

Rabbi Matthew Gewirtz
Friday, January 19, 2024

Again, yes, again. I am here again for the third time since October 7th. I know some think I am insane. But....

Each trip has brought its own unique quality. Besides the fact that I utterly love my family and utterly love the privilege of serving Temple B'nai Jeshurun, it just feels right to be here in these times. Perhaps, it is a dangerous neighborhood, but it feels safe to be here. I don't think a moment of antisemitism. I can see firsthand what is happening. There is no filter of television, newspapers, or internet. I can ask questions, deep questions from the primary source. There is not agreement about much, but there is the ability to dissect and dig; to discern and to comprehend without inhibition. It is a home that is hurting and fighting; that is navigating and surviving. It is a home without a complete understanding of what is to happen next, indeed an understanding of uncertainty as a sort of norm. And somehow in the blurriness, there is some relief and even clarity. All the previous sentences are one of dichotomy and even a sense of being counterintuitive. And with all of that, I feel at home because it is our home. I don't live here, but I do feel the way a Jew is supposed to feel when he or she is at home.

I arrived a couple of days early. Early for what.... for what will make this third time so very different. I am staying with my dear friends Joel and Gail Rosenfeld for Shabbat...and to prepare for, with Joel, the arrival of a group of 36 TBJ members for our solidarity mission. I am so incredibly proud. So proud of the size of our group. So proud of the enthusiasm of our group. So proud of their devotion, commitment, and desire to bear witness, be in solidarity; offer love and comfort; and perhaps most importantly to volunteer with and for communities that we will do anything to help. And so I can't wait to see you all when you get here. Get sleep before you get here...we have a lot to do. And to everyone back at home, we are here to represent you and say everything you have been expressing over the past three months. We promise you; you will be with us in every experience. And we will report back in this space as regularly as we can.

One last thing before Shabbat. Joel and I were just picking up one more thing for dinner at the supermarket. Joel, said, "Look ahead on the checkout line. That is Yair Golan." Golan was the Deputy Chief of Staff to the IDF. On October 7th, many of you read about him. Because at 61, he put on his uniform, took his son's army boots, and headed down to the Gaza Envelope. He picked up a gun a central command and fought the terrorists. He didn't just fight, but he singlehandedly saved scores of young concert goers from the Nova Music Festival where so many were murdered. He knew the fields of the area intimately from his military service and was able to navigate and save lives. I am not starstruck easily, but this sighting gave me chills. A real-life hero. Fulfilling on so many levels.

Please follow us in this space. No pictures today....no need to see my jetlagged face. But when there are worthwhile ones, we will send many.

Shabbat Shalom and love from Rosh Ha'Ayin.