**Reflections**

**Rabbi Malka Drucker**

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Dear Friends,

Although I’ve been on vacation these weeks, it has hardly been a time of relaxation for any of us. I know that you are as frightened and disturbed as I have been as the news from Israel tears at our hearts.

Death and destruction continue as I write this message. Israel is fighting for its survival. Regardless of what we may believe is the right course of political action, whether we believe that there is such a thing a proportionate response, we support Israeli citizens as part of our collective family.

On Tisha B’Av I sat on the floor with members of the Santa Barbara Jewish community to hear the plaintive words of Lamentations. The first words of the scroll wail, “How desolate the city is!” Jews all over the world feel alone these days, knowing that those outside the community cannot understand what it feels like to be a Jew today.

One sixth of Israelis (one million) slept in bomb shelters last night, while others fled to whatever safety they could find. The world, as well as many Jews, sees the Israeli army as invincible, yet the numbers belie this myth. While there are 6 million Israelis, 12 million Jews worldwide, there are 100 million members of Hezbollah, 300 million Arab Muslims, and one billion Muslims worldwide. For most of us, the existence of the Jewish state has been a fact as real as the existence of America. Our life as Jews without a Jewish state would be very different in terms of our dignity and freedom.

While we pray for peace and an alternative to the present horror, we must be unequivocal in telling our friends that we support Israel. Ask them to have enough humility to accept that they may not have the answer to peace and ask that they have compassion for all who suffer, including the Jews.

Prayers and words are not enough. The United Jewish Communities has created the Israel Emergency Fund, from which 100 percent of contributions will go to providing food, shelter, and escape from the most dangerous regions for its citizens. [Here is the link](http://www.ujc.org/content_display.html?ArticleID=188078).

This does not mean that we are indifferent to the suffering of others; it means that Jews are responsible for one another first.

I am a member of Peace Now and am on the rabbinic cabinet of Brit Tzedek. I have signed petitions asking for the world to intervene in this suicidal and genocidal battle. My primary obligation, however, is to take care of my sisters and brothers in Israel. I ask you to join me in an effort of solidarity so that none of us, especially Israelis, do not feel alone in this challenging time.

This morning the New York Times had a picture on the front page of two young Israeli soldiers embracing with huge smiles as they were leaving Lebanon, grateful for their own lives, as well as each other’s. Thank God we have not grown so embittered that we rejoice in the downfall of our enemies. May the dark night soon end so that we can see jubilation on the faces of all our soldiers upon their return home.

Peace and Blessings