



My Dear Students,

We have all watched with profound worry these past days as Israel is under siege from rocket fire. Our earnest prayers and well wishes are with our students, alumni, brothers and sisters who are sitting in their bomb shelters throughout Israel and for the safety of our soldiers on the front lines. We mourn together for those who we have lost and pray for the recovery for those who were injured.

I remember once hearing from Raanan Gissin, former Senior Advisor to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, about how the broader Jewish community and people of good conscience throughout the world can help Israel in difficult times. He compared the situation to a time when he was a soldier in the army during urban night patrols. He recounted how the alleyways were narrow with only room for a single file line. The soldiers would run through an alley in radio silence and total darkness. When the first person got to the end of the alley, he would stop and wait to feel the tap on his shoulder indicating the other soldiers were behind him. He said the most frightening times in his service were the minutes that he was standing at a corner waiting for the tap on his shoulder. For those brief moments he was uncertain whether his unit was behind him or he was standing alone in enemy territory.



He likened the experience to Israel's relationship with world Jewry and the broader pro-Israel community. Israel knows there are times when we are standing in dangerous territory, he said, and what you can do is tap us on the shoulder. Let us know that you have our backs. Let us know that we are not alone.

I can personally share with you as someone with a home in Israel, children who served in the IDF and who has sat many times in a bomb shelter due to an incoming aerial attack, you play an important role at this time. Your voices and advocacy in both public forums and profound moments of connection with Israelis matter deeply to our brothers and sisters who are running to shelters when the sirens wail.

The prophet Isaiah teaches us that "For the sake of Zion I will not be silent; for the sake of Jerusalem I will not be silenced (62:1)." You, my dear students, as the leaders of tomorrow exemplify how we need to use our voices now and always in support of Israel. This week you have gathered in force to advocate, communicate with Congressional representatives throughout the country, participate in rallies, organize international solidarity Zoom calls with Israeli students and pray together for the safety and security of the Jewish homeland.

Like one unit tapping the shoulder of the soldier ahead of him, we are one family who supports one another and has each other's back.

May God bless you and all of Israel with a Shabbat of quiet, comfort and peace.

Shabbat shalom,

Ari Berman

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