

## Resilience and Hope

*Damim*, the Hebrew word for blood. The blood of our soldiers, the blood of innocent civilians. *Damim*, also a word for money. The money we donate to support Israel and the safety of our people.

In college, I heard a sermon in which the Rabbi used the word *damim* to describe the relationship between the Jews of Israel and the diaspora. “Israeli soldiers and civilians invest their blood, while we in the diaspora invest our money”—I found the equivalence implied in that statement to be offensive...

The unintended impact of his comparison was the impetus for my own *aliyah* to Israel some 35 years ago.

Resilience. The capacity to overcome.

As an officer in the IDF, when I wasn't guarding settlements and patrolling the streets of Gaza, I spent much of my military service working as a research psychologist in an office that overlooked the *shars heret chiyul*—a series of small buildings that processed busloads of newly inducted young men and women. Every day, teens would enter the buildings in their civilian uniforms of jeans, sweatshirts and athletic shoes, only to emerge shortly thereafter - newly immunized, wearing ill-fitting khakis, boots, dog tags, and long-brimmed army caps, ready to begin basic training for military service in a yet undetermined specialized military unit.

An unknown that would require the capacity for resilience.

As I stand before you, I can only imagine the resilience required of my 19 year-old cousins, Gilad and Omer, who as of last night, were sitting with their units at the Gaza border, waiting their turn to do their rounds in the hotbed.

I cannot conceive the resilience of their parents, who bear the unimaginable anxiety, day in and day out, particularly in these very moments.

And it is resilience that will, hopefully, enable the grieving parents of Max Steinberg and Nissim Sean Carmeli - *zichronam livracha* - and the other families who have lost loved ones-- to someday embrace and find renewed meaning in their lives.

There is a generation of young people in Sderot and surrounding settlements in the south who are spending much of their childhood, resilient—as they run to bomb shelters—in the middle of their school day, in the middle of their soccer games, in the middle of their dream cycles.

And today, residents of population centers throughout the country whose daily routines are interrupted to take refuge—in a shelter, under a bench, or by the side of the highway—exercise resilience by continuing to live their lives -- to create-- to celebrate -- to love-- when bombings subside.

Political leaders who over the past sixty six years have been involved in negotiation after negotiation -- with some major achievements -- and many disappointments and failures -- have exhibited resilience through their willingness to continue dialogue.

To paraphrase Yehudah HaLevi:

while my heart is very much in the east, I am definitely in the west... I support Israel in my own way, as that Rabbi of my youth put it, not with my *dam*—my own blood, but with *damim*: through donations, political support, educating the next generation, visiting Israel regularly and attending events such as tonight's solidarity program. And while it is not the same resilience as that of my family in Israel - it is an unwavering resilience none the less.

What has sustained the resilience of our leaders, our soldiers, our families? What has sustained our resilience in the diaspora?

*Od lo avda tikvateinu* -- we have not lost our hope --  
for a free homeland in *tzion* -- for a future without war --  
for a future of peace.

It is clear to me that it is not blood and money but *Tikvah* -our shared hope that defines our relationship with Israel and drives our united perseverance.

*Am Yisrael Chai* -- The people of Israel live.

*Medinat Yisrael Kayemet* -- The state of Israel perseveres.