life and blessings, and reject the other choices.

As Israel recognizes the threats and promises from Iran and the Iranian proxies, and is preparing for any eventuality, we must remember our values. We did not seek this war. We did not seek the conflict with any of the seven enemies that are currently attacking Israel. We did not seek to have the horrors of October 7th, nor the hostages being kidnapped. But in choosing life, this sometimes means being prepared and engaging in war... for the last year has shown us that this war is for our very survival.

And Israel is preparing. On Wednesday morning, the Defense Ministry announced a deal with Boeing to procure a squadron of F-151A fighter jets, the Israeli version of the advanced F-15EX. These are the most advanced fighter jets that will be equipped with Israeli technology including "cutting edge weapon systems". Four to six jets will be provided per year beginning in 2031. We pray that they are never needed, and that there is a lasting peace that protects a safe Israel before the jets are ever needed or delivered.

But we are at war now. Over 170 rockets, drones, and missiles were launched by Hezbollah into Israel over the last 24 hours (including an attack on the airport in Tel Aviv). According to Kann 11, the IDF has raised its alert level due to the increased risk of Iranian ballistic missiles being launched at Israel.

Each media source seems to have its own understanding or projection as to what the election results in the United States mean for the wars in the Middle East. Bloomberg is reporting that an Israeli official has told them that the transition period between the administrations "offers a window of opportunity" for Israel to attack Iran's nuclear facilities. I had a conversation with Yoel Israel and Joel Pollak yesterday, who both feel that there may be some sort of actions that take place between now and the inauguration in January... potentially from either or both sides.

So yes, Israel is preparing for whatever may happen, and we all need to pray that

whatever happens leads to a lasting peace that creates working relationships as neighbors between Israel and the other nations in the region.

Psalm 34 has one of the primary injunctions to every Jew. "Seek peace and pursue it." What makes this statement even more powerful is the background of the author, King David. A warrior and military leader, he was also a musician, poet, and ultimately King. As a man who understood the ugliness of war, recognize the importance pursuing peace.

Even, and especially during these times of war, may we all pursue peace with a passion: peace between nations, peace between politics, peace between religions, peace between each other, and peace within ourselves.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 7, 2024

6th of Cheshvan, 5785

November 8th 2024 at 6:00 am PST

Amsterdam Pogrom & Israel

Chevre,

On Thursday night, Israeli soccer players and fans in Amsterdam were victims of what is being a "modern pogrom": a planned and coordinated act of violent anti-Semitism. The news keeps coming in, and by the time you read this, may have changed again, but this is what is known right now (11am Amsterdam time on Friday).

Hundreds of Jewish fans of Maccabi Tel Aviv soccer team have been violently attacked in Amsterdam. Exact numbers are still not clear, but at least 10 Israelis are seriously injured and seven missing.

The Israeli Ministry of Diaspora and Battle Against Anti-Semitism gave three notices over the last few days to the Dutch government warning about planned

attacks on Israelis. These warning were entirely ignored.

Maccabi Tel Aviv soccer team was set to play against Ajax in Amsterdam on Thursday night. Over 2600 Israeli fans had come to cheer the team. Organized groups of Arab terrorists with "free palestine" signs and shouting arabic attacked Jews in a coordinated effort after the game (the Dutch police were warned, and stayed away from the areas). Groups of 5-10 Arabs hid all across the city in alleys and key exits from various train stations, and as soon as they spotted Israelis, attacked with knives, bats, other weapons, and even using cars with palestinian flags for hit and run attacks. There is video footage of Dutch police watching on and doing nothing as the Jews are beaten. One fan got to the Amsterdam airport beaten and covered in blood, and said, "the Dutch police sold us out to let the Arabs lynch us".

Israel, at Netanyahu's immediate direction, has already sent planes to Amsterdam to get Jews back to safety in Israel. The Chief Rabbis of Israel immediately endorsed planes and personnel to do anything needed, including violating any Shabbat laws, to rescue every Israeli in need. Israelis have been directed to get to their hotels and stay there, and emails, calls, texts, and social media are being used to try to locate all Israelis there; and to get them safely to the airport and on planes home.

Former Israeli Prime Minister said words that are terrifying to every student of Jewish history, as we are almost at the anniversary of Kristallnacht: "This seems like a planned and organized Pogrom in Amsterdam". Once again, we are seeing a truth in Europe that none of us want to believe can happen again... a violent hatred at Jews. And it is in the Netherlands, where 3/4 of all Dutch Jews were killed in the Holocaust, and which had the highest percentage of Jewish murders of any Western European countries. (If you want to know more of the sordid Dutch anti--Semitism, you can go to <https://www.annefrank.org/en/anne-frank/go-in-depth/netherlands-greatest-number-jewish-victims-western-europe/>)

Channel 12 has called this "Krystallnacht 2". President Herzog called the attacks, "a warning sign for any country that wishes to uphold the values of freedom. We woke up this morning to shocking images and videos that since October 7th, we had hoped to never see again". Dutch political leader Geert Wilders called the evening a "Jew hunt in the streets of Amsterdam", and sadly stated that "the

Netherlands has become the Gaza of Europe". And Israeli Ambassador to the UN Danny Danon tweeted, "These are the true faces of the supporters of the radical terrorism we are fighting. The Western World needs to wake up now!"

And while Israel is dealing with this tragedy and working to get Israelis home, they are still being heavily attacked on the war fronts in Israel. Probably as a symbolic action against the US election, Hezbollah has been repeatedly launching rockets at "Trump Heights" in northern Israel. Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis have stayed consistent in launching non stop barrages against all of Israel, but with special emphasis on the north. Iran is threatening to attack Israel, and attack the US if they lend any support to Israel. The US has sent a squadron of F-15 fighters to the region in preparation for an Iranian attack, according to Kan News in Israel; which is also reporting that Israel is considering an attack on Iraqi territory to "disrupt Iran linked operations there". Kan additionally reported that a Kuwaiti newspaper reported that Iran has moved hundreds of missiles and drones to pro-Iranian militias in Iraq to create a strategic stockpile to use against Israel.

In this week's Torah portion of Lech L'cha, God tells Avram to go away from he know, from the place of his family, to a place that God would show him. That place is Israel, and we must all remember that it is our home. Wherever we live, Israel will always be a home for each of us...a place that will always welcome any of us if choose to move there. Although we choose to be Diaspora Jews, we must always keep an awareness in our consciousness that Israel must be protected and stay safe: and so let us all say extra prayers for that Jewish homeland this Shabbat. And prayers of healing for all those Israelis in Amsterdam: that they may be safe and healed, and return to their homes and families in Israel.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 8, 2024

7th of Cheshvan, 5785

November 9th 2024 at 6:08 pm PST

A Busy Shabbat...

Chevre,

All the Shabbat is supposed to be a day of rest, it has been a busy, busy day around the world. This is especially true in the Middle East.

First, regarding the pogrom in Amsterdam. There's a worldwide call for the mayor of Amsterdam to resign given that she has a history of making anti-semitic and anti-israel comments, and what she allowed to happen in Amsterdam the other night. She had been warned multiple times by the Israeli government, yet took no precautions to protect over 2,700 Jews/ Israelis who were there in her city. All Israelis have been found and accounted for by the Israeli government, which has been significantly helped by the Maccabi Club in the Netherlands.

A Maccabi fan spoke to Ch. 14 in Israel: They were waiting for us, terrorists on every street corner and simply tore apart every Israeli that came their way. We were beaten, humiliated, stabbed, run over. They literally drove on sidewalks in order to run over Jews. Until the Fanatics organization came out to protect the beaten, no one helped us, the police ignored everything that was happening." This is all too reminiscent of kristallnacht, which occurred 86 years ago today.

A lot of news came out over Shabbat about Israel, especially about those who have been her enemies for the last year. Qatar has said they will stop mediating negotiations with Hamas, and it has been reported in multiple sites that they have publicly said that all Hamas leadership must leave their country (I have not been able to find an independent source to verify this exile of Hamas leaders, but it is being reported in nearly all Middle Eastern media). The head of the Iranian Guard is now threatening to destroy all Israeli ports on the Mediterranean, which would devastate Israel's economy, God forbid. In the last 48 hours, there has been an increase in a Syrian Rebellion against the current government, which Israel is starting to support. The rebels want to throw Iran's military as well as all Iranian influence out of the country.

Senator Marco Rubio assembled a group of congressmen who wrote a formal letter to Secretary of State Blinken calling for an immediate change of policy towards Qatar. They are calling for a freezing of the funds belonging to the leaders of Hamas who are currently in Qatar. While this may or may not happen right now, it foreshadows how the next Administration will interact with Qatar regarding their being a home for terrorist leaders.

On a different note, a formal investigation has been launched into the allegations of sexual misconduct on the part of Katim Khan, the prosecutor for the ICC in The Hague. Khan is the prosecutor that has been pushing to have warrants of arrest issued internationally for both Gallant and Netanyahu.

At the same time, Secretary of Defense Austin had a threatening conversation with his counterpart in Israel, Minister Katz. It's been confirmed that he told Katz did the US will withhold financial and Military weapon support from Israel if Israel cannot confirm significant improvements in the supply and distribution of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Much of what has happened on this past Shabbat has been helpful to Israel. Maimonides thought that you can always understand current events through the Torah portion of the week. In this week's portion, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed for not having even 10 people are hospitable to their neighbors; the land is promised to Abraham and his descendants; and The Binding of Isaac takes place. One of the underlying lessons of this Torah portion is that the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael must learn to get along together as cousins, lest the only option becomes one of Destruction.

May peace between all of the descendants of Abraham come to this world quickly, and May we all live in a world of mutual respect and caring for our neighbors... even and especially with those with whom we disagree.

Shavuah Tov and Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 9, 2024

9th of Cheshvan, 5785

November 9th 2024 at 10:21 pm PST

A Personal Request For Bnai Zion Hospital

Chevre,

As you probably know, our temple community has been extremely supportive of Bnai Zion Hospital in Haifa since the war started a year ago... and as much as you all know how recalcitrant I am to do fundraising, I am asking for your help again for the hospital.

On this Tuesday, November 12, there is a benefit golf event for the hospital, with the golfers hoping to complete 101 holes, and asking people to pledge any amount of money per hole completed. 100% of the money will go directly to Bnai Zion Hospital for much needed medical equipment. (This idea is based on a fundraiser done by Maccabi USA Team member Max Margolis, who did a similar event in Israel for families of hostages... Kol HaKvod to Max and his father Michael for both what they did, and for inspiring this event on the 12th.)

If you might be willing to participate, you can go to <https://www.bnaizionusa.org/save-israel> to find out more about the event and to donate to the hospital.

This is an opportunity to actually save lives (something very few of us get a chance to really do). Every \$3300 purchases a state-of-the-art rehab bed. Each bed helps 20-30 injured soldiers and civilians per year, and is usable for 4-5 years... this means that each bed helps save over 100 lives. That translates to each \$100 donation actually saving the lives of three Israelis. Think about that: how often do any of us get to save so many lives for a sum like that?

I hope you will join me in supporting this event, and that you go to <https://www.bnaizionusa.org/save-israel> and find out more, and help save lives. This is the true definition of a good deed.

Thank you so much for your help with this... every little action makes a big difference.

B'shalom and Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 9, 2024

9th of Cheshvan, 5785

November 11th 2024 at 6:12 am PST

Israel, Pogroms, & Jewish Veterans

Chevre,

Again Israel was attacked with drones, rockets, and missiles throughout the weekend and Monday morning; causing some damage including fires. 27 attacks from Hezbollah, 7 from Iraqi Shia Militias, 4 suicide drones from Iraq to Jerusalem, a missile from Yemen (intercepted thank God), and dozens of sirens and alarms from other attacks. Talks of ceasefire with Hezbollah and Lebanon are unconfirmed rumors: they come out the US and other Western countries, but Israel, Lebanon, and Hezbollah say there are no real proposals to discuss.

Dutch police arrested some of the violent terrorists of the Amsterdam pogrom, but all were released without charges being pressed as of this time. Despite the Dutch authorities creating a ban on protests, hundreds ignored the ban on Sunday, with dozens of arrests being made (still not clear if any were actually charged with a crime). Israeli officials have warned that Israelis should not attend the upcoming soccer match in Paris, even Paris officials announced in Sunday that they are having 4000 police and 1200 stadium staff deployed for the upcoming Israel/France soccer game on Thursday. Swedish Jews were attacked in Stockholm last night during a memorial for Kristallnacht.

And here, domestically, it is Veteran's Day. Not normally considered an important holiday for Jews, but it actually is. Not just because America had been one of the greatest gifts for Jews for over 200 years by being a welcoming home, but because of the history of Jewish veterans who have served this nation so courageously.

In the 1890s, Mark Twain wrote an article about how Jews did not serve in the military of the United States. In response to that, 63 Jewish Veterans of the Civil War formed a group which is the longest-running veterans service organization in the nation, now known as Jewish War Veterans of the United States, or JWV. To his credit, Twain retracted his comments with an article called "The American Jew as Soldier": an apology for what he had said and expressing support of this organization, which has tied together Judaism and American patriotism for over 100 years.

The National Museum of American Jewish Military History in Washington DC, established in 1955, details some of the many services Jews have done in service of this nation. Jews have distinguished themselves in the military from Hayim Solomon's help with the Revolutionary War to now, including Medal of Honor recipients going back to the Civil War and continuing through the present. From enlisted men to Generals, flying Aces to Commodores, Jews have served the United States with their devotion and their lives. The great United States Special Forces, known as the Green Berets, were founded in 1952 by Aaron Bank, a Jewish Colonel. On the occasion of his hundredth birthday in 2002, George W. Bush commended him for developing the unconventional warfare programs and techniques that were used in toppling the Taliban.

Not just fighting anti-semitism, JWV has worked hard to create opportunities for Jews in the military. They established a Jewish chaplaincy program, allowing rabbis to help people of any faith in need. They have fought for Jewish military abroad, sent care packages to Jewish servicemen over a century, and been leaders in combating every form of discrimination that has ever been found in our Armed Forces. In 2002, they helped 24 Jewish veterans receive the Medal of Honor who had previously been denied because of anti-semitism through the passage of the Leonard Kravitz Jewish War Veterans Act. On Jewish holidays you can see members of this group at every Veterans Hospital passing out Jewish care packages.

If you are a Jewish veteran, or know another Jewish veteran would like to know more about JWV, please email me directly or go to <https://jwvusafoundation.org/> It is an important and worthwhile organization.

So on this holiday, let us remember the many Jews who suffered in pogroms throughout history through today. Let us all pray for the protection and safety of Israel. And let us all be grateful to all our veterans, especially the ones of our faith, who have protected this nation and the rights of freedom that we enjoy.

Happy Veterans Day and Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 11, 2024

10th of Cheshvan, 5785

November 12th 2024 at 4:54 am PST

Kindergarten Attacked and More

Chevre,

At just after 10:00 a.m. Israel time, Hezbollah attacked a kindergarten school, with children in the school. For some reason, the alarm sirens did not go off, but thanks to God's beneficence, children were in the shelters at the time and no children were injured, although the playground and classrooms were destroyed. While the world protests Israel, let us all see if any comments or protests are made against Hezbollah for attacking children in their school.

Amsterdam has been burning all of Monday night and into Tuesday as Islamic terrorists protest and burn the city. Dutch politician Geert Wilders summed it up succinctly. "After the hunt for the Jews, now comes the intifada."

There have been announcements by the Pentagon that the US carried out 9 military strikes against pro-Iranian militia in Syria, as well as against Houthi ports in western Yemen.

We are currently in the Jewish month of Cheshvan, a month of reflection in our Hebrew calendar, when spiritual growth begins beneath the darkness. Today is the yahrzeit of both Methuselah (at the age of 969, not just 900) and our matriarch Rachel, who died while giving birth to her son Benjamin. It is a time when we need to develop our spiritual awakening and skills, in preparation for the lights that will shine through the world at Hanukkah in a little over a month.

May we all cultivate our inner light, spiritual awareness, and faith even as the darkness around us seems so challenging... and be blessed like Methuselah to live full lives filled with wisdom and joy.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 12, 2024

11th of Cheshvan, 5785

November 14th 2024 at 6:09 am PST

Mideast Eyes Seem Focused On the US

Chevre,

Wednesday and Thursday found significant bombing in Beirut by the IDF, have a lot of between 5:00 and 8:00 ballistic missiles from Hezbollah towards Israel, as well as its daily attack of rockets. 2 civilians were killed in Nahariya by the rockets: Ziv Belfer and Shimon Nejam. May their memories be a blessing and their families comforted among the mourners of Zion. Turkey's rattling their sabers, and Erdogan said on Thursday morning that Turkey will be cutting off all relations with Israel.

But like much of the world right now, Israel and the Middle East are looking towards the United States and the incoming Administration to try to understand with their future holds. Multiple reports have come out from Iran saying that they are waiting for any attacks against Israel until they can negotiate with the new Administration. Two signs of the last 48 hours are particularly, and creating a lot of news in Israel: Trumps picks for US Ambassador to Israel, and his choice for Defense Secretary (remember that these are not the new Cabinet members, but are Trump's expressed choices). Both men (Mike Huckabee and Pete Hegseth respectively) incredibly passionate about Israel. Both men have made comments in the past however that are causing up a Ruckus in the entire Middle East. You just made comments about Israel as a strong ally, but they have also both repeatedly made statements about the impossibility of a two-state solution, and even suggesting annexation of Gaza. Whether we agree or disagree with either of these men's opinions, whether these opinions are reflective of Trump, or even whether either man will ultimately have the proposed position seem to be questions that are not being asked in Middle Eastern media. Both men are viewed as Iran hawks, and their names being even proposed is creating a lot of attention in the region. I'm not suggesting that the positions of these men are either good or bad, as there are powerful arguments on both sides. But the discussions about them have created a rampage of political comments throughout the region...and both Israel and her enemies are closely watching the

transition phase of the Presidency.

Eyes are also on the US due to the arrest of Asif Rahman. Rahman is a CIA intelligence officer who has been accused of leaking sensitive classified us material about Israel. He allegedly is the person who released Israel's plans to retaliate against Iran's October missile barrage and attack on Israel. Many people wondered why Israel postponed so long, and one of the main reasons was that their plans were leaked in detail. Rahman was arrested by the FBI in Cambodia and again, the United States is a focal point in Middle Eastern news media.

So like our brothers and sisters in Israel, we must all watch carefully to get an understanding of how the new administration may be dealing with Israel. But let us all pray that whomever is placed in positions of leadership, that they help achieve a peace in the Middle East that is long lasting.

And let us all have faith that this peace will come in our time.

Cbazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 14, 2024

13th of Cheshvan, 5785

November 15th 2024 at 5:40 am PST

Curiouser and Curiouser

Chevre,

Sometimes what goes on in the world is so odd that there are no real comments to be made, so here are just some updates going on in Israel and the world over Thursday and Friday morning

---Elon Musk apparently had a well-publicized a secret meeting with Iran's ambassador to the United Nations. Whatever you may think of him, Musk is not part of the current administration, nor is he truly confirmed for anything in the upcoming administration... so the whole concept of him meeting with the

ambassador is a bit odd. Sources in multiple media outlets said that the meeting, which lasted over an hour, was good and productive; and was aimed at diffusing tensions between the United States and Iran.

--- On the other side of the aisle, the US and France presented a piece ceasefire proposal to Lebanon. The proposal included France and the United States supplying arms to the Lebanese army, which would then contain Hezbollah and destroys infrastructure and bases; and that Israel would withdraw from Lebanon after 60 days. The problem is that Hezbollah has not even been part of the discussion; Israel certainly hasn't agreed to anything like this given past history; and the Lebanese don't seem to be so keen on the idea either. Moreover, the idea that Hezbollah will fall apart when confronted by a Lebanese Army seems like a delusion as long as Hezbollah is being supplied weaponry by Iran.

--- In France, there were more challenges in the street and stadiums as the French and Israeli soccer teams competed against each other on Thursday night. There were Arab demonstrations, attacks on police, and "Jew hunting" groups; but with over 4,000 extra security details and police teams, it was significantly safer than in Amsterdam.

---The IDF announced the text from Lebanon have reduced from an average of 150 plus every day, to approximately 100. While that is a significant decrease, we should all contemplate for a moment the idea of over 100 attacks per day for over a year. And these attacks are consistently at civilian targets. But while the world condemns Israel, they continue to remain silent as Israeli schools, playgrounds, and other children's facilities are being attacked by Hezbollah.

--- Two neighbors of Israel had different announcements on Friday morning. Greece made an offer of 4 billion euros to buy Iron Dome technology for their own nation. And the Turkish Defense Minister said the Turkey is not ruling out the possibility of a World War III (God forbid) and is "making preparations".

But the Torah portion of this week gives us solace. Abraham and Sara are promised a child despite their extremely old age: a promise that is miraculously fulfilled with the birth of Isaac. To paraphrase Yogi Bhajan Khalsa, we Jews do not just believe in miracles, we have a 3700 year history of both relying and experiencing them.

And we can all have faith that those miracles will continue for our people and our nation. We may have no idea, no plan, and no understanding of how peace can come to Israel and the region; but we can and need to have faith that God, as He always has throughout our history, will take care of us.

That miracle for Abraham and Sarah was not something they could have conceived of in their dreams. Similarly, we may not be able to know how, but those miracles for Israel and the Jewish people can be relied upon.

May we all recognize the miracles we each experience in our own daily lives, and be so grateful for them that we choose to be kind, compassionate, and caring for others who walk in this world with us.

Chazak u'Baruch and Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 15, 2024

14th of Cheshvan, 5785

November 16th 2024 at 7:15 pm PST

Shavuah Tov Updates

Chevre,

Shavuah tov, may this week bring good health, success, prosperity, love, and peace to all of us and all of Israel.

The Shabbat was busy in Israel, and around the world. Rockets from Lebanon landed at Haifa. Although, thank God, there were no fatalities, there were a number of injuries; and a direct hit was taken on a synagogue in Haifa. This was part of 23 attacks by Hezbollah on Israel over the Sabbath, each attack having roughly 10 rockets or drones. Additionally, a ballistic missile was launched by Hezbollah at Herzliya and hit an open beach area with no injuries, but the explosion was so large that it was felt 35 km away. Let us always remember that this is what Israel has had to put up with on a daily basis for over a year.

Internationally, it is being reported by the Study of Global Anti-Semitism and Policy in New York that the ANC, South Africa's ruling party was on the verge of financial bankruptcy until it received huge donations from Iran and Qatar days after filing the claim against Israel last December. And according to Israel Hayom, European Foreign Minister Josep Borrell has proposed a man Israel from dialogue talks with the EU, as well as proposing to ban all exports from Judea Samaria in Israel.

Channel 12 in Israel is reporting that for the first time since the war began, there seems to be hint of a change in Tehran's policy. They are reporting that Iran has instructed Hezbollah to work out some sort of negotiated peace deal. They are the only ones who reported this so far, but we can be hopeful that in fact there may start to be a pathway towards peace.

And it has been confirmed by multiple sources that when Israel attacked Iran, they destroyed a secret nuclear facility in Parchin, southeast of Tehran. Part of the Iranian nuclear program that was put on hold in 2003, the US and Israel had apparently both discovered that the facility was in fact operative in both development and production of weapons. The destruction of the facility sets back Iran's weapons development program significantly, and takes us a step farther away from, God forbid, nuclear attacks.

May the time not be distant O Lord when all nuclear weapons, all nuclear facilities, and all weapons of mass destruction are removed from this world, and replaced with a peace between nations, religions, cultures, and individuals.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 16, 2024

16th of Cheshvan, 5785

November 18th 2024 at 6:09 am PST

Updates

Chevre,

The world's news just seems to keep being... odd. Some good and some unsettling, it seems as if all of it is to help guide us to surrender to God.... and there we will find the true understanding. And so, in no organized order...

---The newly elected Senate Majority Leader, John Thune, issued a statement directed to the International Criminal Court. He threatened legislation creating official sanctions against the ICC if they seek arrest warrants against Netanyahu and other Israeli officials.

---Senior members of Hamas leadership who have been living in Qatar, have now been confirmed by Channel 11 to move to Turkey. While this may at first seem like positive news, we have to always remember that Turkey is a loose cannon; and Erdogan seeks to create a new worldwide caliphate based on the Ottoman Empire. Qatar is run by businessmen with theological and political agendas. Turkey is run by a fanatical intent to conquer the world. The move of Hamas leaders may or may not be helpful in affecting Hamas' actions.

---Iranian hackers claim to have hacked and stolen documents from the Ministry of Finance, the Bank of Israel, and the Israeli Stock Exchange. This has been reported in multiple outlets, but there doesn't seem to be proof of the hack.

---There are more rumors and leaks of a ceasefire in Lebanon, but they still don't have backing from Hezbollah, although apparently Iran is now pushing Hezbollah to end the conflict. The rumors define the deal as including:

Ceasefire Implementation of Resolution 1701

Hezbollah retreating beyond the Litani river

Withdrawal of Israel from Lebanon

The terms would not stoo Hezbollah from re-arming

US envoy Hochstein in in Beirut and Israel this week to push the deal

It seems that there are so many different parts moving that it is difficult to really understand what is happening. But again, this gives us an opportunity to deepen our faith by surrendering to God's will, and learning to appreciate the journey...

May we all appreciate our journeys, and may the journey of the People of Israel lead speedily to a lasting peace.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 18, 2024

17th of Cheshvan, 5785

November 19th 2024 at 1:01 am PST

Chaos + Confusion = Creation

Chevre,

Tel Aviv was attacked by ballistic missiles from Hezbollah on Monday. Thank God, there were no fatalities, and numerous locations were damaged. Dozens of rockets were fired again at the Galilee. It still shocks me that there is not a greater outrage from Christians around the world at the attacks on this area, which is so sacred to both Jews and Christians. In Shafaram, rockets claimed 39 victims, including 8 children under the age of 4, and a 40 year old mother of 4 was killed.

The common belief is that Iran has moved all sorts of weaponry, including short and long range missiles into Iraq. Israel has sent formal requests to the U.N. to force Iraq to end these attacks per United Nations Charter.

There was a lot of news about the Israel/United States relationship in Monday and Tuesday's news in Israel. Netanyahu detailed publicly for the first time about the challenges in the relationship, especially since Oct 7, and his statements about both President Biden and Sec of State Blinken were not very flattering. The Prime Minister doesn't always remember that US officials' top stakeholders are Americans, and Jews are only a small percentage of that demographic. But as Jews, we must be clear that we need to do all we can to get the US to fully support Israel, and that Israel is the front line battle in a war against the U.S. and the West.

Rather than relaying to you some of the disdainful comments Netanyahu made about Biden, you can read about Netanyahu's statement

here: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-says-bidens-counsel-throughout-the-war-was-repeatedly-off-mark/>

According to Reuters, members of the UN Security Council called for more aid to Gaza; and then at almost the same time it was announced that on Saturday, over 100 trucks of food was hijacked in Gaza... in one of the largest hijackings of the last 13 months. The convoy was under the responsibility of UNRWA and the UN World Food Fund.

Also according to Reuters, the Senate will be voting on Wednesday on Bernie Sanders' proposal to immediately block all sales of arms to Israel; and it is getting support with a number of Senators. This is dangerous for Israel, for the United States, for the West, and for every Jew. Sanders has demonstrated being a "self-hating Jew" his entire career; consistently against any support for Israel. Every American Jew needs to be aware not only of Sanders' objectives, but of his cohorts in their attempts to allow the destruction of Israel. (His current supporters on this proposal are Senators Welch/Vermont, Merkey/Oregon, Schatz/Hawaii, Van Hollen/Md, and Warren/Mass). Let us pray that the U.S. does not turn its back on our partnership with Israel.

The IDF found Russian made weapons in Hezbollah bases according to Tuesday's Wall St. Journal. This is physical confirmation of what many have suspected: Iran has been getting Russian weaponry and moving it to Hezbollah. Iran's Foreign Minister Araghchi made more threats at Israel on Tuesday morning, threatening to retaliate against Israel with a plan called "True Promise 3".

The world is a reflection of the transition between administrations here in the US: everything seems to be in flux... But we need to remember that creation itself in the Book of Genesis comes out of "chaos and confusion" (tohu v'vohu) What may seem like chaos to us now will surely transform into creation... and may it be a creation of peace and healing for the world.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 19, 2024

18th of Cheshvan, 5785

November 20th 2024 at 6:12 am PST

The Palestinian Authority, Russia, Turkey, and Iran

Chevre,

As the IDF reveals more information about their discoveries in Hezbollah and Hamas weapons caches, the world's involvement in the war becomes clearer, and both more sad and dangerous.

Between 60 and 70% of weapons found in the last months in Hezbollah caches are made in Russia. Some of it, like Kornet anti-tank missiles, were made by Russia, sold to Syria, and ended up in the hands of the Hezbollah terrorists. Another Hezbollah weapons cache was found in a schoolyard in a Southern Lebanon village, again with weapons made in Russia (not directly related, it was reported by Reuters at around 11pm PST that the US is shutting down the embassy in Kiev).

The Palestinian Authority reportedly has asked Hamas to transfer management and negotiations of hostages to them. We all need to recognize that the PA and Hamas have much more in common, including the same goals, visions, and hatred than most Americans recognize. Especially as American Jews, we need to be honest that the PA is a terrorist organization from its inception, committed to the absolute destruction of Israel. The only difference in goals between the PA and Hamas is that the PA is playing a long game as opposed to Hamas wanting Israel's destruction immediately. Article 9 of the PA Charter is clear that "only armed struggle will liberate Palestine". The PA still has not condemned Oct 7, and defines Palestine as the river to the sea per Article 2 of the PA Charter. We must never forget the PA goals, which include the eradication of the state of Israel.

The PA may have more challenges in Israel due to a Jerusalem District Court decision made on Tuesday which is obligating the PA to lay compensation to families of victims of the Sabaro attack of 2001 to a cost of tens of millions of shekels. Although this ruling will certainly be appealed, it could make financial obligations become an effective weapon in the war against terror in Israel.

Iran was also in a lot of regional media on Tuesday/Wednesday as the UN Atomic Energy Agency reported that Iran has 32 times the limit of enriched uranium than agreed to in the 2015 nuclear deal, and has enough to make 12 nuclear

bombs. Iran, for its part, doesn't deny that it has broken all agreements, but is threatening to "take immediate action in the nuclear field" if any resolutions or censures are placed against Iran by Western foreign nations, including the US and UK (both of whom have expressed in the last 48 hours that they are discussing resolutions with the UN against Iran).

Hamas leaders are said to now be in Turkey, and the US has threatened Turkey not to do business with or allow anyone from Hamas to stay there. State Dept Spokeman Matthew Miller gave a press briefing on Tuesday, where he made vague threats to Turkey that they better not let those Hamas leaders stay there, or else... and no one seems to know what the "or else" really is.

It is for all of these reasons that it is so important that the United States stays a powerful ally of Israel in this time... committed as partners together. And as Jewish Americans, it is imperative that we do all we can to strengthen that alliance and partnership in every way.

But it is even more important for us to always remember who our true ally is, has always been, and always will be: God. God has always sent partners to support the Jewish people in times of trouble. And He has always provided the right partner in the right time to support the people of Israel.

And He always will. Am Yisrael Chai are more than just words and more than a catch phrase. They are words that are a recognition of our unique partnership with the Almighty, and a faith in the Eternal Covenant.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 20, 2024

19th of Cheshvan, 5785

November 20th 2024 at 8:05 am PST

800 Have Fallen

Chevre,

As of Wednesday morning in Israel, 800 Israeli soldiers have fallen in this war since Oct. 7.

Please take a moment today to say Kaddish for these fallen heroes. May their families be comforted among the mourners of Zion, and their memories be for a blessing. May the One who ordains peace in the universe quickly bring peace to Israel.. a lasting peace between Israel and her neighbors, that spreads throughout the entire world. And may we all be blessed to experience that worldwide peace in our time.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 20, 2024

19th of Cheshvan, 5785

November 21st 2024 at 6:04 am PST

Some Hopeful News...

Chevre,

The Senate voted on Wednesday to reject three proposals brought forward by Bernie Sanders that would have prohibited any support of Israel; prohibiting weapons sales, technical and logistical support; or even technology that would reduce collateral damage. 18 Senators voted for all three proposals, and the proposals were resoundly defeated, thank God. It is good news for both Israel and America, but it is also a warning: a similar resolution put forth by Sanders in January was supported by only 10 Senators, which demonstrates a disturbing trend that we need to be aware of.

Other hopeful news include the US Treasury placing financial sanctions in six Hamas leaders, who are suspected of having moved from Qatar to Turkey. The sanctions freeze any US based assets, and blocks any transactions with any of the Hamas leaders.

The US also blocked a UN Security Council resolution that would demand a

permanent ceasefire and the release of hostages, but would not make them contingent upon each other. In other words, Israel would have been required to have a ceasefire as a member of the UN, but Hamas might not release hostages. Again, thank God that the US vetoed the resolution.

Hezbollah hit a kindergarten in Israel for the second time this week, this time in Acre. There are reports in Israeli media that the US has told Iraq not to allow attacks on Israel to come out of Iraq, but no US official is cited. There are also reports in Iraq that the militias are preparing for an Israeli attack.

Israel launched a powerful attack on Syria military, killing 36 high level officers, including a brigadier general. The Assad regime continues to support Hezbollah, and so, Israel has started working on that branch of the Iranian proxies in order to stop Hezbollah and bring peace to the region.

Today is the yahrzeit of Hannah Senesh, the young freedom fighter who was executed by the Nazis on this date exactly 80 years ago (according to the Hebrew calendar, her Gregorian yahrzeit was Nov. 7). Her story is famous (you can learn about her at <https://medium.com/memory-action/hannah-szenes-the-young-poet-and-parachutist-who-risked-her-life-to-help-fellow-jews-during-world-0f88a570960d>), and many don't know she wrote the poem that became the powerful song "Eli, Eli". One of her great quotes that guides so many is, "One needs something to believe in, something for which can have whole hearted enthusiasm. One needs to feel that life has meaning, that one is needed in the world".

Each person reading this email... you are needed in this world at this time. Your prayers... your thoughts... your actions... they make a larger difference in this war and in the world than you may realize. Each spark of each soul is so needed to create a great light that will wash away the darkness of war and pain. Never think you don't affect the world... you do in the greatest and most subtle of ways. And you are truly a blessing

And let us all remember these other famous words of Hannah Senesh:

O Lord, My God
I pray that these things never end
The sand and the sea

The rush of the waters
The crash of the Heavens
The prayer of man

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 21, 2024

20th of Cheshvan, 5785

November 22nd 2024 at 5:28 am PST

The World vs. Israel

Chevre,

It often feels as if Israel is alone when we see the anti-Semitic, anti-Israel Jew hatred... but we must always remember that we are never alone... God is, has been, and always will be our ally... and we have 3700 years of history that demonstrates that truth.

The ICC has issued warrants for arrest of Netanyahu and Gallant for "war crimes" and "crimes against humanity". But nothing against Hamas and the other Iranian proxies. Israel's President responded by saying, "The decision chose the side of terrorism and evil over democracy and freedom, and turned the international justice system itself into a human shield for Hamas' crimes against humanity". Biden called the decision "outrageous", and Trump expressed clearly that things will change in January.

The Intl. Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has decided to require Iran to deliver a comprehensive report of all its nuclear program; something Iran refuses to do. In theory, this should mean an immediate return to heavy sanctions against Iran. But Iran announced on Thursday night that it is carrying out the threat it made earlier in the week, and operating new and advanced centrifuges with the goal of enriching uranium quickly to a higher degree.

As daunting as these and other pieces of news may feel, we need to remember

the words of President John F Kennedy, whose yahrzeit is today. "Israel was not created in order to disappear - Israel will endure and flourish. It is the child of hope and the home of the brave." We must constantly remind ourselves of the basic truth of Am Yisrael Chai - the Jewish people live. As Jews, we need to choose this type of faith over fear... and to deepen our personal relationship with God. It is in that relationship that we can find solace and strength.

So take a few minutes this Shabbat and just talk to God. Express your own words and feelings and start a conversation. Out loud and literally...speak with the Divine as you would with a loving parent and friend. It may make you more aware and feel more centered...

And if you listen carefully, you may hear God speaking back with you.

Shabbat Shalom

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 22, 2024

21st of Cheshvan, 5785

November 24th 2024 at 5:57 am PST

Baruch Dayan Emet and More...

Chevre,

It often feels as if Israel is alone when we see the anti-Semitic, anti-Israel Jew hatred... but we must always remember that we are never alone... God is, has been, and always will be our ally... and we have 3700 years of history that demonstrates that truth.

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Shabbat Shalom

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 22, 2024

21st of Cheshvan, 5785

November 24th 2024 at 6:08 am PST

Baruch Dayan Emet and More...

Chevre,

It is with sadness that we must mourn the death of Rabbi Zvi Kogan, whose death was confirmed on Sunday morning. Rabbi Kogan was a Chabad Rabbi in the United Arab Emirates, and has been part of that community since it was formed in 2020. He was kidnapped on Thursday, and his death was confirmed by Israel's embassy in Abu Dhabi. Israeli officials are exploring if this was the work of a terrorist group from Uzbekistan that was reportedly sent by Iran and has now fled to Turkey. Israel has now placed a warning that all non-essential travel to UAE be restricted. May his memory be a blessing, and his family comforted among the mourners of Zion.

There was a terror attack aimed at the Israeli Embassy in Amman on Sunday morning. A lone gunman attacked the Embassy. Ultimately, the terrorist was killed and three security guards injured.

Israeli backpackers visiting Townsville in Queensland, Australia were threatened and then chased by a shop owner yelling "you dirty f*****g filthy Jews" according to the Anti-Defamation Commission. This is the latest anti-Semitic act of Jew hatred coming from Australia, which at one time was considered one of the safer places for Jews in the Diaspora. And the Norwegian government has introduced a proposal to increase the budget of 170 million NOK (approximately 15 million USD) to fund the Palestinian Authority in Gaza, Lebanon, and the UNRWA. This follows Norway's commitment to support the ICC in issuing an arrest warrant on Israeli officials for "crimes against humanity"... a practice also supported and embraced by Prime Minister Trudeau on behalf of Canada. At the same time, on Sunday morning the Amsterdam officials allowed an unlawful demonstration of Muslims to go through the Amsterdam streets unchecked in their Jew hatred. This is on the heels of the pogrom in Amsterdam. Despite condemning videos, the Dutch authorities have released detainees from that event, and are now blaming the Israelis for the violence.

And rockets and drones have been attacking the Galilee non-stop all Sunday morning, with over 61 rockets launched towards the area by 11am...

It is important to be aware of these attacks on Jews worldwide not to increase our fear, but to increase our faith and action. Jew-hatred both domestically and worldwide is more intense than it has been for decades, and as American Jews

we need to be conscious of this truth. Now is the time to come together as Jewish communities in prayer and solace, and to support Jews locally and around the world with our deeds. And we must keep our faith strong that God is our ally, and even if we do not see the path, He will keep us safe.

It is also a time to remember that faith over fear does not mean foolishness. Be aware of what is going on in your own community, and expose any Jew hatred you see or experience. And always be safe. Our temple has armed security at every event and service, and I am proud to say that in the last months, a number of our congregants have received training and completed the requirements to achieve their CCW licenses. If this is something you wish to learn more about, please email me directly and I will get you in touch with the right people to learn more.

This is one of the big lessons for each of us in this chaotic world of increased Jew-hatred. Faith over fear, but never foolishness by being oblivious or by being aggressive. We need to remember the words of King Solomon, "A fool starts fights" (Proverbs 18:6). We are a people of people, committed to peace. Yes, we may have to take precautions, but we cannot ever let our anger about Jew-hatred push us to instigate any confrontation. We are in daily pain about what is going on in the world; especially the unjust accusations against Israel, which has been so victimized in the last 13 months. But we can never surrender to anger.... we must always choose a path of peace. Otherwise, God forbid, we become no different than our enemies who worship violence.

I know this may seem like a dichotomy. But we are Jews... a people who have lived with simultaneously conflicting realities for thousands of years.

King David, arguably the greatest warrior in Jewish history, said in Psalm 34:14 words we need to always remember. "Turn from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it"

May we all find that peace in our hearts, our faith, our actions, our lives, and in this time.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 24, 2024

23rd of Cheshvan, 5785

November 25th 2024 at 6:11 am PST

So Much Is Happening...

Chevre,

Hezbollah fired over 350 rockets at Israel on Sunday including one that landed 300 feet from Bnai Zion Hospital in Haifa, injuring 14 people who were immediately taken care of at the hospital with equipment newly bought this year... in part, thanks to the donations of members of our community. Today, your efforts directly saved some lives. Kol HaKvod, may you and your families be blessed many times over.

But the healing from that hospital would not have been needed if those hundreds of rockets had not been launched. As discussions continue regarding a ceasefire with Hezbollah, let us not forget that they started launching rockets at Israel in October 8, 2023; and it was not until September of 2024 that Israel finally started seriously to fight back. Monday morning rumors in Israel are that we are close to a three stage cease fire with Hezbollah, but "close" is a long way from peace, especially since the three stages give Hezbollah time to rebuild in order to attack again.

A five million dollar has been officially offered by the Israeli government to anyone who brings a hostage alive out of Gaza. Hopefully this will inspire some people to return hostages, but there has been none released this way yet.

The UAE has arrested 3 suspects in the murder of Rabbi Kogan, and it is not clear yet exactly who these culprits are affiliated with. But in Argentina, which has committed to being allied with Israel; Buenos Aries police raided and confiscated a shrine to modern Nazis that was filled with weapons and Nazi propoganda. And Harvard President Alan Garber is again in the news. This time, for denying tenure to the one Yiddish scholar on campus, who received unanimous recommendation from his department's academic committee. Garber's action

has sparked input from Jewish faculty across the campus, and concern that there will be even downsizing of Jewish themed topics.

With all these challenges, how can we solve so many issues? Simple. Have faith and do good deeds every day.

And if you question that recipe, remember Bnai Zion Hospital: a hospital that saved lives today thanks to the many donations that people made to the hospital over the last year.

Each small action makes a difference. So let us all try to do more good deeds for others...

Or at least take on one new mitzvah... one new good deed each day. The good deed you do benefits others, and elevates your own soul. May each of our souls touch higher heights and deeper depths through the merit of our good deeds.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 25, 2024

24th of Cheshvan, 5785

November 26th 2024 at 6:13 am PST

Ceasefire?

Chevre,

Israel's media is filled with discussions about a ceasefire with Hezbollah in the immediate future, with terms that supposedly approved of by Lebanon and Hezbollah. The expectation is that the proposed ceasefire will be approved by the Cabinet only, but not the entire government of Knesset. Leaks of the terms are uninspiring, and are being touted as a ceasefire that may be dangerous for Israel. But multiple outlets are saying that the factor is the intense pressure by the United States; which has threatened Israel. The Times of Israel as well as media both overseas and domestically are saying the US told Israel that if they

do not have ceasefire while Biden is still in office, then the US would no longer veto a UN Security Council resolution against Israel... which would allow UN forces to ultimately be at war with Israel. This would mean that the entire world would, God forbid, be at war with Israel. Israeli media are attacking Biden as a lame duck President who has always wanted the worst for Israel, and is going to use these last weeks to hurt Israel.

But this is only one reason that so many in Israel are upset by the deal. It would not remove Hezbollah threats entirely; and as a result, leaders and Mayors of communities in the north are telling citizens to not go back to their homes there as it isn't safe. There is a lot of controversy within Israel about this deal, and we should expect to hear passionate discussions throughout the day, probably culminating in a Knesset decision on Tuesday evening or Wednesday morning.

Would it be a ceasefire, or an opportunity for Hezbollah to rearm and attack Israel again... restarting the war in the north but losing the advantage Israel has gained over the last few months? There is no way of knowing the future right now, but it seems that much of the country does not want the proposal to pass the Knesset.

Let us all pray that whenever ceasefires occur, they transform from temporary ceasefires into long term and lasting peace treaties.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 26, 2024

25th of Cheshvan, 5785

November 27th 2024 at 5:55 am PST

Where Will This Ceasefire Lead

Chevre,

As of now, a ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon/Hezbollah is in effect. Some in Israel are happy about it and some are not. The political machinations of how

and why this is happening are fascinating, and would be a great conversation over a long dinner. But this is just an email, so here are some of the basic highlights of the deal:

Over a period of time the IDF will be out of southern Lebanon, with an international force supplanting them there to enforce the resolution from 2006 (that was never kept); and to keep Hezbollah on the other side of the Litani River. If Hezbollah attacks, Israel is allowed to respond. Hezbollah is not becoming un-armed. Lebanese citizens are moving back to their homes towards the border. Israeli citizens from the north who have been displaced for the last year are being told not to go back home as it is so dangerous, Hezbollah has a history of breaking agreements, and the weapons of Hezbollah could easily cause death and destruction again, God forbid.

A Hamas leader has said that they are willing to make a ceasefire as well... but they have said that many times. If they ever really wanted a ceasefire any time over the last 418 days, all they would have needed to do would be to give back the hostages and stop fighting. So, it seems unlikely that a real peace with Gaza is possible in the immediate future. In Lebanon, media outlet Al-Mayadeen is celebrating this as a victory for Hezbollah, and that it is "because of Nasrallah."

No one really knows what will now happen; although there are many opinions. What we do know is that for at least this morning, there will be no people being killed through war.

...and that is a blessing

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 27, 2024

26th of Cheshvan, 5785

November 28th 2024 at 6:07 am PST

Cracks Already Appearing

Chevre,

The ceasefire is not even 36 hours old, and already there are cracks appearing.

Israel has made it clear that it will answer any violations, even the smallest, with force. There have already been a few drones shot down by the IDF, and at around noon today in Israel the IDF confirmed that they had carried out a strike in southern Lebanon, which it says was a "warning shot" due to the arrival of suspects with vehicles that were identified going into the Markaba area.

Israeli citizens who live in the north are not going back to their homes per government instructions as this ceasefire does not include any buffer zone between Hezbollah and the northern Israel communities. US envoy Hochstein said today that it is a fantasy to think that Lebanon will agree to Israel staying in Lebanon's southern region as a buffer zone; and it is doubtful that Israel will ever entrust the safety of its northern citizens to an international peacekeeping force. This is what was done after the 2006 UN Resolution, and it resulted in Hezbollah amassing weapons and digging tunnels into Israeli territory.

There is chaos in Syria as of Thursday morning. Hezbollah has been fleeing, leaving piles of weapons behind in Syria, with multiple Iraqi and Afghan militias supported by Iran taking over their positions. Opposition groups which include ISIS and Kurds (not together) are attacking. The Syrian Army, backed by Russian air power is attacking everyone, and Turkey will likely get involved in attacking the Kurds. Israel is not involved, and on Tuesday night, the Syrian Assad regime attacked a school in Yereko with heavy artillery. Several children were killed and dozens injured, and we can all wait for the UN condemnation, EU threats, and ICC warrants... but don't hold your breath.

Given Israel's commitment to keeping its citizens in the north safe; and given the history of Hezbollah, which is dedicated to the complete destruction of Israel and the death of every Jew, God forbid, it seems only a matter of time before the war begins again.

...but we are Jews, whose national anthem means "the hope"... and we will always choose to be hopeful.

It may take a miracle for there to be peace in the area of northern Israel, but we Jews are in the miracle business.... and business is good.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 28, 2024

27th of Cheshvan, 5785

November 29th 2024 at 6:22 am PST

Syria, Iran, & At Home

Chevre,

While Israel and the world await to see how long it takes before this ceasefire is broken (there have already been accusations of it being broken) or if a miracle happens and it holds; there is a lot of other action going on in both Syria and Iran...

Syria is having progressively more internal fighting between rebels and Assad's forces. By most accounts, on one side there is Assad, Hezbollah, Iran, Iraqi Shia militias, and Russia. Siding with the rebels against Assad are Al-Qaeda, Kurds, jihadists, ISIS, and possibly some Turkish support. The only benefit to the infighting is that while they attack each other, they have less focus on attacking Israel. But we need to remember that whichever group(s) end up controlling Syria... none of them are friends to Israel.

Iran is also in the news as it is admitting to the accusations by the Intl. Atomic Energy Agency that it is planning to install about 6000 new centrifuges to enrich Uranium. They also have said that they intend to enrich the uranium to 5%, which is much higher than the 3.67% that Tehran agreed to in 2015. It is clear that Iran is not in the energy only stage of nuclear development, but has intention to develop weapons grade uranium.

While it seems that we cannot directly affect the situations in Syria or Iran, in fact, we can directly affect the world. We have finished Thanksgiving, but for many people even in our own area of the Conejo, San Fernando, or Simi Valleys; it is hard to be thankful during the upcoming holiday season. But there is a lot that each of us can do; from donating new or gently used clothing or toys for

families in need to giving our time and/or finances to any of the many organizations in the area that are directly servicing the homeless or poor. You can always bring toys to your local fire station, which distributes them to the needy prior to Christmas. Jewish Family Services helps Jewish families in need all year, and can always use the support. Their website www.JFSLA.org can give you valley locations as well as more information about the organization. If you would like to help active or past USA military, you can go to www.WoundedWarriorProject.org, www.HFOTUSA.org, or www.USO.org. And if you want to help the soldiers of the IDF and give support to these heroes in Israel, www.FIDF.org is the website for Friends of the IDF.

www.FindHelp.org is a website resource of different organizations that help different groups, and can lead you to be able to help others. And if nothing else, you can always drop off gently used or new clothing or toys to our synagogue, and we will find a way to get them to distribution organizations.

But please remember to share the feeling of gratitude with others less fortunate. It may seem that these are only small good deeds. But I can promise you that each time any of us do one of these small acts of kindness, it affects the problems and wars going on around the world deeper than you may imagine. The small charitable actions of a single individual are like a candle that illuminates darkness.. and with enough candles, we really can eliminate that darkness from the world.

At Hannukah we often sing "Light One Candle" by Peter, Paul, & Mary. As we approach Hannukah this year, let each of us light our own soul's candle by sharing the gratitude of Thanksgiving with others in need.

It will affect other individuals, make you feel good as you give; and please believe me that in doing that, we really do change the world.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

November 29, 2024

28th of Cheshvan, 5785

December 1st 2024 at 5:59 am PST

Shavuah Tov, Challenges, & Light

Chevre,

Shavuah tov. In this week's Torah reading, God promises the land of Israel to Jacob and his descendants (Gen 28:13); but do you think our ancestor Jacob knew what the price would be for his descendants? Could Jacob ever have conceived the hate that flows against us so continually in that region, and around the world?

And it does flow. This ceasefire doesn't exactly seem like any sort of real ceasefire... maybe because so many of the attackers on Israel are actually Iranian proxies, so a ceasefire with Hezbollah only affects one arm of the octopus that is a vehicle for Iran's hate. Yemen launched ballistic missile at Israel, which thank God was brought down outside of Israeli airspace. The IDF is identifying Hezbollah violations of weapons, launchers, etc., and per the agreement are destroying them. Over the weekend rocket launchers were destroyed in Lebanon, as well as Israel launched drones to eliminate other weaponry deeper in Lebanon. Precision attack took out rocket launchers in Gaza that were confirmed to be in a "civilian building in a humanitarian zone"; and as a result the World Kitchen Organization is suspending its activities in Gaza.

Israel's national security force has put out earnings against travel to Thailand or Southeast Asia for Israelis as well as any Jew worldwide. A pro-Palestinian organization called "March 30 Movement" is pressuring Dutch authorities to arrest three IDF soldiers visiting the Netherlands for "war crimes". A Hamas official said that Hamas is willing to discuss anything in order to get a ceasefire there. But their parameters are the IDF leaving Gaza entirely under the auspices of Hamas (possibly in conjunction with the P.A.); a trickling of releasing hostages, a few at a time; and the opening of the Philadelphi corridor... So really, what new discussion points are they suggesting. Here's an idea: Let Hamas release all hostages and remove themselves from any control of Gaza, and then there can be a productive talk towards peace.

Today we begin the month of Kislev, the month of Hanukkah. This month reminds us, among other things (which will be discussed in future emails as we

get closer to the holiday), that in the middle of darkness there will be light. Let it also remind us that there will be light at the end of this darkness of war we have been experiencing since Oct. 7. Am Yisrael Chai...the people of Israel will live; and there will be peace... a lasting peace for Israel and the Jewish people everywhere.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 1, 2024

Rosh Chodesh Kislev, 5785

December 2nd 2024 at 5:14 pm PST

Kislev: Hanukkah and A Month of Miracles

Chevre,

We have now entered the month of Kislev, also known as "the month of miracles". With all the changes going on in the world, I thought it might be worth learning just a little bit about this month, and to give ourselves a kavannah, an intention, for the month.

Historically, the month begins the holiday of Hanukkah (Hannuka, Channukah, or however you chose to spell it in English). The word Hanukkah means "dedication" (this month is all about dedication), and refers to the re-dedicating of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Maccabees (also known as the Hasmoneans) in the 2nd century B.C.E. Hanukkah is simultaneously a memorial festival in honor of our Patriarch Jacob, as ordained for all time in Genesis, Chapter 50 by his son Joseph. Both the mourning festival for Jacob and the festival honoring the re-dedication of the Temple begin in the 25th day of Kislev.

It is a miracle that both of these events happened on the exact same day, although over a thousand years apart. And each event commemorates a miracle unto itself. The fact that Jacob gave birth to a nation; was promised the land of Israel for his descendants; survived the drought in Canaan; and that his offspring became the leaders in Egypt are just some of the many miracles associated with

Jacob. The military victory of the Maccabees against the much greater army of Seleucid Greeks; the survival of Judaism against assimilation; and of course, the lasting of one day's oil for eight days are all examples of the miracles that occurred in the time of the Hasmoneans.

It is because of the simultaneous reality of two ages of miracles that we say the two prayers when lighting the candles. "Who has commanded us to kindle the Hanukkah lights" refers to Jacob's time; and "Who did wondrous for our ancestors in this time" refers to the Hasmoneans.

But Kislev is more than just the beginning of Hanukkah. Some of the important historical occurrences that happened during Kislev include:

---6th: Death of David ben Gurion. 1973

---8th: Death of Golda Meir. 1978

---9th: Both the birth and death of the Mitteler Rabbi, the second Rebbe of Chabad. 1773 and 1827

---14th: Both the birth and death of Reuben, the eldest son of Jacob. 1568 BCE and 1445 BCE

---17th: The UN General Assembly approved the partition of Palestine, leading to the modern State of Israel. 1947

---19th: R. Shneur Zalman, the author of the Tanya and founder of Chabad, was miraculously acquitted and released from his death sentence in Czarist Russia. 1799

---25th: The Greeks begin pagan sacrifices in the Holy Temple. 167 BCE

---25th: The Hanukkah miracle of the Hasmoneans. 164 BCE

---27th: The flood rains cease according to Genesis 6. 2105 BCE

It's a pretty amazing list, especially if we look at how many large transitions happened during Kislev.

From a spiritual point of view, it is considered a month when miracles are easily accessed. It's symbol is a "keshet", a rainbow... one of the most beautiful miracles we all get to see, and which stirs something inside each of us. The word "kislev" derives its Hebre root from the word "kesef", meaning security. When we are secure in our faith that God is omnipresent and omnipotent, we are able to receive the miracles that God seeks to give us.

Sefer Yetzirah and other mystical texts give us more insight into the month of

Kislev. It is associated with the tribe of Benjamin (it was Benjamin's descendant Nachshon whose action of faith precipitated the miracle of splitting of the Sea of Reeds); the planet Jupiter; the constellation Sagittarius; the letter Samekh; the heart in our body, and the quality of educating our children. The month itself is a ladder... a connector between the worlds that reaches from earth to heaven and back down to this physical world. We will deal with some of these meanings in the upcoming workshop on Jewish astrology; where each participant will create their own detailed astrological chart based on our mystical teachings and texts.

One other fun insight about Kislev is fun to share with regard to "gematria", Jewish numerology. The word for ladder in Hebrew is "sulam". The numerical value of the word sulam of 130 (samekh=70, lamed=30, mem=40). The holiday of Hanukkah begins in the month of Kislev, but ends in the month Tevet. The letter associated with Tevet is the hebrew letter Ayin, which has a numerical value of 70. So Tevet is 70 (ayin).and Kislev is 60 (samekh). Added together the total is 130...a "sulam"...a "ladder". Hanukkah, which includes both months is a "ladder" holiday: an ideal time to pull miracles down from heaven and into this world.

May we all receive miracles in this month of Kislev, and into Tevet through Hanukkah. Miracles of safely educating our children; of good health and prosperity; of a respite from the Jew hatred of the world; and of a lasting peace for Israel.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 2, 2024

1st of Kislev, 5785

December 3rd 2024 at 12:21 am PST

A Princess Bride Ceasefire & A Hamas/P.A. Partnership

Chevre,

In the movie "The Princess Bride", the Wallace Shawn character keeps expressing his shock at what happens by saying "Inconceivable!" After this happens many

times, the Mandy Patinkin character says to him, "You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means."

Replace the word "inconceivable" with "ceasefire" and we have a description of Hezbollah and Israel right now.

There has been no real ceasefire, nor has Hezbollah abided by the limitations of this supposed ceasefire. They have continued to attack in a multiplicity of ways; have been trying to get Iranian weapons through the Syria among other ways; and launched a mortar attack at the Mt. Dov area. As per Israel's warnings, each violation of the "ceasefire" has resulted with Israel reacting by destroying launchers, etc. This is not a ceasefire by any real definition. It is not a cessation of hostilities;- just a slowing down, ostensibly so that Hezbollah can re-arm via Iran.

And as per usual, the world attacked Israel for responding to Hezbollah's violations. Led by French and American officials, Israel is being blamed as an aggressor... just as so much of the world blames Israel for the horrors perpetrated by Hamas on Oct. 7

At the same time, President-elect Trump is trying to choreograph his own "hostage" moments ala 1981. For those of us old enough to remember, on January 20, 1981, Reagan took the oath of office, and within minutes the 52 hostages who had been taken hostage by Iran were released. Trump made his intentions clear today by writing "If the hostages are not released by January 20, 2025... there will be ALL HELL TO PAY in the Middle East, and for those in charge who perpetrated these atrocities against humanity". His rhetoric has influenced negotiations for the hostages as Hamas is now claiming to be open to alternatives, and Netanyahu is working with other Israeli officials to formulate a new framework for a ceasefire/hostage deal. But multiple Israeli officials have said that they will not trade getting back the hostages for a scenario that would allow another Oct. 7 attack, God forbid.

The London Arabic news site Ak-Araby Al-Jareed, is reporting that they have a copy of a signed document of partnership between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority that lays out six commitments of the partnership to lead Gaza together. Most people ignore that just like Hamas, the P.A. includes in its charter the total destruction of Israel, and Hamas and the PA are totally alike in values and goals.

I was in high school, and am old enough to remember the Iranian hostage crisis in 1979/1980. This nation was on pins and needles for 444 days (we have currently been at war in Israel for 424 days), and it was a bleak time for this country on so many levels. But a miracle occurred with the release of the hostages as Reagan was sworn in.

Let us all pray that a similar miracle happens now, in our time with the hostages being released and a lasting peace spread over Israel. Am Yisrael Chai L'Olam Va'ed.... Let us keep faith in that statement: The people of Israel live forever."

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 3, 2024

2nd of Kislev, 5785

December 4th 2024 at 6:08 am PST

UN Continues Its Anti-Israel History

Chevre,

The United Nations General Assembly has again shown its desire to ultimately eliminate Israel; a pattern that has been going in for years but just keeps getting more blatant.

Tuesday saw three General Assembly resolutions resoundly pass. 1: the "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine" attacks Israel as an "occupying power" that must "comply with international law" and "evacuate settlers from the Occupied Palestinian Territory". 2: A request for the Secretary-General to provide more resources to facilitate the creation of a two-state solution. 3: Condemning Israel for failing to withdraw from the Syrian Golan. There were more documents and speeches, all of them condemning Israel and portraying Palestinian (terrorists) as victims.

If you ever question the Jew-hatred and anti-Israel bias of the United Nations,

remember that since 2015, this organization has condemned Israel almost twice as many times as it has commented on all the rest of the nations of the world combined. (167 against Israel, 84 against all other countries combined). UNRWA has been undeniably verified without contestation as a supporter of Hamas, even having UNRWA staff directly involved in Oct 7 and allowing Hamas terrorists to use their offices as military bases to attack Israel. The U.N. General Assembly's actions show that it is dominated not by a desire for world peace, ut be a desire to eradicate Israel.

Israeli officials are repeatedly making it clear that if the ceasefire is broken, Lebanon will be targetted as well as Hezbollah directly. Israel is also offering 5 million NIS (New Israel Shekel) approximately 1.4 million USD for information that leads to the release of any hostage, as well as guaranteed and protected safe passage out of Gaza.

Let us all pray that Israel gives away hundreds of millions of dollars and all the hostages are returned; that the UN is recognized for what it is and transforms into a legitimate organization; and that the ceasefire rows to a lasting peace between Israel and her neighbors.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 4, 2024

3rd of Kislev, 5785

December 5th 2024 at 5:41 am PST

Politics, War Crime Compensation, and Athletics

Chevre,

It really is unclear what will happen in the Middle East, as circumstances and "anonymous" leaks keep coming out, often in contradiction with each other. But here are a few things that have been confirmed from Wednesday and Thursday morning:

---Internal Hamas documents have been verified and released that order all Hamas soldiers to kill any hostages if Israel tried a rescue mission. Hamas operatives are specifically told in this directive, dated Nov 22, that there will be no repercussions for killing any Israeli captives if it seems Israeli forces are close.

---American intelligence has confirmed that Hezbollah is using this time of "ceasefire" to restore its strength and capabilities by recruiting new terrorists; increasing the self-production of weapons; and securing new routes to smuggle weapons from Iran through Syria. While this has always been clear to Israel, America's confirmation gives a bit more leeway for Israel to act to stop these actions by the terrorists of Hezbollah.

---Trump announced that Adam Boehler, who was a lead negotiator in creating the Abraham accords, will be Special Presidential Envoy for hostage affairs, and is already having conversations with representatives in the Middle East. It is, however causing challenges as the Biden representatives have made it clear that they will bring Boehler into any dialogues, and the different leaders in the region are being pushed and pulled to deal with either a lame duck administration or envoys that aren't official representatives yet.

---Wednesday was a special day in history for Italy, as Italy paid out compensation to victims of Nazi war crimes. After a decades long legal battle, 800,000 euros was paid out to the heirs of a man killed in 1944. This could be used as a precedent for other families of victims.

---Qatar is re-entering the negotiations with Hamas as a mediator. The only thing that has changed since they left as mediators is that Trump seems passionate that hostages should be returned prior to his inauguration, "or there will be hell to pay"; but that seems to be enough to drag the Qataris back to the table

---And the World Maccabi Union has announced that the 2025 Games scheduled in July will happen, unless, God forbid, there become sudden dangers or a renewed increase in attacks. They will not put athletes and spectators in jeopardy, but expect a safe and peaceful Israel by then. The Maccabi Games are the epitome of Jewish athletic competition; the third largest sporting event in the world; and the largest single income stream through tourism for Israel. Maccabi lends its name to many events through each year such as the Pan American or European Maccabi; or the JCC Games, which allow any young Jewish athlete who desires to play as part of their local Jewish Community Center come to Israel and be able to participate in a more casual atmosphere. But the actual Maccabi Games that are being held in July (they are held every four years, the year after the Summer Olympics) are truly the Jewish Olympics that involve

extensive tryouts, etc; and with over 80 countries sending delegations, is the largest gathering of top Jewish athletes in the world, many of whom were historically also medalists in the Olympics (Mitch Gaylord, Mark Spitz, and Harrison Dillard to name a few). The commitment of the World Maccabi Union to proceed with the Games is a huge boon to the Israeli economy; and will hopefully be a jump start back into an Israeli economy of peace and prosperity.

May this decision by World Maccabi Union be a sign that things really are looking up for Israel; that a time of peace is just around the corner; and that Israel, her people, and the land will all soon be safe and protected under the shelter of God's Presence.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 5, 2024

4th of Kislev, 5785

December 6th 2024 at 6:07 am PST

Australia and Israel

Chevre,

For decades, Australia was a safe home for Jews, who were integrated fully into Australian society and culture. As we have seen repeatedly over the last months, this is no longer true as Jew hatred has integrated itself into society from the top of politics on down. There have been over 2000 anti-Semitic incidents since Oct. 7, a quadrupling since the year before, and physical attacks increased from 11 the previous year to 65 in 2024.

Friday morning saw an attack on a synagogue in Melbourne as the Adass Israel synagogue was engulfed in flames after masked people were seen spreading an accelerant that ultimately gutted the building. The synagogue, which was built largely by Hungarian survivors of the Holocaust, suffered a similar incident of arson in 1995. According to 7News, Melbourne police are beefing up security at synagogues and Jewish facilities around the city; and Opposition Leader Peter

Dutton is pointing out that this was predictable given how Anthony Albanese, the PM of Australia, has failed to stand up for Israel since the Hamas attack; and has allowed Jew-hatred to flourish in Australia while moving Australia away from being an ally to Israel both internationally and within the United Nations.

Let us all keep the Australian Jewish community and especially the members of Adass Israel in our prayers, and realize that this could, God forbid, happen anywhere in the world at any time.

Egypt and Qatar are once again working on a ceasefire in Gaza, and all Arab countries that have harbored Hamas terrorists are getting more nervous by the day that Trump will keep his threat if this is not resolved by his inauguration. Reports were released on Friday morning in Israel that while some people look to find blame within Israel for Oct. 7; there were actually 3000 troops poised to simultaneously attack in the north on that morning...but that simultaneous attack was thwarted by the quick action of the IDF jumping four brigades to the north, causing Hezbollah to back away.

The UN General Assembly has issued another resolution against Israel, demanding that Israel return to pre-1967 borders and withdraw from the Golan Heights. As of Friday morning, the IDF has declared a state of maximum alert near the Syrian border in preparation for escalated tensions in Syria and the potential collapse of the Assad regime, despite Assad's attempts to get military assistance from Iran and Russia.

In this week's Torah portion, the land of Israel is again promised to Jacob's descendants. As we see the increase in international Jew-hatred, the many actions taken against Israel by the international community, and the many attacks upon Israel by her neighbors, may we all remember that God has ALWAYS kept His agreements with the people of Israel, and always will. This is not a "blind faith", but a faith based on 3700 years of history.

Am Yisrael Chai, and Shabbat Shalom

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 6, 2024

5th of Kislev, 5785

December 6th 2024 at 4:58 pm PST

Syria and Shabbat Shalom

Chevre,

As we enter Shabbat, Israel is focusing on Syria and the conflict there, and how that may affect Israel. As you know, Assad is being confronted with rebel forces on all sides. Honestly, it is unclear if it will be better for Israel if Assad stays in power, or if he loses. There is great concern that the rebels, who are sponsored in many ways by Iran, will create a worse enemy for Israel; or if Assad, who has also been supported by Iran in the past, is the greater risk. Either way, Israel is concerned not only about who ends up being victorious in Syria, but about loose weapons from their conflict ending up landing in Israel.

Jordan has closed their border with Syria, although there are reports that the southern border crossing between the two nations has been taken over by the rebels. The Russian Embassy in Syria has notified that all Russian citizens should leave the country, and there are unconfirmed reports that the Russian forces may ask to leave via the Israeli Golan. The IDF has reinforced aerial and ground forces in the Golan Heights, and has emphasized that they will not tolerate threats near the Israeli border. To quote Israeli Channel 13, the message from the IDF is, "Do not approach the border of Israel!" On a different front, Iran has converted a tanker into a drone-carrier with the ability to launch mass drones, and which has now left its home port.

A reminder that this week's Torah reading includes one of the times that God promises the land of Israel to the descendants of Jacob. It was promised to us 3700 years ago, and we know that God always keeps His promises, and we will always have a home there.

Am Yisrael Chai and Shabbat Shalom

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 6, 2024

6th of Kislev, 5785

December 7th 2024 at 5:02 pm PST

Irony, A Dark Day in History, Where's Assad? & A Question....

Chevre,

Shavuah tov, and may this week bring good health, prosperity, and peace to us all, and to Israel and the world.

But peace is not something that Syria is experiencing right now, and as a result, Israel is on a heightened alert. Rebels have taken over numerous cities on their way to Damascus, including the second and third largest cities of the country (Aleppo and Homs), and have taken over an area close to the Israeli border. The IDF has been very clear that they had better not turn towards Israel, or they will retaliate hard.

Assad was supposed to have spoken on Saturday evening to the Syrian people, but did not. Rumors are swirling that he has left the country. The Damascus airport was closed after an executive jet took off, rumored to have taken him and/or his family to Abu-Dhabi... but the Syrian President's Office has maintained that he has not left Damascus.

In one of the great examples of irony, the IDF has been helping UN forces survive against rebel attacks, including in the Golan. The UN not only consistently condemns Israel and tries to hurt its economy and people whenever possible, but just last week passed a resolution for Israel to abandon the Golan. And yet it is there in the Golan, where and when UN forces are being attacked, that Israel has come in to save the day.

Today is the anniversary of the death of King Herod I in 4 B.C.E.(not to be confused with his son, Herod Antipas, who was king during the time of Jesus). Granted kingship over Israel by the Roman Senate, his death was a day

celebrated by the Jews, Herod is discussed at length in Josephus' work "Antiquities of the Jews" (written in 94 C.E., and containing much of our accepted knowledge of that time in history). Although he rebuilt parts of the Second Temple as well as the amazing structures in Caesarea (the amphitheater that he built there still has regular concerts and shows today), he was a despot in nearly every way. Most especially, he was more committed to Rome than to his people, and killed not only his own wife, but overthrew the Hasmonean (Maccabee) dynasty of Jewish kings; placing himself as the monarch and a vassal of Rome, and his death was not mourned.

Today is also a black day in modern history. On this day in 1975, the United Nations began its journey into institutionalized hatred for Israel, and the propagation of the myth of "palestine". It is a day that all of us who were alive remember, as it is on this day that the United Nations made the claim that "Zionism is racism" with UN General Assembly Resolution 3379. Although revoked in 1991 with Resolution 46/86, it is the official start of making anti-Semitism an integral part of the fabric of the U.N. that has intensified over the years. US Ambassador to the UN Daniel Moynihan (later the Senator from New York) said before the vote, "The United Nations is about to make anti-semitism international law. The United States does not acknowledge, it will not abide by, it will never acquiesce in this infamous act... A great evil has been loosed upon the world".

We have all been fighting that evil every day, and especially since October 7th. Every one of us who ties ourselves to Jewish communities, supports Jewish institutions, prays for Israel, or does anything for the Jewish World in any way is taking on this fight.

One way that our Temple Community has been maintaining this fight since October 7th is through these daily emails, which I hope are meaningful to you. If they are meaningful, and/or if you share them or use the information in your dialogues in your life, I ask that you support the synagogue with the really fun fundraiser on **December 29th: our Annual Latke Launch**. You can find information about the event at www.nersimcha.org/latke-launch, but you can participate for as little as \$20, support the temple, and you might win any of the fabulous prizes which include vacations in Las Vegas or Palm Springs, fine art, jewelry (including a gorgeous Tag Heuer watch), and more. And the event itself is a lot of fun to participate in if you can be there (although you do not need to be

present to win).

To fight against anti-semitism is the responsibility of every person, and especially every Jew, and this is one easy way to be part of that fight. I hope you will register at www.nersimcha.org/latke-launch, and make a difference in the fight against Jew hatred by supporting the synagogue.. and maybe even winning a great prize!

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 7, 2024

7th of Kislev, 5785

December 7th 2024 at 11:18 pm PST

Syria Falls, Pearl Harbor, & Hope

Chevre,

Damascus has been taken over by the rebels, and the world's media says it clearly as so many headlines read "Syria has fallen". It was confirmed that Assad flew to "an undisclosed location" earlier in the day, and that all of Assad's prisoners in Damascus have been released, according to the Times of Israel. Channel 12 in Israel reports that Israel has conducted airstrikes on chemical weapons production laboratories in the Damascus area due to concern that these chemical weapons plants of Assad are used by the rebel groups. They are also reporting that Israel has taken up key positions on the Israel/Syria border.

This takeover of Syria creates not only chaos in the region, but a total confusion of what group is aligned with what other group. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan posited that "Iran, Hezbollah, and Russia are now in a weak position in the Middle East compared to the strength of Israel", which may be totally accurate; totally false; or partially true. Similarly, Opposition Leader Lapid said, "It is more important than ever to create a strong regional coalition, with Saudi Arabia and the Abraham Accord countries, to deal with the regional

instability". Again, while this is an idealistic statement, it doesn't factor into the equation Hamas, the hostages, Hezbollah, the Houthis, or Iran... so it may be a workable plan or be entirely impossible. And according to the Israel Broadcasting Authority, representatives of the Kurdish government in northeastern Syria have started discussions with Israeli officials out of concern over Turkish backed forces advancing in Syria.

Because of the chaos and confusion, Israel is moving forces around the region, including bringing up extra brigades to the Golan in case whatever/whomever ends up controlling Syria starts to attack Israel, God forbid.

But we need only look to the first two lines of the Torah to glean hope that this will lead to the creation of peace in something new. In the Book of Genesis it says that creation comes out of "tohu v'vohu"... "chaos and confusion". So let's embrace that truth, and may the chaos and confusion happening in Syria and the region birth a new time of a lasting peace for Israel and the world.

As we pray for that peace, let us also remember and say Kaddish for all those who died at Pearl Harbor 83 years ago today. A tragic "Day of Infamy" that saw the death of over 2400 Americans (including 2341 service members); it too was a day of chaos and confusion. But out of that chaos, America was forced to enter World War II, which placed us not only in conflict with the Empire of Japan, but with their ally, Nazi Germany. Out of the chaos we fought the Nazis: a kind of true evil that the world had not seen before, and would not see again until the actions of Hamas on October 7. Pearl Harbor was a horrible tragedy, but it woke America up so that the great evil of that time was ultimately defeated. Pearl Harbor dragged us into the war, which eventually led to a longstanding peace with enemies, who ultimately became our allies, and still are today. May the souls of those men and women who died at Pearl Harbor, as well as all those who died in WWII, be blessed among the righteous of the heavens; and their families and communities be comforted among all who have lost their lives defending freedom. And may the chaos of today also lead to a peace for Israel that transforms her enemies into her allies.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 7, 2024

7th of Kislev, 5785

December 9th 2024 at 6:12 am PST

Syria & Golda

Chevre,

Syria is now being run by "rebels"... but different ones are claiming leadership and it may take some time for one leader to truly emerge. Currently, Al-Golani, head of the Hayat Tahrir al-Shams, is in the lead and claiming control. The 43 year old rebel is a former senior commander for al-Qaeda who is labeled a terrorist by the US government, which has offered 10 million dollars for information leading to his capture. In 2014, he said his goal was to see Syria ruled under Islamic law, with the country purged of other religious minorities.

For obvious reasons, Israel is concerned about what the ultimate leadership of Syria will look like; and through Sunday and into Monday morning was sending airstrikes to destroy Assad's weapons depots, chemical weapon plants, and air defense systems. Assad is now in Moscow, with Russia officially saying that they stand by their friends.

With Syria in chaos, Iran seems to be working more diligently on their nuclear weapons program. The IDF reports that Tehran is in "crisis mode", and US officials are suggesting that Iran has been weakened significantly with the fall of Assad, the defeats of Hezbollah, and Israel's strikes against Iran directly.

Hamas, in consultation with Hezbollah and other Iranian proxies, is providing lists of terrorists in prisons that they will demand released as part of any hostage release/ceasefire. Their expectation is that Israel should reward them for the atrocities that were done on Oct. 7.

Today is the yahrzeit of Golda Meir z"l, who died in 1978. As we go through this chaos and potential transitions and transformations, we should remember this amazing woman, and some of her words:

---"Pessimism is a luxury that a Jew can never allow himself"

---"Those who don't know how to weep with their whole heart, don't know how to laugh either"

---"We will have peace when Arab mothers love their children more than they hate us"

But I've always felt since I first heard it, that this may be her greatest piece of personal advice:

---"Trust yourself. Create the kind of self that you will be happy to live with all your life. Make the most of yourself by fanning the tiny, inner sparks of possibility into flames of achievement."

May we all find those sparks in our soul, and accomplish the achievements we dare to dream.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 9, 2024

8th of Kislev, 5785

December 10th 2024 at 6:13 am PST

Politics and the Pope

Chevre,

Syria is reeling, and so is the political landscape of the Middle East. Iran seems to be trying to figure out how strong it really is and can stay; Hezbollah is trying to recover from losing Syria as a transit point between itself and Iran; and the entire region is trying to establish a new political reality. But while Arab nations are evaluating how Assad's exit affects the region, Israel has spent the last 24 hours destroying Syrian weapons and targets so that they cannot be used against Israel by enemies of Israel...some of whom may end up running Syria. Israel airstrikes hit over 100 military targets on Monday (no civilian facility or casualties), including at least 3 major Syrian army airbases that housed dozens of helicopters and jets. With over 250 strikes since Sunday, Western officials believe that if the strikes continue at this pace, the Syrian Air Force will be entirely destroyed in a matter of days... ensuring that the rebel groups and any future government will be unable to threaten Israel from the air, B"H.

But a different type of attack happened over the last few days...this one from the Vatican. The Vatican's Nativity Scene was dedicated by the Pope. But instead of the typical baby in the manger scene;- this one has the baby Jesus laying a palestinian keffiyeh scarf. This modern symbol of terrorism, Jew-hatred, and war is swaddling the "prince of peace" in a clearly (and admitted) political statement suggesting that Jesus was a palestinian (not a Jew). The scarf was given by the Palestinian Authority for this purpose, and is yet another example of Pope Francis' distaste for Israel; whom he has, in the past, suggested might be committing genocide in Gaza. Jewish leaders from Rome to Israel and around the world have pointed how problematic it all is for Jewish/Catholic relations;- but the Vatican has doubled down and unapologetically defended its decision.

In 1965, Nostra Aetate was established as part of Vatican II; and Jewish/Catholic relations officially changed to be more respectful. This was one of, if not the most important theological documents of the 20th century. Among other things, it stopped the Church from accusing modern Jews of the centuries long libel of the deicide of killing Jesus.

In combination with the Subsequent Notes in 1974, it radically affected inter-faith relations, and ushered in a golden era of dialogue between the faiths. It should be no surprise to anyone that the great tzaddik, Rabbi Abraham Heschel z"l, was instrumental in the formation of the document through his relationship with one of its main authors, Cardinal Augustin Bea, a German Jesuit priest.

All too often in recent years, Francis has, through his words and actions, hurt Catholic/Jewish relations. Although he has always spoken of how he is a great friend of the Jews, in recent years, the 88 year old Pontiff has said things that have hurt Israel and interfaith relations... and this latest action of a terrorist scarf wrapping the baby Jesus is problematic on many levels.

But Nostra Aetate still stands as official Catholic doctrine. We all need to have faith that the Church will balance itself, and be a partner with Judaism in repairing this world.

And as Jews, it is good to remember that even (and especially) if we don't agree with Catholic theology... since God accepts how we all pray differently... maybe we should accept each other in this world that we share together.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 10, 2024

9th of Kislev, 5785

December 11th 2024 at 5:44 am PST

Fire in Syria and Malibu

Chevre,

It was announced today that the IDF has destroyed over 80% of Assad's military weaponry in Syria. In preparation for whichever group ultimately ends up being in control of the country, Israel has torn through Syria's military so that there is little left to potentially attack Israel, God forbid. The other benefit is that it will help facilitate peace in the region as Syria was not only a source of attacks on Israel, it was the main thoroughfare between Iran and its proxies, especially in Lebanon.

At the same time, Tuesday night and Wednesday morning saw some rockets launched from Gaza. This is in spite of the fact that negotiators are hypothetically working on a ceasefire and hostage deal. The dance about such a deal remains the same as it has been, with Hamas demanding an exchange of many hundreds or over a thousand convicted terrorist felons being released from prison, as well as the removal of Israeli forces from Gaza. Hamas' representative in Lebanon, Ahmed Abdel Hadi, told the Hezbollah affiliated network in Lebanon that there really is no presented ceasefire deal, and these are just rumors from the Israelis.

The Franklin fire in Malibu is still burning, with over 2,800 acres destroyed. It says everything about this holy community that numerous people have emailed or texted offering their homes for anyone who is being evacuated and needs help. Again, if you or anyone you know is being evacuated and needs help, please contact myself or Orlando, and we will help provide a temporary home for them.

Whether it is because of fire or war, we need to remember that the world can change in a moment's notice, and the only true safety and protection is with God. At the same time, we need to do our own action to enact the Divine injunction of taking care of each other. There is a beautiful teaching that while on the one hand we should know that all things stem from God; on the other hand, we should act with each other in righteous ways as though God would never intervene. If we can combine these two seemingly contradictory statements.. if we truly act as if everyone we meet is the Messiah, only waiting for an act of kindness to reveal himself... then it won't matter when the Messiah comes, as we will all be living in a way that is in harmony with each other, God, and ourselves.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 11, 2024

10th of Kislev, 5785

December 12th 2024 at 7:30 am PST

More of the Same...

Chevre,

The UN has truly lost all legitimacy, and continues to show its hatred for Jews and Israel. Two resolutions have been passed by the general assembly in the last 24 hours. One is unilateral support for UNRWA, an organization that has been proven to actively support and help Hamas. The other resolution passed by the general assembly calls for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, without any consideration for the hostages. The United Nations should just change its name to UNAI, United Nations Against Israel.

Blinken and Sullivan are making their Middle East rounds again, with Sullivan in Israel and Blinken in Jordan. As has been usual, each man integrates vague commitments and pressure into their talks with leaders like Netanyahu and King Abdullah of Jordan. In these talks however, it seems that the Middle Eastern

leaders are making their own statements to be stronger, and paying a mere lip service to Blinken and Sullivan, knowing that they do not represent US foreign policy in a month. But the dance goes on, with both Bibi and Abdullah insisting that there must be ensured safety that Syria will now not become an even worse neighbor than it was with Assad; and that the US must help prevent terrorist organizations from seizing control.

It is being reported that Hamas is saying that they might be willing to let some Israeli forces stay in Gaza if a ceasefire included all their other demands such as, terrorist prisoners being released from Israeli prisons, etc. There are believed to be 96 hostages left alive... this latest ceasefire proposal would release 30 of them in exchange for 60 days of Israel ceasing fire, stepping back, and giving Hamas time to rebuild.

Let us all pray for a release of all the hostages back to their families; for a new Syria that is a partner in creating a lasting peace and security for Israel; and for the Middle East and its leaders to embrace policies that lead to those results.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 12, 2024

11th of Kislev, 5785

December 13th 2024 at 5:29 am PST

Jacob Becomes Israel & Syrians Want to Become Israelis

Chevre,

While we all continue to watch all the machinations, negotiations, and politics in the Middle East; on Friday late morning, 6 Druze villages in southern Syria have publicly petitioned to become part of Israel, aligning themselves with the Golan Heights. Their statement was clear: "We want to be under Israeli rule, and ask Israel not to leave the villages in southern Syria."

The IDF has announced that they believe they have complete air dominance with

the dismantling of Syrian defenses; and there is public discussion about the Israeli Air Force attacking Iran while they can in order to destroy all nuclear facilities there.

In this week's Torah reading, Jacob (whose name means "heel") wrestles with an angel, and his name is changed to "Israel", meaning "He who wrestles with God". He changes his destiny through a changing of his name. It is an important reminder for all of us that we can always make changes in our lives... if we have the courage to work for that new goal or change. It doesn't matter what we have done or experienced, it's never too late to make a change. No matter how old we are... there always remains the possibility for us to make the changes we seek; to fulfill our true destinies; and to make our deepest dreams come true.

The great Rabbi Akiva is said to have only started studying when he was 41. And Jacob? Most theologians place him to be his 90s at the time of this wrestling, when he changed his whole life purpose.

May we all learn to disregard our physical age, and instead focus on attaining our spiritual destiny. It is never too late to awaken ourselves to manifesting our dreams...

Chazak u'Baruch and Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 13, 2024

12th of Kislev, 5785

December 15th 2024 at 6:16 am PST

Israel & Syria - What is Really Going On

Chevre,

From 1971 until these past weeks, Syria was ruled by the Assad family (Bashar Assad ruled from 2000 - 2024, and his father Hafez from 1971-2000). For over 50 years these two despots controlled Syria with iron hands, even using chemical weapons against their own citizens. That reign of terror is over, but no one,

including Israel, knows what the future holds for that nation. What we all do know is that the current leader of rebels who seems to be taking over the nation, al-Julani, has a history that matches the evils of the Assad family. He has been listed as a "Specially Designated Global Terrorist" since 2013, and there has been a 10 million dollar reward offered for information leading to his capture since 2017.

In the last week as he has been seizing power, he has tried to portray himself as a diplomat... a man who only seeks peace. This weekend he again made claims that he is a peaceful man and Israel should stop being involved in dismantling the Syrian military. Also this weekend, he made a clear statement about how Syria is giving "Russia a chance to reconsider their relationship with the Syrian people". His "career" has been marked by declarations of war against the US; leading ISIS of Iraq; planning and executing multiple terrorist attacks; being the "general emir" of Al-Nusra, the terrorist group designated by the US as an alias for al-Qaeda in Iraq in 2016; and the probable leader of the country Syria is becoming. Although much more polished, he is the same category as Nasrallah and Sinwar; and no friend to peace, Israel, or the United States.

He has repeatedly said that Israel has no need to attack Syria any longer, as he just wants peace. But everyone who knows his history recognizes that this is just a mask, as his entire adult life has been about destroying both Israel and the U.S.

Israel is using the challenges of the last two weeks in Syria as effectively as they can to attempt to remove future threats from the leftovers of Assad's regime so that they cannot be used by a terrorist like al-Julani. Over 90% of all air weapons and defensive systems have been destroyed by the IDF in recent days. In more than 60 strikes over this weekend, the Israeli forces destroyed the remnants of the Syrian Navy to make sure that al-Julani, or whomever may replace him, from being able to attack Israel. Israel recognizes the danger of this man, and is doing everything possible to take away any military capabilities from him.

There are rumors in almost all Middle Eastern media that Israel, possibly with help from the US, is contemplating using this time of chaos to also eliminate Iran's nuclear facilities. The Israeli Air Force is rumored to be preparing for strikes at those facilities while at the same time Iran is claiming they are ramping up those facilities. While Iran is claiming that they are not going to work towards nuclear weapons; they are simultaneously increasing their ability to make

nuclear weapons. With Syria in chaos and much of Hezbollah disabled, many believe now is the time to destroy those nuclear facilities. Ex-IDF General Yisrael Ziv said this weekend, "US and Israel have an historic opportunity to strike Iran's nuclear project". He said that to not do so "would be a terrible mistake", and that because "Iran's regional axis is weakened, Tehran's air defenses are compromised, and Russia's influence has diminished", he noted that such strikes would not lead to regional war.

As grateful as we are that the evil of Assad has been removed from Syria, we need to open our hearts and pray that the new heads of Syria do not look to create even more conflicts. We need to ask the Holy One and His Presence (the Ruach HaKodesh and the Shechina) to bring peace to region, and to help Iran become a nation governed by its people towards a goal of peace.

May the One who creates peace in the Universe establish peace upon us, upon all the people of Israel, and upon the world.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 15, 2024

14th of Kislev, 5785

December 16th 2024 at 6:06 am PST

No Longer "Erin Go Bragh"

Chevre,

While there have been many pundits commenting on news in the Middle East, Sunday through Monday morning has been more of the same: some rockets launched from Gaza; vague statements about the possibilities of a hostage deal; the IDF shooting down Houthi missiles; and the US pressuring Israel to let more aid come to Gaza (this time to include weapons so that what happened in Syria doesn't happen in Gaza).

A sad action that did take place is Israel finally closing its embassy in Ireland,

citing the strong anti-Israel stance that the Irish government has been taking since Oct 7. For those unaware of Ireland's actions; the Dublin government has officially accused Israel of genocide; chosen to support a state of palestine unilaterally and without any guarantees or discussion about things like the P.A.'s commitment to ultimately destroy Israel; and has supported Gaza, and by extension Hamas in the war since Oct. 7.

Scholar and author Thomas Cahill has postulated that Western civilization is actually based upon the Jewish and Irish cultures, and it is sad that relations between the two countries has deteriorated so significantly.

So it looks like this Hanukkah we will be eating latkas, but not drinking Guinness.

I suspect that there will be some interesting reports coming out in the next few days about Syria, Iran, Gaza, Lebanon, and Israeli politics... May all the news be blessings for the land of Israel, the nation of Israel, and the people of Israel.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 16, 2025

15th of Kislev, 5785

December 16th 2024 at 11:09 pm PST

A Brief Update

Chevre,

The saying about "the quiet before a storm" seems to be appropriate right now, as Israeli media sources are publishing "rumors" and "anonymous sources" about events that are "about to happen".

Defense Minister Israel Katz had a closed door meeting with the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, where he reportedly said that we are closer to a hostage deal than ever before. He supposedly said that Hamas has let go of many of the obstacles they have insisted upon in the past, including a continued

IDF presence in the Philadelphi Corridor, nor would the deal include an open ended cessation of hostilities.

In a different public speech, Katz also said, "All our operations are preparing for an operation against Iran, as the prospects for a diplomatic remain slim". Israel Hayom reported that Israel is also frustrated with the continued attacks by the Houthis, and may at any moment strike Yemen to stop the attacks. This may make sense as the Houthis fired a ballistic missile at Tel Aviv on Monday morning, briefly shutting down Ben Gurion airport.

May the rumors of peace and hostages being returned be a true prophecy, and their release be a Hanukkah gift for the world.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 16th, 2024

16th of Kislev, 5785

December 18th 2024 at 12:54 am PST

Iran, Mt. Hermon, Hostages, & The Importance of Small Steps

Chevre,

While rumors abound in Israel that there may be an Israeli attack on Iran, suddenly other nations seem to be noticing Iran's aggressive push to have nuclear weapons. Britain, France, and Germany made a collective announcement Wednesday morning that Iran "must reverse its nuclear escalation". They are finally admitting that Iran's nuclear stockpile of enriched uranium is at "unprecedented levels" and without "any civilian justification". Given that the IAEA Director General said on Tuesday, "the agreement with Iran is irrelevant, it is getting closer to nuclear weapons"; it almost seems as if the world is encouraging Israel to attack Iran's nuclear sites (and do their dirty work for them). But if we have learned little else over the last months, we've learned that Israel will do what they believe necessary for the safety of their own country in

their own time.

Tuesday morning was filled with rumors in worldwide media that despite what the Prime Minister's office said, the media wanted to claim that Netanyahu had boarded a plane to Cairo for hostage negotiations. But by late Tuesday morning it was clear how wrong these rumors were. Netanyahu flew to the Golan and was with other defense officials as they stood atop Mt. Hermon, and Netanyahu made a statement of commitment that Israel will stay there until "another arrangement" can be found. Having been on that mountain 53 years ago as a member of the IDF, he made it clear about how important that location is for the safety of Israel; and how Israel is not going to just turn it over to the new and current leader of Syria, who is a lifelong jihadi terrorist. Deputy Foreign Minister Haskell said, "It is important to avoid falling for the attempt to whitewash jihadist groups in Syria. These are terrorist organizations and this is a wolf in sheep's clothes."

Although there are many officials talking about how close we are to making a deal to release the hostages, the people in charge seem to be saying the opposite. Minister Smotrich said on Wednesday morning that the deal is not good and does not serve the interests of the Israeli people. Islamic Jihad is demanding a full and permanent withdrawal from the Gaza strip, and Gaza officials are saying that no deal can be made because Israel keeps adding conditions. So despite the words of John Kirby or Western media, it seems as if this is still a repeat of so many futile talks of the past months.

But nothing is ever really futile. The small steps we take lead us forward to the goals we may not yet know; in the same way that the small steps of the Snake Path lead to the top of Masada, which cannot be seen from the path itself. Jewish history is filled with small movements forward that ultimately lead us to great victories. These small steps forward are important as we prepare for Hanukkah... where eight small candles will make one great light of freedom.

Each year, our synagogue has an annual fundraiser, the Great Latke Launch, based on this idea that many small lights together can create something great. For as little as \$20, you can participate in this fun event on Dec. 29 at noon at Triumfo Park, and win prizes like fine art, jewelery, and vacations (you do not need to be present to win). I invite you to participate to raise much needed funds for the synagogue by going to www.nersimcha.org/latke-launch and to let

yourself experience the value of being part of something bigger than ourselves... of adding your light to the other lights of our community to truly make a "Ner Simcha" ... a candle light of joy.

And I hope you will join the community at our annual Hanukkah Party on Friday, December 27, at The Stonehaus at the Westlake Village Inn. We will welcome the Shabbat and light the community Hanukkiah, sing songs, play games, and have pizzas and fries (Stonehaus chefs aren't quite sure how to make latkes, and this is the closest foods that have oil). It is always fun, and we never know what surprises Benny and Mat have in store for us.

To help put you in the Hanukkah mood, here is a new Hanukkah "Wicked Medley" by the Jewish acapella group 613.

<https://youtu.be/QY-h65HwWPw>

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 18, 2024

17th of Kislev, 5785

December 19th 2024 at 6:48 am PST

Houthis, Los Angeles, & Is A Hostage Deal.Closer?

Chevre,

The Houthis have been attacking Israel more constantly and consistently, and even though the vast majority of their missiles have been intercepted, there have been real dangers. One missile that was destroyed broke apart, and fragments fell and destroyed a school. Thank God, no one was hurt as it was late at night, but it was the final straw for Israel to decide to start striking back towards Yemen. Israel has now attacked the three main ports in Yemen, apparently destroying much of the offensive capability of the Houthis.

There are continuing statements that we are closer to a hostage release deal. Rumors of all sorts are coming out from different media outlets that range from

we are in the final steps of the negotiations, to there is no possibility of a deal. Many outlets, especially in the Middle East are claiming that most of the deal points have been hammered out other than what convicted Arab terrorists and murderers that are currently in Israeli prisons will be released.

Not related to Israel, but to all of us, a report fro L.A. County Commission in Human Relations reported that anti-Jewish increase by 91% over last year. This is the largest single increase they have ever had, and hate crimes against Jews at distance the hate against any other category of citizen.

As we approach the time of Hanukkah, please remember to be situationally aware. While many of our fellow citizens embrace the Christmas spirit of loving each other, they are also those hate mongers who look to express their misery and anger at the holiday season and at life itself by attacking Jews. As always, just be conscious, and to use an old quote, if you see something, say something.

Hanukkah is a time of rededicating ourselves to it our values of family, friends, freedom, judaism, and more. In this week before the holiday, start to reconsider what are your values? What are the things that are so important to you that you have not been spending time on or paying attention to? We each need to use this week to really evaluate our own lives, so that we can rededicate ourselves through the lights of Hanukkah next week.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 19, 2024

18th of Kislev, 5785

December 20th 2024 at 6:08 am PST

Yemen, the US, the UN, the World, & Assimilation

Chevre,

It is now confirmed that the Houthis in Yemen launched two Hypersonic missiles at Central Israel, both of which were intercepted. The shrapnel from one did

significant damage to a school, but as it was at 2:00 in the morning, thank God no one was hurt. The other had shrapnel that landed in the field. Israel has responded by attacking parts of the Houthi military; destroying fuel and oil two power plants and eight tugboats at their three port locations. Multiple media sources in the Middle East report that the Houthi actions were upon directions from Iran, and Israel is making it clear that they will no longer just take attacks without responding. Similarly, in Lebanon, intelligence was shown that launchers were being aimed at Israel, and those launchers were promptly destroyed.

Domestically, seven committees from the House of Representatives unified and have recommended that all federal funding be taken away from any University that allows anti-semitic actions on their campus. They are basing their actions upon the title 6, and are focused especially on the campuses that were so hostile last spring, including UCLA, Harvard, Columbia, MIT, Penn, and more. US representatives are also having to Syria to have meetings with the incoming leaders there; which seems exceptionally I'd give you the current leader of Syria as someone that is on the terrorist list for the US with a reward of \$10 million.

Other international news includes Sweden announcing that they are withdrawing funding of UNRWA; and UN Sec General Antonio Guterres (an established Jew-hater who has worked tirelessly to destroy Israel) said, " Israeli airstrikes in Syria constitute of violation of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity and must be stopped." Not once in 15 months has this anti-semite condemned any of the thousands of attacks on Israel by Hezbollah, the Houthis, or Iran. He did not even condemn Hamas once until October of 2024, a full year after the horrors of October 7th. And even then, he did not condemn Hamas itself, but just the acts of that day.

There is a question that Israel has always had to wrestle with, and it is something that our Jewish ancestors have been wrestling with since the destruction of the Temple almost 2,000 years ago. Given that the majority of the world hates Israel, should Israel try to change that attitude, or simply do what they believe is right and good for Israel? Similarly, our ancestors have always had to determine whether they act in ways that are consonant with Jewish tradition, or assimilate and hope that their neighbors will forget or ignore that they are Jewish?

Assimilation, and how we feel about how we are viewed by others, has been an underlying issue for the Jewish people for over 2,000 years. And it is the same

issue that our ancestors dealt with against the Seleucid Greeks in the second century BCE that led to the revolt of the Maccabees, and the miracle of Hanukkah. As we confront assimilation in our world today, I hope that we all keep in mind the lesson of the Maccabees, whose victory we are about to celebrate in less than a week: that we must always be proud and clear in standing as Jews wherever we may be. With regard to Israel and how they choose to deal with a world that hates them, the way the United Nations Secretary General constantly demonstrates, it is probably best to remember the words of the great Golda Meir: "If we have to have a choice between being dead and pitied, and being alive with bad image, we'd rather be alive and have the bad image."

May we all go from strength to greater strength, always keeping in mind the ethics and practices of Judaism as we truly try to be a light unto the nations, and bring peace and God's presence into the physical world.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 20, 2024

19th of Kislev, 5785

December 21st 2024 at 9:27 pm PST

Updates After Shabbat

Chevre,

Shavuah tov! As we enter this week and prepare for Hanukkah, may we all have the strength, courage, and faith of our ancestors, the Maccabees; may we always stand up for what is right and righteous; and may we all embrace a new dedication to making the world a better place... starting with really dedicating ourselves...

It has been a challenging Shabbat as a ballistic missile launched by the Houthis in Yemen evaded the interceptors and landed in a Tel Aviv residential area; injuring six people who currently being hospitalized. Israel is working on forming a global

coalition against the Houthis; and has also announced that they are preparing to go into Western Yemen, with or without support from other countries.

The IDF found yet another large tunnel in Gaza, this one over 7 kilometers long. With so much attention placed on Syria, Hezbollah, Lebanon, etc., it is too easy for us to forget that Israeli reservists are being called up every week to keep clearing out Gaza of Hamas tunnels, weapons, etc.... some of them for their 3rd or 4th tour of duty in the last 15 months.

The US quietly behaved oddly this weekend. For years, there has been a 10 million dollar reward for any information leading to the arrest of Al-Julani, the terrorist who is establishing power in Syria by filling Assad's void. That reward has now been cancelled, and the US has sent over officials to meet and support him. Al-Julani has decades of demonstrating his real values as a leader of ISIS and other Islamic terrorist organizations that have vowed to destroy Israel, and then the US and entire Western world. There are some who are saying he is "reformed" and wants peace... but those are sources in Western media. In Middle East media it is not even attempted to portray him as anything but what he is. And while Barbara Leaf, a US senior diplomat in the region, was singing Al-Julani's praises as a modern leader and future partner with the US; many media sources in the Middle East reported that Al-Julani was yelling at a woman to cover her head before a photographer took a picture of her without head covering. The US also has 5 billion dollar military equipment deal with Egypt, which is making Israelis very uncomfortable given the radical increase in Egypt of anti-Israel sentiment over the last few years, as well as the increased support of Hamas.

There are many conflicting reports about a potential hostage deal; ranging from reports that it is over 90% completed, to reports that it is no closer than it has been for months. Rather than listing the many rumors, let us all pray for the redemption of those souls and their speedy release.

Hanukkah reminds us that the most effective way to fight any darkness is shine a light. May the upcoming lights of Hanukkah melt away the darkness, hate, and vengeance in the world; and replace it with a light of holy peace.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 21, 2024

21st of Kislev, 5785

December 23rd 2024 at 6:04 am PST

Hostage Deal, Iran, and Hezbollah

Chevre,

Different media continue to report different takes on how close we are to any deal for the hostages, but it seems that despite what the "mediators" are saying, this has again all been typical Hamas behavior. Again (this has repeatedly happened), as it seems that we get close to a deal, Hamas starts making more demands and holding on to the deal breakers that they have before such as Israel entirely withdrawing, Israel leaving the Philadelphia corridor, etc. Again, it seems as if this has been another move to stall Israel, so that Hamas can take the time to strengthen themselves.

Iran is now looking towards other methods of getting weapons to Hezbollah rather than using Syria as a bridge, which was the method of weapons transportation that they were using for such a long time. Reports are that they are attempting to figure out an air transport system of weapons to get from Iran to Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. Mossad Director David Barnea made a public statement on Sunday to Israeli political officials that Israel should attack Iran now, based on Yemen attacks which are with Iranian weapons. A missile injured 16 more on Sunday in Tel Aviv that had been launched by the Houthis in Yemen.

We are nearly at the point in the temporary ceasefire with Hezbollah where Israel might be pulling back, but part of the conditions of that include Hezbollah giving up all of their weapons. It seems that rather than doing that, they've spent the last weeks collecting and assembling new weapons, so we will see if they really want any sort of peace, and are going to give up their armaments.

In all three areas of Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas, as well as with the Houthis et al; the world needs to really look at what the Quran says about proper behavior against the infidel... and to realize that Israel is considered the pinnacle of

infidels (along with the United States), in order to really understand the behavior of these groups. The Quran and Hadiths are clear: the Infidel is to be killed, converted, or enslaved. Those are the only choices according to the religious theology of Iran and its proxies. The Quran gives them the religious obligation to do whatever is necessary to achieve this goal. This is how they can justify the horrors of October 7th, and it is how they have no issue with stalling, lying, or breaking negotiations with regard to ceasefires or hostage negotiation. If we keep that understanding of their primary religious obligations, then the behavior of Hamas with their misleading hostage negotiations becomes more understandable.

May the time not be distant when all the hostages are returned; when that aspect of Islamic theology becomes rejected; and a lasting peace can be achieved in the region.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 23, 2024

22nd of Kislev, 5785

December 24th 2024 at 6:09 am PST

Is Israel About To Retaliate?

Chevre,

Another Houthi ballistic missile was launched at Central Tel Aviv, and thank God intercepted space. But half of Tel Aviv had to rush to shelters. Defense minister Katz issued a strong statement, saying, "We will target the Houthi infrastructure and their leaders, as we did with Haniyeh, Sinwar, and Nasrallah". Surprisingly, opposition leader Benny Gantz spoke even stronger words than the defense minister. He has now publicly advocated for Israel to attack Iran remove the regime there as the most effective way to stop all the Iranian proxies such as the Houthis. "The solution to putting an end to the attacks lies in Tehran." It is clear around the country that something must be done about the threats coming from Yemen, and that it is all being armed through Iran.

As disturbingly, Turkey and the new leaders of Syria have announced an alliance. The nation of Turkey under Erdogan, is equally as dangerous as Iran. Always remember when dealing with this Turkish regime, that their expressed intention is to recreate the Ottoman Empire with themselves as the ruling nation of that caliphate. Fact that the new Syrian leadership would enter into an alliance with this regime that seeks world Islamic domination says volumes about who Al-Julani really is.. which makes it even more puzzling as to why the US would remove the 10 million bounty on him as one of the worst leaders of worldwide terrorism.

With regard to the hostages, Hamas still has not released a list of those hostages who are still alive. This has been delayed for many weeks, and is only one of the examples that demonstrate that maybe Hamas is just looking to stall, and never really looking to release all the hostages at all. Western media and audiences seem to have forgotten that the current leader of Hamas is Sinwar's brother, Mohammad, and he is as much or even more of an extremist than his brother was.

Late on Monday night, 23 of 66 UN humanitarian aid trucks were hijacked by terrorists...again showing how little Hamas or the other authorities in Gaza care about Gazan citizens.

But Israel cares, and continuously providing aid, and even medical assistance, to its enemies who have vowed to destroy the State of Israel. There is no precedent in the history of war for a nation to continually and consistently provide aid for its enemy. Yet that is exactly what Israel has been doing for well over a year, and continues to do now. And while we do this unprecedented with compassion and kindness, the anti-semitic world, led by the UN, accuses us of genocide.

But in only a few nights we will be lighting lights in the middle of darkness. Which used to live by faith, and God has always taken care of us. It is our responsibility, privilege, and blessing to be a light into the nations and to show compassion even to our enemies. May God forbid us ever forgetting that compassion, for if we do, we would become no better than the multitude of Nations who live their lives based upon anger, fear, and a lack of faith.

May we, all Jews, and all of Israel always base our lives on faith over fear;

compassion over conflict, and be blessed to always be protected by God's Presence.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 24, 2024

23rd of Kislev, 5785

December 25th 2024 at 6:14 am PST

Xmas and Hanukkah

Chevre,

Today is Xmas day, and tonight is the first night of Hanukkah. But before exploring a bit about both holidays, a brief update on Israel.

The Houthis attacked Tel Aviv again on Xmas eve; the fourth time this week, and again the missile was intercepted. Israel is committed to taking down this enemy as they have others in the last year, but it may take aid from other nations as Yemen is a long distance from Israel. Israel may also go directly after Iran, as they are the suppliers of weapons to the Houthis. Hamas is still evading committing to following any of their agreements, including that they still have not provided a list of living or dead hostages. We can only pray that Israel stays strong and protected, and that other nations around the world choose to partner with Israel against these enemies of Western civilization.

Today is Christmas, one of the holiest days of the year for our Christian brothers and sisters. There are many Jewish interpretations about Jesus, but he is usually considered a rabbi who fought against the corruption of the time. Our Christian friends however consider him the living personification of God in the physical world. A simplification (not the best, but typically a good one for Jews to understand) is to use the analogy of water, ice, and steam as an understanding of the Father (God), Son (Jesus), and Holy Spirit.(which will return at some point in the future in physical form to save humanity)... the same entity in 3 different forms.

How can we as Jews respect a theology that seems so contradictory to our own? My personal approach is to again to be simple. We believe the Messiah will come, and Christians believe Jesus will return. Since the Moshiach (Messiah) will love all people, I find it useful to simply say to our Christian friends that I believe that the Messiah will come (may it be in our time) and we will say "welcome", while Christians say "welcome back"... and we will all accept him. This approach is disarming and inclusive, and respects their tradition while not contradicting our own. And if you think about it, it is probably an accurate prediction.

Hanukkah is a special holiday for us. We light a candle every night, and add a candle every night. Although we place the candles in from right to left, we light them from left to right (the newest candle is lit first).

Like most Jewish holidays, Hanukkah is “metahistorical”, meaning that it is both a remembrance of an historical event, as well as a time to teach our souls specific and important lessons that transcend time and are always applicable. In the case of Hanukkah, which literally translates to “dedication”, it actually remembers two different historical events, and contains extremely valuable lessons that we must all always keep in mind.

And those lessons are all about freedom, personal responsibility, and making our actions based on faith.

The first historical event is little known or recognized except to scholars or extremely observant Jews. In chapter 50 of the Book of Genesis we learn that Egypt mourns the death of Jacob for 70 days; Joseph then travels for a day to bury Jacob in the cave of Machpelah; and Joseph ordains a seven day festival of mourning for his father (50:10). Including the day of travel, this makes an 8-day memorial that is “ordained”, meaning that it is to be observed for all time. We know that Jacob was both born and died on the same day of the 15th of Tishrei in the Hebrew calendar (the first day of the holiday of Sukkot, the Festival of Tabernacles), so the mourning begins 70 days later, on the 25th of Kislev in the Hebrew calendar: the first day of Hanukkah.

Jacob, who was also named Israel (Gen. 32:27), was the father of the Jewish people, and lived his life based upon his faith in God. Joseph ordained this festival on behalf of his father so that all Jews, and all humans, would always

remember to act on faith, and to live with courage. It is also a reminder that Israel will always be the land of the Jewish people, as it is given to Jacob and his descendants by God (Gen. 35:9).

The second historical event is one that most people know, but do not fully understand. Most people think that it is about one day's worth of sacred oil lasting for 8 days, but it is much, much more than that.

In the second century B.C.E., the Seleucid Greeks controlled Israel. Led by their King Antiochus, they wanted to truly control the people as well as the land. They had no desire to kill the Jews, but wanted them to all convert to their pagan religion. The Seleucids understood that if you can control people's spirituality, you can totally control their lives. And so they made it the law that all Jews would need to convert to the Hellenistic form of life and worship. In 167 B.C.E. they dedicated the holy Temple in Jerusalem to Zeus, and banned Judaism.

This caused a revolt led by a Jewish priest named Mattathias and his five sons. Upon Mattathias' death in 166 B.C.E., the mantle of leadership was taken up by his son Judah, who became known as Judah the Maccabee ("Judah the Hammer"). On the 25th of Kislev, 164 B.C.E., The Maccabees sealed their victory and recaptured the Temple, which had been desecrated by the Seleucids with all forms of idol worship; including the sacrifice of pigs, idols to Zeus, and other forms of pagan worship. The Maccabees needed to rededicate the Temple so that it could be used for its intended purpose of worshiping God. Part of that rededication meant lighting the Eternal Light (Ner Tamid), which could only use clean flasks of a special virgin olive oil. Given that it would take eight days to prepare new pure oil, it did not seem to the Maccabees that they would be able to keep the sacred lamp lit for more than one day.

But a miracle happened. The one flask of oil that should only have been able to stay lit for one day, lasted an entire 8 days until new oil had been produced. This eight day miracle began on the same day that the 8 day festival of mourning of Jacob also started, the 25th of Kislev. And so the Festival of Hanukkah was established, and we light candles each night for eight nights to commemorate the miracle.

But this second aspect, which is much more known than Jacob's Memorial, is significantly more than just a commemoration of oil lasting longer than it should.

The Seleucids were the greatest empire of their time in the world. The Maccabees and their soldiers were insignificant in terms of numbers and weaponry. On the surface it would seem they had no chance of revolting and recapturing the Temple and the land of Israel from the powerful Seleucid Greeks. But they acted upon their faith and their principles, and they were triumphant. It is here that we learn the deeper lesson and importance of the holiday of Hanukkah, and why it is so applicable in today's world.

The Maccabees acted on faith, and against all odds beat off the enemies of God. Hanukkah is a holiday not only about the oil, but about the military victory itself. It is a reminder that when we are acting righteously and in harmony with God's teachings, nothing can stop our victory. This is a lesson we need to all remember as we face the many enemies of the Jews who seek to destroy us. It may seem as if they outnumber us but the holiday of Hanukkah reminds us that with God on our side there is no battle that cannot be won.

So on this Xmas day and first night of Hanukkah, let us all take solace that God will always take care of his people. Let us all embrace those of other faiths in this holy time, and share the beauty together of dedicating ourselves to God; always remembering that if God can accept how we each pray... we should accept each other as well

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 25, 2024

24th of Kislev, 5785

December 26th 2024 at 6:10 am PST

Imagination, Wonder, Gratitude, and Miracles

Chevre,

As we finish the first day of Hanukkah and will light the second candle tonight, I would like us all to imagine...

Imagine that we are part of the Maccabee warriors. You have been achieving victory after military victory for three long years of war against the greatest empire in the world. Finally, you have succeeded in reclaiming and redeeming Jerusalem and the Holy Temple. But there is a challenge.

You have discovered only one flask of oil for the Ner Tamid, the Eternal Light, and a debate has started between your colleagues. Should you light the light immediately, signalling a complete victory and God's presence residing in the Temple; knowing that it will go dark in a day and remain unlit for a week? Or should you wait the week until the holy oil is produced, and then light the Ner Tamid, knowing it will remain lit in perpetuity? (It actually last over 200 years, until the Romans conquer Jerusalem.) After much debate, it is decided to light the Light now, and then go through a week without the light once this first flask is used up.

But as the first day goes on, it seems as if the holy oil is not burning as quickly as it had in the past. In fact, by the time of the second night begins, there is still a good amount of oil left in the flask. As the second night continues, your confusion transforms into wonder as to how the oil doesn't seem to burning down.

And then you and your comrades recognize that something special is happening. You wonder if there is something different about this particular flask. But as the second night continues, people start talking about a miracle ; and this theory starts to become more accepted. Your wonder shifts into a shock that you are personally witnessing something miraculous. This feeling is overwhelming and humbling as you realize that God takes an active interest in the world.

And each and every Maccabee starts to realize that just like He was in their military victories, His Presence is right there in the Temple, and can be seem through this miracle of oil lasting longer. The wonder and gratitude are merged with a true sense of awe.

This is the lesson for today, and for tonight as we light the second candle. As you go through the day and into candle lighting, think of miracles that have happened in your life. Maybe the birth of a child; getting into a loving relationship; a success in business or athletics; something about Israel,- or the miracle of life that can be seen in a flower or sunset. Feel that sense of awe

about something... and with that deeper awareness in the forefront of your consciousness, light the second candle tonight.

Life itself is a miracle, and when we are aware of miracles in our own lives, the Hanukkah candles will take on a new and deeper meaning.

May we experience more and more miracles in our lives, and let these candles become the sparks that light up our souls with awe, gratitude, and wonder at the incredible grace of God.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 26, 2024

25th of Kislev, 5785

December 26th 2024 at 8:50 pm PST

Hanukkah Celebration of Hasids and Rappers

Chevre,

Let us all celebrate with this kind of joy in every moment of this holiday and throughout the year! The Hebrew lyrics mean, "I believe in perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah, and even though he may delay, I still choose to believe!"

<https://www.facebook.com/537831687/videos/10152424661266688/>

Believe and rejoice! (with gratitude to Yuri and Natalia for forwarding this to me)

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 26, 2024

26th of Kislev, 5785

December 28th 2024 at 7:29 pm PST

Shavuah Tov

Chevre,

As the Sabbath ends, and a new week begins, let us all say prayers for healing for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is undergoing prostate surgery on Sunday in Israel. After being diagnosed with a urinary infection, it was decided that this would be the best form of treatment. Whether you like or hate him, respect or ridicule him, it is important for Israel that he recovers and heals quickly. Israeli politics are complicated, and it would not be good for Israel or the world if a new coalition had to be established with new leadership during this time of war. We ask God to grant a speedy and full healing, a refuah shlema, for Benyamin ben Tzila.

Sometimes it seems that irony is lost in this world. Hamas, who is so committed in theory to Islamic principles of holiness, and specifically the Holiness of Jerusalem, launched another missile attack from Gaza on Saturday night at Jerusalem. Most of the damage done was as a result of shrapnel falling after the rockets were intercepted, including falling children's playground. The Houthis also launched a ballistic missile at 2:00 a.m. on Sunday morning, which was, thank God, intercepted.

The IDF took weeks warning that a hospital in Gaza needed to stop being used as a military launching site for Hamas. This weekend, after surrounding the hospital and making sure that real patients were evacuated (as opposed to terrorists posing as patients), the IDF confiscated massive amounts of weapons, including grenades and RPGs; and apprehended 240 Hamas and Jihadi operatives. This included the hospital director, who admitted to being a Hamas operative involved in Oct. 7.

Again, it seems that the irony is lost on the world; which condemns Israel for defending itself by taking out launching facilities, while it remains silent that those military bases are actually endangering all real patients by hiding inside hospitals (that are run by Hamas terrorists).

Yesterday (Sunday night-Saturday night) was the 27th of Kislev. This is the date that we traditionally are taught was the day when the flood rains ceased. The

evils of the ancient world in the time of Noah were finally destroyed, and the dawn of a new age was able to begin. This is a time of hope and optimism... a hope for us in our time as well. The last 14 months have been dark and painful in so many ways. But we need look only at history to know that darkness always is ultimately defeated by light... and the darkness we have been experiencing, with God's help, is starting to be replaced with light. Thousands of years ago, as the flood rains ceased and the clouds dissipated, a new world was born: a world that would embrace Abraham and his descendants, the Jewish people. We must choose faith and know that the darkness we have been experiencing is now about to shift as well, hopefully to a time of a lasting peace for Israel and the Jewish people. We cannot be reminded enough that our faith is not blind, but based on thousands of years of history and experience.

Whatever has happened to the Jewish people for thousands of years; whatever enemies have sought to destroy us; no matter what has happened and how dark the world has looked... we're still here. This is one of the important reminders of Hanukkah.

So I invite everyone to take a few moments for the following music video, remembering the truth of Am Yisrael Chai:

<https://youtu.be/PAmS9AnUts>

The flood eventually ceased; the Seleucid Greeks were expelled; the Spanish Inquisition fell; the Nazis were defeated; and despite overwhelming odds, Israel has not only survived, but triumphed over each of the Arab enemies over the last 76 years... and we can all be sure that with God's help, we will be victorious in all of the current conflicts: remembering that in Judaism, the goal of war is not victory or conquest, but a lasting peace. May we all see that peace now, in our time.

Am Yisrael Chai, Shavuah Tov, and Happy Hanukkah

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 28, 2024

28th of Kislev, 5785

December 29th 2024 at 6:52 pm PST

A 5th Night Teaching...

Chevre,

Tonight we light the 5th candle of this beautiful holiday of Hanukkah. There is a Hasidic teaching for followers of the Baal Shem Tov that is attributed to the Lubavitcher Rebbe z"l, who supposedly taught it in his wedding day.

The fifth Hanukkah candle signifies great darkness because this day cannot fall on the Holy Sabbath. And through the Hanukkah candles, the greatest (spiritual) darkness of the world is illuminated. And for this reason, the potential of Hanukkah comes to fruition specifically through the fifth candle, which signifies the darkness. And this is the function of every Jew, in every place -- in Warsaw or London -- to illuminate the darkest place."

It is our responsibility and blessing to illuminate the darkest places, especially on this night. The darkest places in the world through our prayers and actions towards Israel in this dark time. The darkest places in our nation, through our actions with people when we disagree with politically. We need to bring in the light of Harmony (Tiferet) into the political discourse between friends and family members. The darkest places in our community, through donating our time, finances, energy, and love to causes that help others in our community. The darkest places in our families and friendships, through choosing to truly listen to each other and to show our love not just with our words, but with our actions. And the darkest places inside ourselves; those places of our behaviors and thoughts that we are ashamed of. Those habits and patterns that are self-destructive and prevent us from being the best versions of ourselves. Tonight is the time to bring light to those dark places, and to heal within ourselves so that we can truly make this world a better place for all of those around us.

Happy Hanukkah! May the light of this holiday shine into us, become magnified through our own souls, and shine back into the world to bring peace and harmony.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 29, 2024

29th of Kislev, 5785

December 30th 2024 at 8:13 am PST

Updates

Chevre,

Again, the United Nation showed why it is an obsolete organization filled with Jew hating antisemites. The UN Secretary-General condemned Israel's attack on the Houthis in Yemen, but failed to even mention Israel in his statement, nor did he condemn in any way the ballistic missiles that the Houthis have been launching at Tel Aviv. This is at the same time that the Houthis are threatening to launch multiple missiles and drones in the immediate future, and enter their "sixth state" of eacalating attacks on Israel...all.of which is ignored by the UN and world communities.

Although it doesn't seem to be reported in Western media at all, multiple Israeli sources report that the United States is trying to pressure Israel into giving ammunition and arms to the Palestinian Authority security forces (more weaponry then was agreed to). If we remember that the PA still defines Palestine is being "from the river to the Sea", does this even sound sensible? Apparently, the world believes that Israel should provide aid, weaponry, food, and anything else possible to organizations that are committed to its destruction. Can anyone imagine England giving weapons and ammunition, food, and support to Nazi Germany during World War II? But apparently, Israel is supposed to support those who want to see it destroyed.

Netanyahu's prostate surgery was apparently success, and he will hopefully be starting cyber-meetings again by Monday night if not earlier, and will hopefully be working again within a week to two. In the meantime, his duties are being split between Justice Minister Levin, who is acting as premiere, and Defense Minister Katz, it was authorized to convene the security cabinet if needed.

This place is the world in a very tenuous position as the United States is being led by lame duck president in the last days of his office; and Israel is being led by temporary officials while the Prime Minister recovers. As a result, there is neither strong nor clear leadership in either country, and this may be why the Houthis are so aggressive at this time. As Netanyahu recovers with God's help, and there becomes a definitive administration in DC, Israel's enemies may be more recalcitrant to so aggressively attack Israel.

As we pray for peace for Israel, and for a dedication of all Jews to bring the light of peace and hope for all people and religions of the world, here is the official Hanukkah message from the IDF... an army that is dedicated to ONLY fighting in defense of the nation (hence the name Israel DEFENSE Force)

<https://m.youtube.com/shorts/FUv9Q2-U3uE>

May the time not be distant when peace is everpresent in Israel and the world, when the modern Amaleks and all of our enemies are defeated, when the tools of war are no longer necessary, and when our neighbors becomes our friends and partners in peace.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 30, 2024

29th of Kislev, 5785

December 31st 2024 at 6:09 am PST

Missiles, Failed Ambush, & The 7th Night

Chevre,

The Houthis have launched 3 more ballistic missiles from Yemen on late Monday night. Thank God, all three were intercepted. At the U.N., Israeli Ambassador Danon made it clear to Yemen that if the attacks did not stop, Yemen and the Houthis will meet the same fate as "what has happened to Hamas, to Hezbollah, to Assad, to all those who have attempted to destroy us."

An ambush was attempted in Gaza by Hamas on Monday night at around 11:00pm, but the IDF intelligence obtained pre-knowledge of it, and it was soundly defeated as the IDF was ready for their late-night "surprise" attacks. By the end of the night, 106 terrorists were dead, 2 surrendered, and no Israeli casualties.

Tonight is the 7th night of Hanukkah. This is a night of physical completion...of wholeness in the physical world. It is also New Year's Eve, the completion of the secular calendar. With the synchronicity of both happening on the same evening, it is an especially auspicious and powerful time to review the last year and examine what has been accomplished... and what still needs to be accomplished in the coming year of 2025. What have you done in this past year of 2024? What physical world goals have been met, and what still are incomplete? After lighting the Hanukkah candles tonight, take a few momenta to really take an accounting of what you have done this past year... and what still needs to be done.

In Pirkei Avot, we are taught, "You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it". Much has been accomplished in the past year, but we all still have so much to do. Both collectively and personally. As individuals and as a community.

In this end of year time, we should all be grateful that Temple Ner Simcha is a vibrant Jewish community that exists in this world. With services, classes, special events, and education both for adults and children, we continue to be a light in American Jewry, and for non-Jews as well. With the support of the community, I have sent out hundreds of emails with updates on Israel and the state of Judaism in the world (I hope people actually read some of them), which are apparently forwarded to people around the country.

We have accomplished much as a community this year, and can accomplish so much more. Soon, we will be announcing an adult Bnai Mitzvah program that will start shortly. I am awaiting details on planning a community trip to Israel in July in conjunction with the World Maccabi Games. There are a few nationally known speakers who are determining when they will be able to speak at the temple; and this year the temple will start offering intensive half and full day workshops on specific topics. In early 2025 there will be an intensive workshop on the Talmudic and Kabbalistic practices of Jewish Astrology; and continuing

throughout the year with other intensive workshops on topics such as Jewish Meditation; Kabbalistic Healing Techniques, and more.

And all this is done without membership dues or mandatory costs.

But the financial costs exist for the temple, and as we end the secular year, I ask that you consider making a year-end donation to Temple Ner Simcha. A piece of tzedakah to be given in addition to any High Holiday Pledge you might have made months ago. If you are willing to give to your community and support the work that the temple does, all you have to do is go to www.nersimcha.org/give You will be supporting meaningful work that makes a difference in people's lives, and the act of charity will carry you into the new year of 2025 with the type of powerful blessings that only come through the act of giving tzedakah.

In this seventh night of the holiday, let us all be aware of the jobs we have completed; the goals we have met; and the challenges that lie before us. May we all take the light of this seventh candle of physical completion and use it to bring light, success, good health; prosperity, and peace into our lives, our community, our nation, and the world.

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

December 31, 2024

30th of Kislev 5785

January 1st 2025 at 11:03 am PST

Israel, The New Year & The 8th Night

Chevre,

Happy New Year! May this New Year bless you and your families with all that is good in life, good health, prosperity, fun, joy, wisdom, peace, and much love.

The new year in Israel is bringing both hope and clarity. The hope that with this

new year comes an opportunity to turn the region from Muslim extremist regimes seeking to destroy Israel into neighbors that are true partners in peace and prosperity. Israel is the land of hope, and always has been. And that continues today. It has been said that you must believe in miracles to live in Israel, and the fact that Israelis are still hopeful after the last 15 months is not only a miracle, but a testament to their faith, courage, and commitment.

There is also a clarity that is being expressed on this New Years Day in Israel. We are a people of peace, and avoid war at all costs. But again today, Hamas has backtracked on their previously negotiated commitments. Hamas is now insisting on a week-long total ceasefire and withdrawal before they even give to Israel a list of hostages alive or dead. Hamas has continued to fire rockets, even on Tuesday night and into Wednesday morning as the New Year began. It is clear to the vast majority of Israelis that as much as we all would like to believe that there is a way to get the hostages back, and peacefully resolve the challenges in Gaza, it will probably never happen through negotiations. Hamas is dedicated to our destruction; their theology allows them to lie in any negotiation, and even demands that they never truly have peace with us; as they are obligated and committed to their goals of destroying the "Jewish infidel" in Israel. The new year has brought clarity even to many idealists in Israel that there can be no peaceful solution with Hamas: while we are committed to life, Hamas is committed to death.

As I have said for 15 months, Hamas is Amalek. As painful as it is, we must always remember the horrors of October 7th. The rapes, murders, torturing, and kidnapping of the weak, old, children and women that they proudly and joyously committed. We must never allow ourselves to rejoice in war or death, or we, God forbid, could lose our own souls. But we must also remember that the actions of Hamas on October 7th were clear: they are a modern Amalek, and must be destroyed, not defeated. The Torah is clear, and the last 15 months demonstrate the truth that a peace will never be able to happen between Hamas and Israel. Amalek must be destroyed, we must mourn their deaths as they were not born evil, and we must grieve not only over their deaths but about the reality that we have been forced to do this.

We must never allow ourselves to forget October 7th. Never.

Even Wednesday afternoon's edition of the Jerusalem Post recognizes that

negotiations are again at an impasse. With this new year comes a clarity for the vast majority of Israelis that Hamas will only capitulate and respond to violence. So while there is hope pervading Israel and the world with the dawn of this new year; there is also a clarity of what must be done. A clarity based on practicality integrated with a simultaneous hope and faith based on Israel and the Jewish people's reliance on the miracles of God.

And tonight we light the candle for the 8th night of Hanukkah: the last day that is considered by our Sages to be the demonstration of God's miracles in the physical world. For us, the number eight has two major meanings. The first is that it is a number that is outside the physical world, as it has extended past one complete weekly cycle. We circumcise our children on the 8th day, celebrating the miracle of their birth and the partnership we have with God in raising them. Our Mekabulim (mystical sages), based on the Holy Zohar, teach that the number eight signifies a new beginning outside of the physical world, as it was on the 8th day of creation that God returned to His work of creating miracles after that first Shabbat... that first full day of rest. With the lighting of the 8th candle tonight, we are totally committing ourselves to the realization of God's miracles happening in the physical world and in our own lives.

The number eight in Gematria (Jewish mystical numerology) is also a symbol for the word "chesed", meaning "compassion" (the eighth letter of the aleph-bet is chet, which is the first letter of "chesed"). In lighting the 8th candle we are to commit ourselves to always, always choose compassion. No matter how dark the world is around us, we must allow the light of compassion into our souls; and we must, must demonstrate compassion in all of our actions. Each Rosh Hashanah we pray and request God to step off of His "Throne of Judgment" and take up His "Throne of Compassion". The 8th day of Hanukkah is a time for us to commit to do the same: a time to recommit ourselves to living lives based on compassion in every way and moment. This is the other secret about the candles we light tonight.

As we light the last flame of this year's holiday, we must all take a moment to embrace that hopeful faith of miracles in our daily lives, and for Israel. We need to remind ourselves to be compassionate in every moment. As this falls on the first day of the secular New Year, there is also a unique and important opportunity for all of us by integrating the two holidays together.

May we all commit ourselves to expressing compassion in this new year... for the entire year (and if we are courageous, maybe for our whole lives?). May we also choose to receive God's miracles in every moment of our lives, and open ourselves to the possibilities of miracles in Israel, the world, and our own personal lives. Maybe this is the year that God will bless us with a personal miracle such as good health, a loving relationship, healthy children, prosperity, or whatever it is that we truly seek and need. Perhaps this is the year when the ancient hatred of our nation by so many around the world is replaced with compassion and respect for Israel and the Jewish people. Maybe God will allow the horrors of the last 15 months to be replaced with the miracle of a true and lasting peace. It is a great miracle for Israel still to even be in existence given what it has experienced since October 7th. Let us all pray that this miracle is increased exponentially, and that the people of Israel, the land of Israel, and the State of Israel receive the ultimate compassion from God of a lasting safety, prosperity, and peace with all the neighbors in the region.

I have always said that we Jews are in the miracle business, and business is good! May this New Year and 8th day of the Festival of Hanukkah be integrated together for all of us into a time of hope and clarity, of compassion and miracles.

May we all be blessed in this new year of 2025 with giving and receiving compassion. May we all see, embrace, and accept miracles in our own personal lives; the lives of our family and community; the lives of the Jewish people and Israel; and the lives of humanity around the world.

Compassion and miracles combined with new beginnings in one day; this truly is potentially a powerful day for each of us. May we use this day for the opportunity that it is: a time to heal from the horrors of the last 15 months; to embrace compassion in every aspect of our lives; to accept God's miracles into our lives; and to have a truly new beginning in this new year...

A beginning of peace in Israel and healing for the world.

Chag Hanukkah Sameach and Happy New Year!

Chazak u'Baruch

Rabbi Michael Barclay

January 1, 2025

1st of Tevet, 5785
