



קישור שלום ~ Kishur Sholom
Staying Connected with the Temple Sholom Community

20 November 2023 ~ 7 Heshvan 5784
Parashat Vayetze

Shalom, chaveirim - hello, friends -

I actually don't want to write this much.

It's not that I'm trying to shirk my work or responsibility ... but there is just so much that is constantly changing and deserves/necessitates sharing.

Alas, you know where the delete button is - so if you need ...

But I actually can't stop sharing because one of things we actually can do, here in America, is stay abreast of what is happening AND arm ourselves with proper language for ourselves, our children and grandchildren, our neighbors and friends. There are so many angles to discuss about Israel's war with Hamas - and the continual mourning for the 1200+ who were murdered in Israel on October 7th, the soldiers who have fallen since, and the 240+ hostages who remain held by terror organizations in Gaza.

Bring Them Home

We have a role in helping to bring the hostages home. It is tempting to sit back and convince ourselves that we are helpless. But we are not. First and foremost, whenever people speak about a ceasefire and the innocent civilians in Gaza — make sure that they also remember the

nearly 240 innocent hostages. It is possible to both want the end of the war and understand that little is possible until the hostages are brought home AND Hamas is dismantled. Israelis of the Left and the Right are in agreement on this matter

Congressional Representatives need to hear from their constituents. We have not forgotten the hostages and neither should our legislators. [On this website](#) you will find the phone numbers of your United States House Representatives and Senators and you will be provided with a script as well. It is tempting to think that these calls do not make a difference - but it is important for our representatives to know we care and the fate of the hostages matters! The Halls of Congress are the places where legislation, lobbying, and influence happen on an international level.

Just what is a moral war?

It feels like the entire world is alight with debate over the morality of Israel's war against Hamas. Sadly - the debate is not over Hamas using human shields, the last fifteen years of Hamas' building an extensive network of tunnels and livable spaces underground, or holding elderly and babies as hostages. While some news outlets (NPR, NYTimes, Washington Post, Al Jazeera) begin from the standpoint that that Israel is wrong and the Palestinians are right, I want to offer you some resources — so that you have a vocabulary to talk about what it means to be mindful of humanitarian issues when fighting a war. It really is possible to both feel for the innocents of Gaza while realizing Israel has no choice but to fight.

Consider [this video of an Israeli Army officer](#) speaking to his troops on the night before entering Gaza. This inspiring video is less than five minutes. The officer is surrounded by his troops who are ready to risk their lives for the Jewish people and our homeland. This isn't an academic conversation about what war should look like. This is a conversation being held in a moment when the most serious of matters will be on the line: life and death. The video is a reminder that Israel's military, though fallible and subject to human error, operates with integrity, justifiable conviction, and morality to focus on the mission. The loss of innocent life is a tragedy - and Israelis know that all too well. It is possible to both mourn the loss of innocent while simultaneously defending your own country.

One of the best conversations I have heard yet is by Yehuda Kurtzer, president of the Shalom Hartman Institute (SHI), and Tel Becker, Senior Fellow at the Hartman Institute, Legal Adviser of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and a veteran member of Israeli peace negotiations team. [They speak about the ethics of Israel's current operation in Gaza.](#) This is an academic conversation — but it is one that is easy to follow. Tal Becker is one of my favorite teachers at Hartman. He is passionate, articulate and it is easy to follow his thinking and understand the points he is trying to make.

Shifa Hospital as a litmus test

As you may have recently read the IDF has taken control of Gaza's Al-Shifa hospital. [NPR covered the story last Saturday.](#) If you listen to this report only, you will be led to see Israelis as cruel, heartless and immoral. Please listen to how SHI's [Donniel Hartman and Yossi Klein Halevi discuss the struggles](#), risks and consequences of adhering to moral principles while fighting against an immoral enemy.

I realize that NPR and the Shalom Hartman Institute are not comparable news sources. Regrettably, far more people will get their news from NPR without taking the time to understand the complexity of the Shifa hospital invasion.

Many people in the world are telling themselves a story right now that is very different from the one that is being lived by the IDF and by Israelis. I am astonished by the unleashing of hatred of Jews which has erupted from Berlin to Sydney to Chicago. While it is discouraging to see the sights of college campuses like [UCSD](#), where students are harassed, threatened, and maligned, the sights of cities like [San Francisco](#) where thugs and vandals attack Jews trying to live and do business, the sights of rallies that call for the elimination of Israel.

It is 100% possible to decry the loss of life and feel the pain of innocents, to hope for a quick end to the fighting, AND to understand that Israel has no choice but to protect its citizens and eliminate the mortal threat of Hamas. Hamas wants no two state solution. They want to eliminate every Jew between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea (THAT, by the way, IS a genocide). Hamas governs by way of sharia law which uses violence and intimidation to enforce strict Islam upon all under their control and is the antithesis to the Liberal world in which we, and oddly so many of the "Free Palestine" supporters - operate.

Israelis want this war to end. I have to believe that the majority of Palestinians, who seek to come out from under the threat of Hamas, also want this war to end. We pray that the hostages are brought home soon and safely. We pray that the Israeli soldiers are successful in their operations incurring the least amount of loss of life to the civilian, innocent populations. We pray that decent world leaders and powers will assist Israel and the Palestinians live safe lives where every man, woman, and child can sit beneath their fig trees and grapevines and none shall make them afraid (Micah 4:4).

L'shalom,

Rabbi Mark Cohn

Recommended Resources from the Rabbi's Desk

Constant and important updates, podcasts, blogs, and articles from [The Free Press](#), [Times of Israel](#) and [Tablet Magazine](#).

IN ANTICIPATION OF THE THANKSGIVING DINNER TABLE ... OR JUST A WEEKEND WITH FAMILY:

Reading

["Liberal parents, far-left teens: When Jewish families fight over Israel,"](#)

by Rabbi Daniel Brenner in *Times of Israel*. We are all facing this to some degree. My colleague opens some important "windows" to discussion and understanding.



**"Lunch & Learn" with
Rabbi Mark Cohn
Tuesday, Nov. 21 & 28
12:00pm**

Tuesday, Nov. 21

Deconstructing a text, a post, and a video: How social media and the actual media (i.e, radio and print) can confuse in their predigestion of the facts.

Tuesday, Nov. 28

The Jewish Left: What's left?

"The pain that you are feeling is peoplehood," by Michal Bitton in *Sapir*. Bitton spoke at the March for Israel last week. Her words, written early in the crisis, are critically important.

"No Bin Laden did not strike America to free Palestine," by Andrew Vitelli in *Times of Israel*. The recent interest in Bin Landen's "Letter to America" is frightening - as if people were giving *Mein Kampf* or *The Protocols of Zion* a renewed curiosity.

"How my toddler grandson convinced me it was time to leave Conservative Judaism," by Rabbi Daniel Gordis. This blog will need far more "unpacking." Suffice it to say - Danny is a master teacher and important voice from Israel and namely of the Conservative Movement. His post is an important insight to the state of the Israel-Diaspora affairs and the reality of some American rabbis and opinions and approaches to Israel.

Listening

Three podcasts from "Perfect Jewish Parents: Israel at War" of the Shalom Hartman Institute:

How the Left is similar and different in America and in Israel and what happens when our friends can't stand with Jews and Israel in this moment.

**GET READY FOR A
HANUKKAH PARTY AT THE
SHERMAN JCC!!**

Hanukkah

Sunday, December 10th
1-3pm @ the JCC in Sherman
(9 CT-39, Sherman)
Details to follow!

In the meantime, check out the JCC in Sherman's outstanding schedule -

JCCINSHERMAN.ORG

"Being the Jews we want to be."

"Shades of gray and grief on campus."

"Is anyone prepared for these questions?"

I cannot recommend these podcasts enough for PARENTS and TEENS/COLLEGE STUDENTS! The hosts explore the very issues which are plaguing children and adults.

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