

A “Normal” Life in Israel



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missiles? Or then there's the judgment calls people make, such as to go to the shelter for Iranian missiles because they are big and powerful – but it's not worth it for the Houthis. Their missiles are lame by comparison; you just need to go to a safer room in the house. (This reminds me about the old Buddy Hackett routine about skiing in the Catskills, nice Jewish hills, vs. Vermont, big scary Christian mountains.)

In Israel, this is normal, everyday chit chat. Except that this humor reflects the completely not normal real-life decisions about safety and well-being people here have to make. No wonder Israelis are brash and drive like maniacs...they have bigger issues to worry about.

I start with this because it is important to realize that the context here and conside-

rations about life in Israel are very different from those we face living in Ocean County or elsewhere in the West. Yes, we too have serious considerations and concerns, from antisemitism to security. But we don't feel like our lives are at risk every day. Given that a core component of our work as a Jewish Federation is helping care for the needs of our extended Jewish family and those most at risk, understanding this situation is critical.

Israelis, as a society, are suffering from PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) to one degree or another. Unfortunately...the trauma hasn't actually ended. How can you begin the process of recovery and a return to normalcy when the wounds haven't healed and the scars are still fresh???

That's the real challenge today for Israeli society, as well as those who wish to help those whose lives have been upended. That's why we are looking at headlines that say, "Israel's impending mental health tsunami." And why schools like Ono Academic College are adding programs to train more social workers and mental health professionals.

We can do our part as well, by continuing to support organizations that are

helping people recover – now from October 7 and the 12-day Iran War (which some have also called the War Within the War). That's why we have made an additional round of grants to organizations like Crossroads, which helps Anglo youth dealing with social and psychological problems; to Shutaf Inclusion programs, which is hosting summer camp for special needs kids; and the Koby Mandell Foundation, which also provides camps and therapy for kids affected by these wars. We continually look for other opportunities where our support can make a critical difference, often with populations or programs that do great work but in more niche areas. And your support of the Jewish Federation's Israel Response efforts makes this possible.

Will life in Israel ever be normal? Probably not... But we can all look forward to a time when its citizens can lead more normal lives. Life in Israel will probably always be more intense than just about anyplace else. This place is too close to the hearts and dreams so many around the world. That's part of what makes this country special. Holy.

But a little bit of peace and quiet would be a good thing. Thanks again for your ongoing support and partnership.

Israel is a wacky place. Life here just isn't normal.

The crazy thing is that it feels normal when you are living here. But take yourself out of this context and you realize that the realities and the stressors of everyday life are just different in Israel.

I mean...missiles on a regular basis? This leads to a bit of macabre humor among Israelis. Do you go to the shelter after the first warning about potential missiles? Or do you wait for the siren about imminent