**Daniel Tysman**

(502 words)

The Mission provided an extraordinarily close-up view of how Israelis are living through and responding to their ongoing trauma. We were persistently challenged to reflect, respond, and share our thoughts, making it feel like an event of historic significance for the entire Jewish people.

The main impression made on me was that we all have a huge and pressing obligation to respond. Examples of unity, kindness and heroism that we witnessed gave me optimism that educators responsible for Jewish identity can use this momentous time to rethink and rebuild.

Spontaneous expressions of unity in response to shared grief can be a foundation for systematically building a new, deeper, more intentional version of Jewish peoplehood.

The kindness shown to displaced families, and the outpouring of support for the loved ones of the victims and hostages showed us a different and better way to respond to cruelty.

Visiting the sites of tragedy and meeting people whose lives have been torn apart also exposed stories of individual heroism.

Eli Wiesel wrote that whoever listens to a witness becomes a witness. The narrative and language that we use as educators to retell the story of this tragedy has the potential to reinvigorate Jewish pride.

The ORT network reaches a hugely diverse student population across almost 30 countries. One unifying feature is that our schools share a sense of belonging to a global Jewish family and their educational program puts emphasis on our collective history.

In the wake of the events of 7/10 our connection to this supportive network helped us to navigate the dark months that followed. The heartache of colleagues, relatives and friends has left us emotionally drained. The representation of the war across all forms of media and new expressions of antisemitism have contributed to a sense of insecurity and uncertainty that has tested our resilience.

For all of us responsible for building confident Jewish identities and positive connections to Israel, the Jewish educators’ mission came at a critical time.

We had been asking ourselves how to reassure young people whose media feeds portray Zionists as the perpetrators of evil. What level of responsibility should they assume to promote a narrative that counters hate? How do we prepare them for the transition to university campuses where they are likely to encounter hostility towards Israel?

In the short term we need measures to address the specific challenges, to find some order in the chaos, to look out for each other’s wellbeing and to provide a level of security that makes us all feel safe.

Over the coming months we are going to be conducting a strategic review of Israel education across the international ORT network, leading our school leaders and educators to transform our approach to building Jewish identity in terms of peoplehood and forming relationships with Israel.

The social entrepreneurs we met during the Mission taught us that above all, it’s important to respond to a need with action, and that having a clarity of mission can overcome obstacles and lead to impactful change.