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POINT OF VIEW

Each issue of the CJN features an article written by one of the rabbis active in the Charlotte community.

This month:
Rabbi Murray Ezring of Temple Israel



"COUNTING THE DAYS TOWARD PEACE"

As I write this article, Vice-President Cheney and General Zinni are returning to the Middle East to build support for our nation's war on terrorism, and to try to renew negotiations to end the violence in the Middle East. Last night, as Shabbat ended, my phone rang. It was my brother calling from Jerusalem to tell me that they were just half a block from the Prime Minister's residence when a bomb went off in a café nearby. The continuing violence in Israel; the increasing number of terrorist attacks against the civilian population, murdering and maiming women and children and the elderly is frightening. I know that the State of Israel will do what it must to defend its population.

I must be honest though. As terrible as war is, I think there is a far worse catastrophe, taking place in Israel. Imagine for a moment standing outside a farmhouse in central Israel, less than a mile inside the green line. A young person, fourteen, fifteen years old, walks out of the house with his parents and family to take part in an outing. Suddenly, a flight of American made P-16 jet fighters roar over the house towards the West Bank. The young teenager remarks, "Good, some more Palestinians will die."

I am forced to remember a comment made by former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir. I was told she said, "I can forgive the Arabs for killing our sons, but I cannot forgive them for making our sons kill theirs." It's horrible enough to know that children will be raised to risk their lives and take the lives of others in battle. How awful it is to know that there are children being raised to hate others and to desire death. It is even worse when we realize that a generation of Jewish children,

because of their fear, their anxiety, and their uncertainty, will grow up filled with hate towards their neighbors. Nothing is worse than raising a generation of children that hate each other and look forward to each other's death.

Jews are taught that Tikkun Olam, repairing the world, is a goal towards which we work every day of our lives. But when war, followed by terrorism, leads children to learn to hate, there is no possibility of repairing the world. I wish I had the answer that would lead Arab Palestinian and Israeli on the path towards peaceful coexistence and mutual respect. The answer can only be found in a willingness to accept each other's presence and rights. In this moment in history that does not appear to be on the horizon.

We find ourselves in that period between Pesach and Shavuot. It is a time in which we number and count the days. Pesach teaches us that God gave us our freedom, and the holiday of Shavuot, which concludes the counting of the Omer, teaches us that true freedom can be found in listening to the word of God. As we number our days from Pesach to Shavuot, from freedom to understanding, I pray may God give our people the strength and the understanding to overcome a tendency towards hate, and replace it with the insight towards resolution. I know within my heart that it is time to stop counting the number killed by terror and retaliatory response. Now is the time for us, the world, Israeli and Palestinian, to say "Dayenu." There has been enough bloodshed. There has been enough hatred. It is time to start counting the days towards building lives for the children of the Middle East, free from hate and free from fear. ☆

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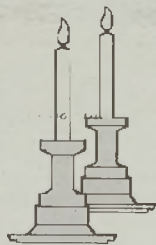
CANDLE LIGHTING FOR APRIL 2002

Friday, April 5
6:29 PM

Friday, April 12
7:34 PM

Friday, April 19
7:40 PM

Friday, April 26
7:46 PM



POINTS OF VIEW

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