

Dear friends of Hillcrest Jewish Center:

It seems surreal that in my last bulletin message I was sharing with you my first impressions on the October 7th massacre, and a month later Israel is engaged in a full war, and we, in the United States and the rest of the diaspora, are facing levels of antisemitism very few among us can remember.

As I write these words, I can think of two insights I would like to share with you.

The first one is that the existential war Israel is fighting, the hostages' situation, and the increasing antisemitism in America, have brought the Jewish people together in a way we haven't seen in many years. In my book *Fables from the Jewish Tradition* there is a fable from the Babylonian Talmud (Sanhedrin 105a) that exemplifies this point: *Two dogs that hated each other were guarding a flock. A wolf came and attacked one of them. The other dog said, "If I don't help him, the wolf will kill him today and will kill me tomorrow." So the two of them went and killed the wolf.*

We, the Jews of Israel and the Jews all over the world are the dogs of the story. We don't see eye to eye on numerous issues regarding the future of the Jewish people. Only two months ago, just to give you an example, multitudinous rallies took place in Israel against the government, and yet, we all understood very quickly that now is not the time for the dogs to point fingers at each other, but rather time to kill the wolf.

The way the Jewish communities in the world came together to support Israel and to fight antisemitism is a testimony of Jewish resiliency and wisdom.

The second point I would like to share with you is that it took us only a few days after October 7th to realize that we had many fewer friends than we thought we had. The silence of many individuals and organizations we have partnered with or supported in the past, was deafening. The title of an article by Randi Marshall in *Newsday*, "Where are my non-Jewish friends?" points to the way many of us are feeling today. Many Jews, especially in the liberal camp, are feeling the loneliness product of deep disappointment and betrayal. In the words of the Jewish-German philosopher, Gershom Scholem, in his article *Against the Myth of the German-Jewish Dialogue*: "It takes two to have a dialogue, who listen to each other, who are prepared to perceive the other as what he is and represents, and to respond to him." While many of us thought we were having a dialogue with our Muslim brothers and sisters, going to iftars and conducting interfaith programs together, it turned out it was just a monologue, a deep ill-corresponded desire on our part to be friends and to build bridges; and the same can be said about our connections with non-Jewish intellectuals at universities and with many leaders in the black community, who rushed to condemn Israel while the bodies of our brothers and sisters were still waiting to be buried.

This is a time for action, but also for reflection and reckoning. It is extremely important that we be mindful of who is being supportive throughout this very difficult time for Israel and the Jewish

people, and who, on the other side, was knocking us when we were down. Let's remember and not forget.

We are believers, the children of believers, and we will do fine at the end of the day. The price we paid and will continue to pay is extremely high, but we all understand what is at stake, and our brothers and sisters in Israel will get the job done, b'ezrat HaShem, and all of us will be there for them.

May we hear good news soon and may we witness brighter days ahead.

*HaShem will give strength to His people, HaShem will bless His people with peace (Psalms 29:11)*

From my heart,

Rabbi Manes Kogan