EDUCATING WITH POSITIVITY TO OVERCOME ADVERSITY

David Meyer

The events of October the 7th have shaken Jews across the world and impacted far beyond the borders of Israel. In fact, horrors of 7/10 triggered an attack on the Jewish people across the world on three fronts.

The first was the barbaric attack on Israel perpetrated by Hamas, and the horrors are clear for all to see. Our nation has suffered antisemitic attacks for thousands of years, and in that regard, every one of us is the descendant of a “survivor.” However, this time it is different. For the first time in 2000 years, we have our own homeland and our own army bravely going forward to counter this terror, protect our land, and, please G-d, ensure our future.

Sadly we have also witnessed a shocking increase in anti-Semitism across the world, with thousands participating in marches of hatred and the vocalisation of genocidal chants. These marches have emboldened antisemitism and legitimised racist rhetoric.

The one-sided approach that has manifested itself among some politicians, in the press, and especially in universities has exacerbated the situation. They have failed in their duty to uphold the values of a democratic society and have propagated a narrative where good has been turned into evil and evil into good.

This leads to the third, perhaps the most challenging aspect of our time. The impact of these attacks on our community is significant, and just about every Jew around the world is suffering from depression as they contemplate the troubling events in Israel and around the world. As educators, our duty must be to consider the impact on our youth. How do we ensure our children can feel protected and safe despite the horrific rhetoric? How can we educate from a perspective of positivity and not fear? How do we ensure we instil love and pride in our nation, our religion and our homeland?

Despite, or perhaps because of the manifestation of antisemitism, we have also seen a resurgence, in some areas of our community, with people, who have been detached, reengaging with their religion. From time immemorial, we have seen a similar response to anti-Semitism. Interestingly this is one of the reasons we eat an egg on Seder night, as unlike any other foods, an egg gets harder when placed into boiling water, so too the Jewish people become stronger through adversity.

However, it is important that we do not allow the hatred of others to define us. Judaism is our lives, and rather than a burden, it is actually the fuel that gives our lives meaning. Our challenge is to give our children an insight into the beauty and wonder of our religion, to appreciate that we have a legacy to be proud of, and that not only will these challenges not defeat us, they will also not define us. We will overcome adversity while retaining our unity, our morality, our beliefs, and while ensuring that we are a true light unto the nations.

It is heartbreaking to see that the youth of today end their prayers with the song of "Acheinu," a plea to G-d that He protect us in times of trouble and especially bring home our brothers and sisters held captive, and protect those fighting a war for our survival. Let us look forward to the time where we can turn from these times of sorrow to times of inspiration where together we will sing the words of "Ani Mamin," and our belief for a brighter future.

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