

RALLY FOR ISRAEL IN CRISIS (August 21, 2006)

We are here together not as doves or as hawks, but as eagles. As it is written, "I have borne you upon eagles wings." Eagles carry their young upon their wings to protect their children from the poisonous arrows which are shot by the archers below.

We are here to protect, we are here to support and sustain our family, threatened with destruction from terrorists, bombers from below.

We are here because the issue before us is not a matter of oil, it's not a matter of borders, it's not a matter of territory, it's a matter of life and death.

Before us we have an unholy trinity — Hassan Nasrallah, Mamoud Amadinejad and Osama bin Laden — who publicly, shamelessly and viciously declared genocidal war against the state of Israel, against the people of Israel, and against all Jews. The design is unambiguous: "*You have no right to exist.*"

When we see on television the bombs, of homes where Hezbollah murderers are hidden, we of course regret the loss of civilian lives: But we must bear in mind the desperate situation in which Israel finds itself. This is no normal war for Israel. This is an existential war: "To be, or not to be." And we Jews hear with ancient ears. Only 60 years ago, we heard madmen shriek for war against Jews, and the miasma of the Holocaust is in our nostrils. Hamas, Hezbollah, Al Queda speak the same language, and mean the same destruction.

And we must not be fooled. Israel is an excuse for a far more sinister design. Global Jihadism means to crush all of Western civilization. Here, Israel is, at best, a convenient token scapegoat to civilizational conflict, which has nothing to do with Israel.

- The million who died in the Iran-Iraqi war had nothing to do with Israel.
- The mass murder in Darfur, Sudan, where an Arab Muslim regime is massacring black Christians, has nothing to do with Israel.
- Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait and butchery of his people has nothing to do with Israel.
- Assad's killing of thousands of Syrian citizens in the city of El Hamah has nothing to do with Israel.
- The Taliban control of Afghanistan in the civil war has nothing to do with Israel.

Israel is not the underlying cause. The underlying issue is the test of Western civilization to overcome global Jihadic extermination.

We've had good reason to expect, from the nations of the world, elementary indignation, elementary outrage. What does it mean that leaders not only deny the existence of the Holocaust, but design to resurrect it, and to perpetuate it?

We had good reason to expect that the nations of the world would exercise sympathy for a state and its citizens who have been unprovokedly attacked, malicious attacks. Its cities bombed, its soldiers kidnapped, its civilians abducted.

We had reason to believe that Israel would rise in popularity in the eyes of the world. Instead, we have heard the sanctimonious, hypocritical and vicious statement by those like former president Jimmy Carter, who, in Der Spiegel, claimed that Israel's defense was "immoral and illegal." Would it be more moral to turn the other cheek while the pistol is pressed against your

child's head?

Kofi Annan is upset that Israel has struck against the known smuggling of dangerous arms from Iran into Syria. But where was Kofi Annan, and where were the United Nations, when Resolution 1559 was passed, demanding the disarmament of the Hezbollah? They were mute, they were blind, they were dumb, they were paralyzed.

But we Jews ought to know better. Israel is popular only in dying and in defeat.

Prayers of sympathy were heard over the ashes of Auschwitz and the torture of Treblinka. Applause and approbation was heard when Israel withdrew from Lebanon in 2000, and kudos heard when Israel left the Gaza unilaterally. When lethal scuds landed in Tel Aviv during the Gulf War, we were popular.

Dear friends, we cannot afford such popularity. It is too high a price to gain a shred of sympathy. For that praise comes only to celebrate our impotence, our weakness, our subservience, our defeat. And above all else, we Jews must not be defined by other people.

Our approval must come not from the outside, but from inner applause. We know the character of Israel when it faces its adversity. We know its moral sensibility, and we know its faith. We know its response to adversity.

Where is God to be found in the typhoon, the earthquake, the tsunami, the cancerous virus, the barbaric violence? God is to be found not in the cause, but in the response to terror.

How do our people respond?

One million Israelis have been bombed daily by

katyushas. Forced to leave their homes, they fled to the south, and fell into loving arms of loving Jews. Homes were opened; beds are found; food shared; wounds bandaged; blood transfused from one body to another. Those who came are not treated as refugees from the north, but as family. The mezuzah pointed inwards. *"Welcome to my home. Welcome to my table. We will eat together, we will drink together, and we will face life together."*

The response is called "*mishpucha*." A friend of mine reports that on the scrawls beneath every Israeli television program, the names of all whose homes are open to homeless appear. My grandson, Ben, who returned from the Lebanese front, told his family and us how he and the soldiers were received. They were washed, they were fed, they were caressed, they were massaged ... with loving hands. Do not allow the fog of war to becloud the deep and profound moral character of the Jewish state and of our people. Response is all.

Remember how Israel responded to the fear and isolation of Jews in Yemen? Do not forget. In 1949, one year after the declaration of Israel's independence, a people who themselves barely emerged from the hell of a Holocaust, lifted a magic carpet to bring the entire Jewish community of Yemen into Israel.

Remember: Israel responded to the intimidation and humiliation of Jews outside its borders. Jews who were forced out of Syria, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Morocco, Kurdistan — 800,000 found loving shelters in Israel. And they came from all walks of life, including the poor, the maimed, the sick, the widowed, and the orphaned.

What moral heroism for this small country and tiny people to absorb into its economy and into its land 60,000 Jews from Ethiopia? 1 million Jews from Russia? All gathered on this sliver of a country.

Israel: Small in numbers, large in heart. And a heart that extends beyond the Jewish community to non-Jews as well.

Remember:

- *Vietnamese boat people settled in Israel.*
- *Israel's medical aid was sent to Rwanda.*
- *Israeli doctors were sent to Turkey after its most severe earthquakes.*
- *Teams of Israelis searching and healing victims caught in the cowardly bombing of the United States Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.*

Why are we here? Who is this people? Who is this "people of Israel" ? This is our soul. This is our *neshama*.

Hear, my people! In your life, we live. In your glory we are honored In your sorrow, we are grieved. In your life, our lives have deeper meaning We are bound inextricably with the soul of you.

The people of Israel, our brothers and our sisters — our family — have taught us how to live with terror. Do not be afraid, and do not be depressed.

There is, as you know, a discothèque in Israel called "The Dolphinarium," where a homicidal suicide killer placed a bomb that killed 21 Jewish teenagers and wounded 120 of them. Outside the disco, there is a hand-written sign that reads: *Lo nafsik lirkod. Lo nafsik lashir.*

"We won't stop dancing. We won't stop singing. We won't stop dreaming. We won't stop hoping."

And we, you and I, we will not stop loving.

We will rebuild with our mishpucha the field and the homes and the hospitals of Kiryat Shemonah, of Sfat, of Afula, of Haifa, of Naharia. And, above all we will not stop dancing.

– Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis

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