

## “OUR ISRAEL TRIP: A DIFFERENT SORT OF SOLDIER”

Our trip to Israel was brief, exhausting and exhilarating. Ultimately the lesson is that only action can fend off despair. Israel lives surrounded by people who seek its destruction. The power of such people is not diminishing in our world, and it is frightening.

In medieval haggadot for Passover, the wicked child was often depicted as a soldier. The Jewish people's experience, throughout so much of our history, was that the soldier was the exemplar of evil. Military power represented that which destroyed the gentle, spiritual culture of the Jew.

But in Israel we met soldiers who are the hope of the Jewish people. These women and men, teenagers, some barely out of their teens, are the guardians of a fragile hope for civilization in a cruel and often barbarous region of our world.

What can we do? What should we do? The brief answer is -- all we can. Although the world may not realize it, that young soldier is fighting for them as well. Which is likelier to yield a world in which the French, English, Russians, Swiss, Poles and others can live in peace -- a world under the sway of Hizbollah and Hamas, or under the sway of the values cherished by Israel? Anyone who does not answer that question “Israel” without hesitation is either evil or blind.

We are rightly proud of what Sinai Temple has accomplished. But pride, as the Bible warns us, is a snare; it can make one complacent. Our pride should be not a snare, but a spur to further action, greater commitment. The children in the bunkers of Kiryat Shemona, the soldiers on the Lebanese border, the children from Haifa who now eat at soup kitchens in Jerusalem -- they deserve more than our thanks. They deserve our money, our presence, our voice and our promise to stand with Israel as she holds fast to the values that, God has taught us, will create a world of peace.