

Dear Friends,

The seventy missiles and mortars launched from Gaza into Israel earlier this week erases any question about the motivation of the recent Hamas sponsored security fence demonstrations. These attacks also make clear that Israel has the right and the obligation to defend its borders. What is true, too, is that the residents of Gaza have miserable lives, lives characterized by impoverishment, desperation and despair. For now, both sides are caught up in what the poet, Yehuda Amichai, termed “the *chad gadya* machine,” that is, an inexorable cycle of history in which the dog bites the cat, the stick beats the dog, the butcher slaughters the ox, and the Angel of Death slays the butcher. So, it goes, and so it will be until the Holy Blessed One finally gets the Angel of Death.

Israelis and Palestinians blame each other for this situation, which began more than seventy years ago. Yet there have been times in the course of the past seven decades when some accommodation between the two seemed to have been possible. But in the 1990’s, the promise of the Oslo Accords was replaced by the biblically based ultra-nationalism of some West Bank settlers on Israel’s side, and by relentless Palestinian extremism on the other. The former resulted in the assassination of Prime Minister Yizhak Rabin, the latter in the second *intifada*. Since then, Palestinians and Israelis have subscribed to their own absolute ideologies that have eclipsed all strategic considerations. This absolutism has secured their entrenched leaders who have forgotten how to dream a different reality for their people. And without the capacity to dream, there can be no change.

In his new book, *Letters to My Palestinian Neighbor*, journalist and Hartman Institute fellow, Yossi Klein Halevi, urges that the prospect of a two-state solution be kept alive. This can be done only if “we undertake a journey together of listening to each other,” he argues. Each side must be open to *receive* the narrative of the other. (Who speaks of acceptance?) In a dialogue Klein Halevi imagines having with his as yet unmet neighbor her writes: “I see your presence in this land as an essential part of its being. Palestinians often compare themselves to olive trees. I am inspired by your rootedness, by your love for this landscape. And how do you see me? Am I, in our eyes, part of a colonialist invasion that was a historic crime and a religious violation? Or can you see the Jewish presence here as authentic, just like your own? Can my life here be seen as an uprooted olive tree restored to its place?”

Alas, such a conversation is not for now, but it must be for another time or all will be lost. The conversation must be for the children of the West Bank and Gaza and for the children of the State of Israel in order for them to have a different future.

Still with hope to come,

Lee