



Jerusalem 4:18 Toronto 4:49

## International Solidarity Effort for IDF Soldiers

*Project SOS Aims To Strengthen Israeli Troops*

As the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) battle Hamas in an attempt to put an end to Hamas' terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians, we have been approached to assist an international effort to show solidarity with the Israeli soldiers has begun. Project SOS (Strengthen Our Soldiers) encourages individuals, families, synagogues, and schools throughout the world to send an e-mail message to soldiers of the IDF in order to give them *chizuk* (strength) during the current military operation in Gaza. Through Project SOS, concerned individuals can write messages of hope and inspiration to IDF soldiers and provide them with much-needed strength during this difficult time.

Project SOS has been developed in conjunction with IDF Colonel (Reserves) Geva Rapp, who is presently on the front lines in Gaza with thousands of IDF troops under his direct command. Colonel Rapp is also the founder of an Israel-based organization called Panim El Panim (Face to Face), which works to bring together Israelis of varying religious backgrounds, spread the message of unity and spiritual growth, and enhance and strengthen the spirit of Judaism within the army. According to Colonel Rapp, the Israeli soldiers would greatly appreciate messages of *chizuk* as they encounter difficult and hostile conditions, and a dangerous enemy hoping to defeat them.

*Kol Yisrael Areivim Ze Lazeh - every Jew is responsible for one another. As Jews, we have an obligation to help our fellow Jews whenever possible, especially during their time of need. As the soldiers put their lives on the line to protect our homeland and our nation, the soldiers in the IDF need to hear from us how much we appreciate what they are doing and we need to let them know that we are praying for their safe return. The simple act of sending a soldier an e-mail expressing your thoughts and prayers can give them the strength they need to continue their critical mission.*

To participate in Project SOS, e-mail your message of *chizuk* and strength to

[office@panimelpanim.org.il](mailto:office@panimelpanim.org.il)

In their letters, people are encouraged to let the soldiers know who they are and where they are writing from; articulate their thoughts; and express their gratitude for all that the soldiers are doing to protect the Jewish people. Every letter that is sent to [office@panimelpanim.org.il](mailto:office@panimelpanim.org.il) will be printed out and distributed to numerous IDF soldiers with the assistance of Colonel Rapp.

## Commentary...

**Shame On Bush And Condi** By Anne Bayefsky

Betrayal. No other word describes the reversal of American foreign policy that took place on the night of Jan. 8 when the U.S. refused to veto the Security Council resolution on Gaza.

A president whose friendship and alliance with Israel once appeared honest, perceptive and unshakable, decided two weeks before leaving office to throw Israel to the wolves. The resolution calls for a ceasefire in Gaza and does not even mention the word "Hamas."

There will no longer be a need for an Obama transition team on foreign policy. The outgoing president and secretary of State have done it all. Yesterday's resolution, along with another Condoleezza Rice-inspired resolution from mid-December, draws Israel into a Security Council spider web that U.N. enthusiasts have been weaving for decades.

Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton can simply step into George W. Bush and Condi Rice's shoes, label themselves new-age multilateralists and let the chips--in this case, remnants of Israel--fall where they may.

## ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel  
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee  
of Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

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The Security Council resolution makes a mockery of Israel's right of self-defense. In fact, it makes no mention of a right of self-defense at all. Eight thousand mortars have rained down on Israel from the Gaza Strip over a period of eight years.

Israel withdrew every Israeli man, woman and child from Gaza three and a half years ago. Yet the United Nations draws an equivalence between a terrorist organization whose very modus

operandi is to target civilians and a state whose aim is to protect civilians, Israeli and Palestinian.

Arab states could scarcely contain their glee. The U.K. went out in front and accepted the idea of a much stronger resolution instead of a Security Council presidential statement, and Secretary of State Rice rolled over and played dead within minutes.

Veto-wielding powers had reportedly given undertakings to Israel's Prime Minister Ehud Olmert that they would not permit a resolution. These promises were ignored in the face of allegedly enormous pressure from undemocratic thugs, state sponsors of terrorism and weak democracies cowering at the prospect of unhappy Muslim constituencies or a dent in their bank accounts from belligerent Arab sheiks. What, moaned U.S. officials, was poor Condi to do?

Here is what she did:

1. The resolution she supported makes no mention whatsoever of Israel's right of self-defense.
2. The resolution calls for a ceasefire while Israel is still under fire, thus gutting the right of self-defense.
3. The resolution puts a right of "all" states "to live in peace"--though Israel is the only state under fire--in its preamble instead of in the operative section of the resolution, where it would have carried substantive weight.
4. The resolution expresses grave concern only about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. No concern is expressed over the humanitarian crisis in Israel that has forced half a million people into underground holes for eight years and left Jewish children growing up with the trauma of fleeing and hiding throughout their young lives.
5. The resolution makes no mention of any need to return Hamas kidnappers and Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. It does not even demand that Hamas or the Palestinian Authority abide by the humanitarian requirement under international law to permit a single visit to Shalit from the International Red Cross or any other international agency.
6. The resolution calls for "unimpeded" provision and distribution throughout Gaza of myriad forms of humanitarian assistance--which obviously makes the conduct of war against Hamas terrorists impossible.
7. The resolution condemns "all acts of terrorism"--without mentioning the identity of the terrorist--leaving Islamic countries to claim that Israel is the state terrorist and that the condemnation has nothing to do with Hamas.
8. The resolution places no mandatory responsibility on Egypt to stop the trafficking of weapons into the terrorist-controlled Gaza strip. It merely "calls for member states to intensify efforts" to stop the trafficking.
9. The resolution promotes further international intervention in the Arab-Israeli conflict, rather than a negotiated settlement between the two parties, by "welcoming...an international meeting in Moscow in 2009." Code language for shoving U.N. terms and conditions down Israel's throat.
10. The kicker is that the Security Council "decides to remain seized of the matter." This means Israel's failure to abide by any of the points in the resolution is grounds for more and more Security Council meetings designed to thwart Israel's right to defend itself against the terrorism that threatens all civilized societies.

When it was over, Secretary of State Rice "abstained" with the following words: "this resolution, the text of which we support, the goals of which we support, and the objectives that we fully support, should indeed be allowed to go forward." These words led other ambassadors to point out that the resolution had, in effect, been adopted by consensus.

For over half a century, the state of Israel and its tiny population has been on the front lines of a war against an evil that plagues every decent human

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being on earth. Israel has time and again sacrificed its children in freedom's cause.

In leaving Israel to fend for itself in an international arena controlled by the enemies of decency and good, President Bush walks shamefully off the international stage, leaving in shambles everything he has stood for since Sept. 11, 2001.

Israel's prime minister reacted to the resolution today by pointing to the obvious: It "will not be honored in actual fact by the Palestinian murder organizations." And though UN actors wish it were otherwise, "The State of Israel has never agreed that any outside body would determine its right to defend the security of its citizens."

This is a universal principle with which every American--and the U.N. Charter--would agree. (Forbes Jan 9)

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**The No-state Solution: Hamas Cares More about Shariah than 'Palestine.'**  
By Bret Stephens

Of all the errors in the West's understanding of Hamas, none is more fundamental than the routine characterization of the group as a Palestinian movement. It is nothing of the sort.

This isn't to say that the Islamic Resistance Movement -- to use Hamas's proper name -- isn't led by Palestinians, or that it's unpopular among them. On the contrary: Even before the current fighting, Hamas was almost certainly more popular than its secular rival Fatah throughout the Palestinian Authority, including the West Bank. The only difference with Gaza is that Israel remains a presence on the West Bank, able to prevent Hamas from gaining sufficient strength to rout Fatah in an armed contest.

Hamas's claim on Palestinian hearts has only gained force in the last three weeks, though whether the feeling lasts will depend largely on how it emerges from the war. But the test of Hamas's Palestinian-ness, as it were, has nothing to do with its popularity. The test is whether it actually believes in something called Palestine. There is scant evidence that it does.

Bear in mind that there has never previously been an independent state by that name; politically, it remains a notional place. The idea of a Palestinian people, referring to the Arab inhabitants of the land, is also of relatively recent vintage. (The late, great Israeli pianist David Bar-Ilan, my predecessor as editor of the Jerusalem Post, was known, as a Jewish child during the British Mandate, as the "Palestinian piano prodigy.")

This isn't to deny, as Golda Meir famously did, the existence of a Palestinian people. But it is to say that a Palestinian people -- as opposed to merely an Arab one -- exists only as a kind of counterpart, perhaps a twin, to the Israeli people. Put simply: No Israel, no Palestine.

That's why the creation of the Palestinian Authority, on the basis of the 1993 Oslo Accords, could only happen once Yasser Arafat's PLO had recognized Israel's right to exist. Israel later learned, at great cost, that Arafat's "recognition" had been a lie. Yet the principle remains valid regardless of the lie.

Hamas, to its perverse credit, does not lie, at least not on fundamental issues. It has never accepted the Oslo Accords. It is sworn to Israel's destruction. Its charter is nakedly and aggressively anti-Semitic; no fig leaf of "anti-Zionism" there. The closest it has ever come to terms with the Jewish state is the offer of a long-term hudna, on the model of the Prophet's 10-year truce with the tribes of seventh century Arabia. "Anyone who thinks Hamas will change is wrong," said supreme leader Khaled Mashal in 2006. Could he be any clearer?

Of course, Hamas enjoys "democratic legitimacy" by virtue of its parliamentary victory in January 2006. And with the quiet expiration last week of Mahmoud Abbas's presidential term, it is the only Palestinian party that enjoys such legitimacy. But this turns out to be no legitimacy at all, since Hamas refuses to recognize the legal basis of the Authority it purports to represent. And this is to say nothing of the putsch through which Hamas came to power in Gaza.

Still, it isn't merely Israel's right to exist, or the Palestinian Authority's, that Hamas denies. It denies Palestine's as well.

The Muslim Brotherhood, of which Hamas is merely an affiliate, has never been keen on the concept of the nation-state. Hamas's charter describes the land of Palestine as an "Islamic Waqf," or trust, "consecrated for future Muslim generations until Judgment Day." Hamas's charming slogan -- "God is [Hamas's] target, the Prophet is its model, the Quran its constitution: Jihad is its path and death for the sake of God is the loftiest of its wishes" -- is tellingly silent on the subject of Palestine.

This isn't so different from the old Soviet model, which disdained nationalism in theory even if it made use of it in practice (and sometimes vice versa). It is nearly identical in its totalitarian aspirations. Above all, Hamas is a revolutionary movement, similar in spirit, if not theology, to Khomeini's

revolution in Iran, or Lenin's in Russia.

It's easy to understand why so many Palestinians would be keen to join the movement: What comparable form of moral and political transcendence can a little Palestinian state offer? But in choosing Hamas and the fantasy of pan-Islamism over secular Palestinian alternatives, they are also choosing to abandon Palestine itself. Good luck to them with their corner of the caliphate.

Western pundits and policy experts are now in full-throat about the threat that Israel's war in Gaza poses to the possibility of a two-state solution. It's a shopworn lament. That solution always depended on the willingness of Israelis and Palestinians to treat their conflict as a territorial one, amenable to the drawing of borders, rather than a religious one. Israel made its preferences clear with its Gaza withdrawal. As for the Palestinians, the people who never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity have missed one, again. (Wall Street Journal Jan 13)

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**We Must Finish the Job** By Stewart Weiss

Our parents are our greatest teachers. One of the earliest - and most important - pieces of wisdom I ever received from my father was his admonition to me that "anything worth doing is worth doing well - and to the end."

The debate now rages on within the inner circles of power as to whether we should wrap up the war in Gaza, pull out and accept a cease-fire, or carry on until the Hamas threat has been sufficiently neutralized, if not destroyed.

Oddly enough, there seems to be a surprising role-reversal at work. Defense Minister Ehud Barak, a decorated general we would expect would want to keep on fighting, is arguing for a halt to the campaign, while Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, whose conversion to a dove has seen him argue strenuously for a Palestinian state, wants to keep the attack going.

No one can say that this operation was a rash and impetuous descent into danger. Olmert's first words on the war stated that Israel had tried every means possible to prevent an invasion, and that, finally, we had exhausted all the peaceful avenues to rein in Hamas and prevent our cities from being daily target practice for their deadly ordnance.

But now that casualties - and world pressure - are mounting, and fear of a second - or third - front is growing, there is a real fear that we will close out the Gaza war before having achieved our objectives.

And that would be a tragic mistake, almost as severe as the disengagement and premature end of the Second Lebanon War.

WAR IS hell - always has been, always will be. Lives are disrupted, suffering abounds, the best and brightest of our young people are put in harm's way and may - God help us - make the ultimate sacrifice. The worst peace, it can certainly be argued, is preferable to the best war.

Yet there are times when war is justified, inevitable and even righteous. Combating a cruel enemy who is sworn to our destruction and armed to the teeth, and who is making our daily life unlivable, adds up to a conflict from which we cannot run away, but must see through to its conclusion.

History can also be a great teacher. Let us go back, for a moment, to the spring and summer of 1945. Germany has surrendered on May 7, ending the war in Europe. After six years of the bloodiest fighting the world has ever known, peace is on the horizon.

But Japan has vowed to fight on against the allies, swearing eternal loyalty to Emperor Hirohito and launching numerous suicide kamikaze attacks on American and British targets.

And so, on August 6, president Harry Truman makes the momentous decision that the new atomic bomb - mankind's most frightful weapon of mass destruction - should be used against the Japanese.

The nuclear attack on Hiroshima kills 70,000 people in the initial blast, with double that number eventually succumbing to their wounds.

But the bloodletting is not over; three days later a second nuclear device is detonated over Nagasaki, killing another 40,000 Japanese civilians.

One week later, on August 15, 1945, the Japanese unconditionally surrender, and the global community sighs in relief as World War II finally comes to an end.

At university, I once asked my history professor why it was necessary to drop that second atomic bomb. Would the Japanese not have been sufficiently horrified by the effects of the Hiroshima blast to sue for peace and lay down their weapons?

His answer was terse, but telling: "When you are fighting for your lives against a fanatical enemy, you don't take chances; you finish the job."

DESPITE WHAT you may see in the world media, and the rhetoric of our adversaries, we Jews are a merciful, compassionate people. We have a doctrine of "purity of arms" unparalleled among the world's militaries. Our soldiers are paradigms of morality and grace under fire, and we avoid civilian casualties whenever and wherever we can, often at great risk to our fighters.

We have absolutely nothing to be ashamed of vis-a-vis our conduct on the battlefield.

But there comes a time when forbearance and mercy are no longer a virtue. When dealing with an enemy that seeks our extermination and denies our very right to exist, we have no obligation to hold back. Indeed, we have no right to ease up, knowing that our civilian population will pay a heavy price for every moment of weakness that we show.

Daily recesses are fine for kindergarten and high-school classes, but they have no place in a struggle for safety and survival.

Instead, we have to gather up our courage, resist the urge to compromise and pull the proverbial trigger on this mission.

We may have entered this war hesitatingly, with trepidation and with great reluctance, but now that we're in it, we must finish the job.

*The writer is director of the Jewish Outreach Center of Ra'anana; his son Ari fell in battle against Hamas terrorists in 2002. (Jerusalem Post Jan 12)*

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## **Facing Reality** By David Gelernter

*The answer to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.*

Several smart observers have described the root cause of the ongoing battle between Israel and Hamas in the exact same phrase: "irreconcilable differences." America and Europe are warned not to press for pointless negotiations, because the parties are irreconcilable. Israel and the Palestinians both want the same piece of land and can't both have it; Islam and Western democracy or Islam and Zionism can only be antagonists.

Warning the world against pressuring Israel is timely and important, as governments everywhere respond to Israeli self-defense by celebrating the usual worldwide Hypocrisy-Fest (complete with street demonstrations, U.N. resolutions, and the customary savage gaiety), and as Israel's battle against Hamas is denounced as immoral or "disproportionate." A proportionate response would presumably consist of Israel's launching randomly targeted missiles back into Gaza. (Hamas's rocket technique was pioneered in 1944, by the way, in Nazi Germany's V-1 "buzz bomb" attacks against Britain.)

But even though the warning (beware of forcing negotiations) is right, the premise is not. Of course Israel has no choice but to fight Hamas in Gaza. Of course the idea that all problems can be settled by diplomacy is idiotic. Yet we ought to remind ourselves that the supposed "irreconcilable differences" between Israel and the Palestinians are trumped up and phony. The facts are well known to those who care about facts, but bear repeating.

The dispute has many causes, but one root cause. If I own an old junker Buick that's worthless to me, and a stranger offers me \$10,000 for it, naturally I'll take the money. But at the same time I might grow suspicious (or at least thoughtful): Maybe the thing is valuable after all. Maybe I could have got more for it.

And suppose the new owner proceeds to enthuse rapturously over the old car, and repairs and rebuilds it and makes it shine, makes it better than new, and starts exhibiting it at car fairs and winning big prizes. Under those circumstances, I'm even more likely to feel aggrieved, cheated, angry, and (especially) stupid--if I'm the kind of person who dwells on old hurts and imagined grievances. And my friends can make matters worse by egging me on. (Everyone loves a fight, especially if he can watch from the sidelines.)

Now, every human being on earth who cares about facts and can tell a lie from a truth knows that there was no such thing as "Palestinian nationalism" until modern Zionism created it out of whole cloth, by placing enormous value on a piece of land that used to seem as precious to its landlords as a rat-ridden empty lot in a burnt-out neighborhood in the middle of nowhere, in the suburbs of nothing. The Jews gradually got possession of an arid stony wasteland (where the sun beats, / And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief / And the dry stone no sound of water)--complete with the odd picturesque, crumbling, dirty town; and they loved it. They turned it into a gleaming, thriving modern nation, not only a military but an intellectual powerhouse. And so it is only natural that the former owners' descendants want it back, and remember how much their ancestors loved it, and how the new owners only got possession by wickedness and deceit. Such memories have the strange property of growing clearer instead of cloudier every day.

Only one thing can restore the former owners' peace of mind. They must be kicked firmly in the pants and told "stop whining and get lost" so many times that they finally move on to another grievance.

Any competent psychologist will agree: When someone is mooning over a thing he can't have because it belongs to someone else, the responsible and humane course of treatment is not temporizing sweet-talk but a blunt lesson in the facts of life. "No, you cannot have my wife (girlfriend, husband, etc.), and we are not going to negotiate over it; let's talk about something else." (And it really doesn't matter that the two of you used to keep company; you never loved her.) "Know Thyself" was supposedly carved on the ancient Temple at

Delphi; "Face Reality" should have been carved right next to it. There is no irreconcilable difference in the fight between Israel and the Palestinians, no bone-deep dispute that will haunt humanity forever. There is only greed and envy. They never disappear, but can easily move from one target to the next. The problem will be solved as soon as the world stops trying to solve it. When the international community moves on to fresh causes, so will the Palestinians.

Islam too is held up as a basis of "irreconcilable differences" between Israel and the Palestinians. But we ought to remind ourselves that Israel fought the Six Day War in 1967 (and took possession of the West Bank and old Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, and Gaza--as well as Sinai, since returned to Egypt) with the armies of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, supported by Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Except for the Saudis, every one of these Arab governments was a secularist or modernizing autocracy. On the Arab side the most important man by far was Nasser, fñher of Egypt, who as a young man had been a "Green Shirt" (modeled on Mussolini's Black Shirts and Hitler's Brown Shirts) and stood for "nonaligned," left-leaning, bellicose secularist nationalism.

Fatah and the PLO were also secular organizations to start, and in some respects still are. (Fatah was founded in 1954, the PLO in '64; they merged in '67.) In the late '60s and 1970s, the PLO made common cause with far-left terror groups such as the Red Brigades, the Baader-Meinhof gang, and other wacko-Marxist murderers. At one point, Baader-Meinhof gangsters traveled to PLO camps for elementary terror training.

The English actress Vanessa Redgrave represents the sort of bloody-minded Westerner who supported Palestinian terrorism in the 1970s. In 1977, Redgrave made an infamous propaganda film on behalf of Palestinian terrorists. But she was hardly endorsing Islam or any other religion. She was a Marxist (and, as far as one can tell, still is). The Palestinian terrorists were members in good standing of a worldwide fraternity that included the Vietcong and North Vietnamese Communists, Castroite Cubans, the Sandinistas, and dozens of other far-left groups that mostly hated religion to the extent they bothered with it at all.

Obviously most Arabs are devout Muslims, and Islam has a long history of jihad. An event of the late 1800s suggests modern Iran: An Islamic leader in the Sudan who proclaimed himself the Mahdi, God-given ruler of the whole Islamic world and (in effect) the messiah, announced a jihad against the British colonial authorities. His army drove the British and their Egyptian allies out of the Sudan. In the process his troops slaughtered or enslaved thousands of British, Egyptians, and Sudanese and presented the Mahdi (as a sentimental remembrance of victory) with the severed head of the British commanding general on a pike. The Mahdist army then launched invasions of neighboring territories, but was finally destroyed by the British at Omdurman in 1898.

No one doubts that the Muslim religion can inspire gigantic ferocity--yet Islam, like horseradish, is available in anything from super-hot to extra-mild. Only with the rise of Khomeini's Iran in 1979, the Saudis' increasingly lavish support for the spread of Wahhabism, and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 did modern Islam become the dominant hate engine of the Middle East, powering anti-Zionist, anti-Jewish, anti-Western bloodlust. The Arabs are an intensely religious-minded people, like the Jews, but the same religious devotion that is focused today on blood-and-guts Islam could also be focused on a kinder, gentler variety, such as the one preached in the 19th century by the Emir Abd el-Kader. (On Abd el-Kader, see the book by John W. Kiser, reviewed in last week's issue.) Religious devoutness persists from generation to generation, but can take many different systems and causes as its target--as Jews are well aware.

The Bush administration, which has done so many small and medium things wrong and the biggest of all things right, could leave the world a parting gift by introducing some appropriate resolution in the Security Council or General Assembly. A proclamation that "anti-Zionism is a form of racism" might be just the thing. (The infamous "Zionism is racism" resolution, passed in 1975 and rescinded in 1991, remains a perfect symbol of depraved worldwide attitudes to Israel.) Or a U.S. resolution might call on the U.N. to take the unprecedented step of enforcing its own charter and booting out members that preach the destruction of Israel. (Article 2 part 4: "All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.") To start the ball rolling, Iran might be designated for immediate expulsion.

The resolution would be savaged and hooted down. But here and there it might make people think. (The Weekly Standard Jan 19)  
*The writer is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD and a professor of computer science at Yale.*

## **We Jews Love Life: A Tribute to Dvir Emanuelof** By Daniel Polisar

Israel is a small country, but when it goes to war, the front is extraordinarily broad. On Sunday of last week, it reached “Gan Dalia,” the kindergarten my five-year-old son David attends in the Ramot neighborhood of Jerusalem. That morning, officers of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) came looking for veteran head teacher Dalia Emanuelof. She was off that day, so they continued searching elsewhere, ultimately waiting outside her home in the nearby suburb of Givat Ze’ev until she returned that afternoon.

The news the officers brought was unbearable: Her 22-year-old son, Dvir, had been killed in Jabalya, making him the first Israeli casualty of the ground campaign in Gaza. Fighting there as a staff sergeant in his infantry unit, the elite Golani brigade, he was felled by Hamas mortar fire. Though Israel has a conscript army, Dvir did not have to be in Gaza, as he had received high marks as instructor of a squad leader course, was asked to go to officer school, and would still have been in training had he accepted; he deferred, however, saying he would not be fit to command until he had first fought alongside his comrades. In fact, Dvir did not have to be in any front-line position: His father Netanel had died of cancer at age 46, shortly before Dvir’s service began; as an only son in a single-parent family, Dvir was exempt under IDF rules from combat duty. Before accepting him to Golani, his commanding officer visited Dalia and asked if she acquiesced in her son’s opting for a dangerous path he was not obligated to choose. Her answer: “If this is how Dvir wants to serve his country, then this is what he will do.” Two days before entering Gaza, Dvir had called home and said: “Mom, I have to fight. I have to be there.” He went, and he fought—and was buried on Sunday night in the Mount Herzl military cemetery in Jerusalem.

A few days later, I was thinking about Dvir as I prepared to speak at an Israel solidarity rally at the Ramaz high school in Manhattan. I opened by talking about Dvir’s words to his mother, and then explained why he had to fight—that is, why Israel had no choice but to wage war to stop Hamas from firing missiles at homes and schools in Sderot and other cities in the country’s south. After describing Israel’s war aims, I addressed the issue on the minds of these morally sensitive young people: How we could be sure that, in the pursuit of moral ends, Israel was using moral means? I stressed the lengths to which the IDF goes to protect Palestinian civilians, and contrasted it with Hamas’s systematic strategy of using non-combatants—women, children, even hospital patients—as “human shields,” to prevent the Israeli army from attacking its fighters or to saddle the Jewish state with the blame for the civilians who are killed.

Afterwards, I fielded questions from seniors in one of Ramaz’s honors classes, of which the most difficult was posed by an earnest young woman named Julie. She accepted that Israel was right to launch an offensive and was fighting in accordance with the dictates of morality, but was deeply concerned about the outcome: If Hamas was eager for Palestinian non-combatants to be killed, while the IDF did its best to prevent such casualties, how could Israel hope to win? Either the Israeli army would be deterred from landing the blows needed to defeat Hamas, or Israel would end up killing large numbers of civilians and be forced by international pressure to accept a cease-fire prematurely—which would be perceived as a Hamas victory, on the model of Hizbollah’s triumph by surviving” in the Second Lebanon War. She offered a chillingly apt understanding of the statement made in 2004 by Hizbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah and later echoed by many Hamas leaders: “We have discovered how to hit the Jews where they are the most vulnerable.... We are going to win, because they love life and we love death.” Nasrallah had meant that the Jews loved their own lives while Muslim radicals embraced death in the pursuit of jihad, but in Gaza, it turned out that Jews also cared more for the lives of Arab civilians than did the leaders of Hamas. I answered, haltingly, on the level of tactics, pointing out that the IDF’s detailed intelligence and precise execution enabled it to limit the bulk of Palestinian casualties to Hamas fighters, and that international condemnation of Israel has been kept in check by widespread revulsion at the use of human shields.

The question was still on my mind when I landed at Ben-Gurion Airport the next morning and headed to a shiva visit at the Emanuelofs. The first floor was overflowing with well-wishers, some sitting and most standing, centered around Dalia, her three daughters, and the general in charge of Israel’s ground forces, Avi Mizrahi, who in an extraordinary gesture of respect was making a condolence visit in the midst of war. Due to his rare combination of gentleness and determination, he became, with Dalia, the center of attention, and the two engaged in a dialogue interspersed with occasional comments from Dalia’s eldest daughter, Hadas, who got married less than a year ago and was visibly pregnant with the family’s first grandchild.

From this dialogue, an extraordinary portrait emerged of Dvir—a modest, idealistic young man who was a leader in the Bnei Akiva youth movement, delighted in taking his friends on hikes throughout Israel, and could never be

found without his trademark smile, which radiated out from his sparkling eyes and lit up everyone around him—a point amply attested to in the photos displayed in the Emanuelofs’ home. He loved life, with a passion, but was willing to risk his own because he felt a sense of mission to protect Israelis living in the country’s south. Dalia, too, was heroic in her own, quiet way. On her face and in her voice one could discern profound sadness, but also pride in her son and the army in which he served, and resolve that Israel must continue to fight until victory. One could also detect a spirit of hope, bordering on faith, that her people would triumph—and that, as Jews traditionally say, *Netzach Yisrael lo yishaker*, the Eternal One of Israel will not fail us.

Equally extraordinary was the picture Dalia painted of the support her family had received. She spoke of two teenage girls who came to her home, and when asked how they had known Dvir, answered that they had never met him but identified with the family’s tragedy and wanted to give whatever comfort they could; of a middle-aged man who said only, “I’m a citizen of Israel, and I came to be with you, as a representative of all of Israel’s citizens;” of an elderly gentleman who walked in leaning on a cane, and declared: “I heard that a Golanchik (young Golani soldier) in your family was killed; I fought in Golani in the War of Independence in 1948, and have come to offer my condolences.” She described a phone call from a woman she didn’t know, who had just had a grandson and wanted permission to name him Dvir. Dalia assented, but urged that he be given a second name, as Jewish tradition says that in calling someone after a person who has suffered an unfortunate fate, one should make this change to symbolize the hope for better fortune. The grandmother answered that the boy’s name would be Dvir Chai—“Dvir lives.” And Dalia concluded the story: “A few days after my son had been killed, I could already say again, ‘Dvir lives.’”

At one point, Dalia turned to General Mizrahi and asked why Israel could not fight in Gaza the way coalition forces have in Iraq and Afghanistan—bombing aggressively against enemy fighters in populated areas. There was no bitterness in her voice at the IDF for having endangered her son’s life by its regard for Palestinian civilians, nor any desire for revenge—only the concerned tones of an Israeli mother anxious to protect the sons of other Israeli mothers. The general answered thoughtfully, but without hesitation, that the IDF had gone to greater lengths to protect its soldiers in Gaza than in previous conflicts, citing the week-long air campaign that preceded the ground invasion. He added, however, that the IDF’s strength is integrally tied to maintaining its humanity and morality. Soldiers are united in part because they know that regardless of religious or political differences, they share a common moral code. Alluding to the widely-held view that Hamas’s military leadership is hiding under Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, he said that he wouldn’t give an order to bomb the hospital from the air, because there are certain things one simply doesn’t do. This is an obligation, he stressed, that the IDF has as a Jewish army. From the reactions in the room, it was clear that while everyone identified with Dalia’s question, they accepted the answer—and were impressed that the officer used this opportunity to reinforce the Jewish values binding all of us together.

As I left to return home before the start of the Sabbath, I understood the answer to the question I had been asked by a young woman 6,000 miles away. Yes, on the tactical level it can be a handicap to love life when your opponent loves death. But in the end, it is that love of life that will enable us to prevail. We will defeat those who love death, because we love life so much that we Israelis—from teenage girls to senior officers in wartime—know how to give comfort to those who have lost a loved one, and to say, “We are with you.” Our love of life enables us to confront tragedy, and emerge with the pride and resolve, the hope and the faith, that Dalia showed.

We love life so much that we educate our children to love life, though surrounded by enemies who hope, pray, and work for our deaths. It is this love of life that enabled the Jews to return to our homeland and rebuild a state after 2,000 years, and it is the sense of mission stemming from this love that will sustain the Zionist dream long into the future. We love life so much that we refuse to have our sense of morality dulled by enemies who seek to force us to kill women and children in order to defend our families. Though our principles limit the IDF’s effectiveness, they provide us with intangibles that more than compensate—the confidence and the strength to pursue our aims secure in the knowledge we are acting justly, and the unity that comes from a society acting in accordance with its most cherished values. And yes, let no one err, we will win because we love life so much we are willing to brave death, if necessary, to ensure that our people can lead free lives in the country we have established against all odds. In the end, it is this love of life that will enable us to prevail—not only in the war in Gaza, but in all the challenges we face in the years and generations to come. (Shalem Center Jan 12)

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