



October 26, 2023

Dear Hevre,

The war in Israel/Palestine is causing many of us tremendous heartbreak, feelings of being overwhelmed, pain, and grief. I do not pretend to have answers, nor do I see clearly the way forward. I do fear that things will get worse before this begins to subside. That being said, I have found it personally useful to be able to name and acknowledge some pieces of our collective experiences at this moment.

Many of us feel a great deal of confusion, and many of us feel a great deal of conflict between inner tensions and truths that are hard, or maybe impossible, to hold completely simultaneously. Many of us are finding that we think and feel one set of things in one moment, and then in a different moment we think and feel a different set of things. Many of us are experiencing fear, heartbreak, and pain. All of these possible reactions and responses to the horror and pain of this moment make sense to me. It has been helpful to me to take a few minutes each day to appreciate the breathtaking beauty of the colors of our trees. If you are feeling overwhelmed, perhaps you can spend five minutes noticing the magic of the changing leaves.

I also want to name that each of us carries a different set of burdens at this time and different relationships to the ongoing war. There are members of our community who are Israeli and for them Israel is truly, home. There are members of our community who had a family member murdered on October 7th. There are members of our community who have parents, siblings, or children living in Israel. There are members of our community who live part time in Israel or spend a great deal of time there. There are members of our community who have lived in Israel and still have deep relationships with the land and people there. There are members of our community who have extended family and friends who live there. There are members of our community who have visited numerous times. There are members of our community who have visited once, and there are members of our community who may never have visited but nonetheless feel a deep connection to the land and the people who live there. There are members of our community who have never been to Israel and some, perhaps, who do not feel a deep connection to the land. I share this paradigm with you, not to ascribe any value or judgement to anyone who sits in any one of these circles, but simply to remind us all of the incredible diversity at Kerem Shalom, and of the tremendous range of experiences and deep feelings at this moment. Whatever our own experience is at this moment, it feels important to acknowledge the range of experiences throughout our community.

Finally, I want to share that as so many of us experienced this past weekend, being in community is a powerful way to counteract the profound heartbreak, feelings of being overwhelmed, and pain that so many of us are experiencing at this moment. I want to encourage all of us to plan to be in community at Kerem Shalom, particularly over the next few weeks.

Friday October 27th, we will be honoring our first and second graders and their (new) commitment to Jewish community and to learning Torah. Nothing could be a sweeter or more joyful antidote to the pain of this moment than celebrating the youngest members of our community with them. Please DO join us.

On November 3rd we will celebrate Shabbat with the Kerem Shalom Immigration Task Force and receive an update on the holy work they have been doing providing resettlement support to the Afghan families we have sponsored. Thinking about the ongoing opportunities to translate our pain and fear into mitzvot and ways to add light and goodness to this world is but another beautiful and powerful antidote to the heartbreak and powerlessness we may feel at this moment.

On November 10th we will have a community-wide dinner in our social hall that will celebrate Shabbat in a predominantly social way. Being together, with food and drink, with company and conversation, sharing our stories and our burdens with each other is yet another powerful way we can support each other as we continue to make our way forward.

All of the upcoming Friday night experiences will absolutely include moments that acknowledge the ongoing crisis and prayers that reflect our deepest values and hopes. It will mean a great deal to me, personally, to be able to surround ourselves with the loving spirits of our community. I sincerely hope that you will join me and all of us for some or all of these upcoming experiences.

We are in this together.

With a broken heart, but no less Kindness & Shalom,

Rabbi Darby