

How Do I Stand with Israel?

During the recent Operation Pillar of Defense, Jews everywhere spoke out to express solidarity with Israel. Here we'll take a look at a few examples of such expressions. A deeper look raises some bigger questions:

What does it mean to show solidarity with Israel? What, if any, are the limits? Does the value of solidarity trump all else in times of crisis? Does expressing empathy for "the other side" disqualify someone from joining in this collective solidarity?



Hamas and the other terror organizations in Gaza have no compunction whatsoever at firing on our civilians while hiding behind civilians. We do the very opposite. For us, every time there are civilian casualties, that's an operational failure. For them, every time there are civilian casualties, that's an operational success. So there's a marked distinction and the people of Israel can't long tolerate this kind of situation where our cities are under constant rocket attacks.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, November 20, 2012

There is no justification for the State of Gaza being able to shoot at our towns with impunity. We need to flatten entire neighborhoods in Gaza. Flatten all of Gaza. The Americans didn't stop with Hiroshima – the Japanese weren't surrendering fast enough, so they hit Nagasaki, too.

There should be no electricity in Gaza, no gasoline or moving vehicles, nothing. Then they'd really call for a ceasefire.

Were this to happen, the images from Gaza might be unpleasant – but victory would be swift, and the lives of our soldiers and civilians spared.

Gilad Sharon

- Here Gilad Sharon, the son of former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, suggests that solidarity with Israelis under fire requires more than expressions of sympathy. Solidarity with Israelis under fire requires that we put aside concerns for Palestinians in Gaza. *What do you think?*

Synagogue A

This morning brought news that three Israelis were killed in their home in Kiryat Malahi, our thoughts and prayers are with their families.

We are painfully aware that hundreds of thousands of Israelis live under the threat of attack.

We pray for a speedy end to this violence, and wish you all Shabbat Shalom.

- What do you think of this message?

Synagogue B

Now more than ever, Israel is at the forefront of our hearts and minds.

We stand in solidarity with the people of Israel in these trying times. Israel's obligation to protect its citizens is beyond question. Hundreds of thousands of Israelis live under the constant threat of attack.

Our hearts go out to all the innocent bystanders on both sides who have lost their homes, or worse, who have been injured or who are mourning the death of loved ones. We continue our unwavering support of those who strive for a permanent peaceful solution to this conflict.

- What do you think of this message? How is it different from Synagogue A's?
- If the last paragraph expresses sympathy for both sides, would you say this Synagogue has less solidarity with Israel, or that there is no difference??

What Public Statement would you write?

It has been a devastating couple of days in Israel and Gaza.

I believe that the Israeli people, who have for years endured a barrage of rocket attacks targeting innocents and designed to create terror, instability and havoc, have the right and the obligation to defend themselves. I also believe that the Palestinian people, both in Gaza and the West Bank, have suffered terribly and deserve to live full and dignified lives. And I happen to agree with the editors of the New York Times that the best way for Israel to diminish the potency of Hamas – which poses a genuine threat to Israel – is to engage earnestly and immediately in peace negotiations with the Palestinian Authority.

But most critically at this hour, I believe that there is a real and profound need for all of us to witness with empathy and grace. Take a breath. We are deeply entrenched in our narratives of good and evil, victim and perpetrator – and we are scared. Over one million Israelis will sleep in bomb shelters tonight and rockets have nearly reached Tel Aviv. So it's tempting to dig in our heels, to diminish the loss on the other side of the border, even to gloat. This is not the Jewish way. However you feel about the wisdom and timing of Israel's response to the Hamas threat, the people of Israel need our strong support and solidarity. At the same time, supporting Israel's right to protect and defend itself does not diminish the reality that the Palestinian people are also children of God, whose suffering is real and undeniable.

Let us pray that this conflict comes to an end quickly, and that we soon see a return to negotiations and a real, viable and sustainable peace.

Rabbi Sharon Brous

- What do you think of this message? In what ways does Brous take Synagogue B's message a step farther?
- What do you think Rabbi Brous meant by this phrase: "We are deeply entrenched in our narratives of good and evil"?
- In a time of crisis, could empathizing with "the other side" detract from national solidarity, or is it a crucial aspect of our Jewish sensitivities?
- Is expressing solidarity important?

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch. **Isaiah 62:1**

למען ציון לא אֶחְשֶׁה, וּלְמַעַן יְרוּשָׁלַיִם לא אֶשְׁקֹט, עַד-יֵצֵא כְנֹגַהּ צְדָקָה, וְיִשׁוּעָתָה כְּלֶפֶד יִבְעֹר. יִשְׁעֶיהָ סֹבֵא

Not in my Name

ليس باسمي
לא בשמי

This Facebook meme spread virally during the 8-day operation, and represents a form of protest, suggesting: "I do not agree with what is being done. Please do not claim to be doing it on my behalf"

- What happens when you disagree with what Israel does?
- Can protest against violence be considered a form of solidarity or even patriotism?
- What are the costs and benefits of this type of robust freedom of expression, particularly during times of conflict?