

Dear Friends:

Just a few weeks ago I stood with members of our congregation on the heights of Haifa, overlooking the bay... and hearing in the distant hills of Lebanon the artillery that was the beginning of Israel's response in this current crisis. A day later, on July 13, we walked the streets of Tz'fat (Safed) in the morning, learning, praying and shopping. That afternoon Tz'fat was hit by the first of what would prove to be many rockets.

A troubled time. Our thoughts and prayers, our anguish and attention (or at least mine) are turned to Israel now. There is much to say, and much to share, and, as ever, many different opinions. We may be divided about the wisdom of individual acts. We are all sickened, I suspect, by many of the images that we see. But we are united, I hope, in our desire to see this conflict come to a swift end, an end which will result in quiet on all fronts, safety for soldiers and civilians alike, an end to the terror of rockets deliberately fired on major population centers, and the tragic loss of life in Lebanon as well.

To learn, to share, and to act. We will be discussing the situation in Israel and Lebanon in the days to come, more informally during services on Friday night, August 25, and in my remarks to the congregation both on September 8 and at some point during the coming High Holy Days. I will attempt to post ongoing thoughts on our website as well. And, of course, you can hear a full range of Israeli opinions – including some voices of dissent – in the Israeli press, including [www.haaretz.com](http://www.haaretz.com), and [www.jerusalempost.com](http://www.jerusalempost.com). (The range of opinions in Israel is greater than that which you will typically hear through the Jewish community in this country.)

But in the meantime Israel needs our help. There are several ways you can contribute. Our Reform movement has launched an Israel Emergency Fund ([www.urj.org](http://www.urj.org)). The Federation has launched an Israel Crisis Fund ([www.ujc.org](http://www.ujc.org)). Israel Bonds has an Israel at War Solidarity Campaign ([www.israelbonds.org](http://www.israelbonds.org)). Or, if you prefer, you can send a check to Temple Shalom, marked to my attention as Israel Emergency Appeal. We will, in the near future, be making our own determination of the best ways to help, and will distribute our donated funds in a variety of ways – whether to ensure that children from the north of Israel are able to come to the center of the country, ambulances are kept filled with supplies or even, perhaps, making a contribution to the reconstruction of Lebanon. Or all of the above.

Of course, although I will be away for part of August, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to be in touch with me, either through email ([rabbifeshbach@templeshalom.net](mailto:rabbifeshbach@templeshalom.net)) or through my assistant, Debbie Kopp ([dkopp@templeshalom.net](mailto:dkopp@templeshalom.net), or 301-587-2273).

And we will, undeterred, begin, in the days to come, to make the plans for our next several congregational trips to Israel. Despite our recent “near miss” or “close encounters,” and with some caution taken about the itinerary, I still believe that it is important – and appropriate – to be in Israel. I would go back tomorrow if I could.

Let us join in our hopes and prayer that tomorrow sees the beginning of the eventual transformation from a time of sorrow to one of hope, from fear of fresh pain to the beginning of redemption. May peace come soon. Even tomorrow. Even today.

With my love and best wishes to all,  
Rabbi Michael Feshbach  
Temple Shalom  
Chevy Chase, MD