

Dear haverim,

Summer is a time for vacation. Many of us are privileged to enjoy some "down time." We travel all over the world and appreciate the wonders of travel.

I write to you from Victoria, British Columbia. The scenery is spectacular; the weather is delightful--unseasonably cool; and the break from my routine is very much appreciated. But Wende and I cannot fully enjoy ourselves, and I am sure the same applies to many of you.

Usually, I don't write while on vacation but I feel the need to be in touch with you this summer. Israel is at war. Israel's finest young men and women are dying while defending our homeland. Innocent Palestinian men, women and children are caught in the crossfire that defines war.

Today, Sunday, July 20, has turned into a tragic day for all of us--the bloodiest day in the campaign. The need for the IDF to continue to destroy the tunnel complex will undoubtedly prove to be a costly decision as more lives will be lost on the battlefield. We have already witnessed why Israel felt it had little choice but to remove the threat of Hamas insurgents wreaking havoc on Israeli life.

Wende and I read the eulogies of the precious men and women who have fallen in battle and our eyes are filled with tears. Our thoughts and prayers are directed towards all those in harm's way, especially those we know are stationed in Gaza. Many of you have inquired about our oldest daughter's well-being. Danielle is doing incredibly well. . . learning how to cope with the need to stop her car and take cover beside it, or race to the safe room in her office complex located in Tel Aviv when she hears the siren or receives the alert on her phone from the app, seemingly required of every citizen. Her boyfriend Gilad is stationed just outside of Gaza with his tank brigade so we constantly are thinking of him.

We find ourselves conflicted. How can we be on vacation and enjoy ourselves while Israel is in the crosshairs of the world once again?

We have all learned the meaning of the military term "collateral damage." I am sure many of you have experienced what has to be considered the political collateral damage associated with Israel's most recent attempt to protect her citizens.

The outbreak of antisemitic incidents across the world is simply frightening. No place seems to be exempt. In the serene setting of Victoria, BC we too experienced the hate for the Jewish people. As we walked by the picturesque setting of downtown Victoria on Friday afternoon an anti-Zionist demonstration was ending, labeling Israel an apartheid state and indiscriminately killing innocent men, women and children. Only a handful of people were present but they didn't miss the opportunity to ridicule Israel and the Jewish people.

Please don't allow yourself to believe that these antisemitic sentiments would disappear if Israel were to find a way to coexist with its Palestinian neighbors. Unfortunately, the world is besieged by so many who are looking for a reason to express their dislike of Jewish people. Right now, Israel is giving them a good reason to demonstrate. Tomorrow, they will find another reason--history does not lie.

Today, I say loudly and proudly, "Am Yisrael Chai." I am so very proud of what Israel stands for. No, Israel is not perfect. Neither am I, and neither is any country. But, I am proud to stand by the people who adopt the code of ethics that defines the Israeli politic every day. Inspired by the prophets and our rabbis of every generation, Israel continues to lead the world toward a more civilized and refined existence even against its own will.

I pray the loss of life comes to a sudden end this week and a lasting and mutually respectful peace will embrace Israel and her neighbors.

Shalom from Canada.

Rabbi Stefan J. Weinberg