

Chaim Goldberg: Sirens and Bad Guys

Writing a weekly blog isn't always that easy for me. I'm not the kind of writer who can usually just sit down and force something out. If I do, you can usually tell in the lack of quality and passion.

On my way to work Thursday morning, I wasn't sure what I was going to write about. Nothing new was really burning in my chest to share with the world.

Then at 10:05 a.m., that all changed.

I was sitting in my office at Maoz Israel Ministries in Tel Aviv, when suddenly I heard "it". The sound that haunts my nightmares, the sound that makes my heart pound with fear like nothing else, the sound that makes my hands shake. I heard "the siren."

What siren, you're asking? The siren, that warns us, in Israel, to take cover from an incoming attack. The siren that rang out for days just two months ago when Israel was repeatedly attacked by Hamas terrorists in Gaza.

That was my first war experience, here in Israel. And boy, was it a doozy. Tel Aviv hadn't been fired on since the first Gulf War, when Saddam Hussein was on the rampage. Jerusalem hadn't been fired on for even longer. But here we were being fired upon day after day. And each time a rocket was incoming, the sirens would wail.

When the sirens go off, you have only seconds to take shelter. "Seconds" is not enough time to even form a clear thought, let alone take action to save one's own life. But seconds is all we have.

Depending on what you're doing at the time of the siren, you have to gather yourself enough to run out of your home or office and in to the nearest bomb shelter. Heaven help you if you're in the shower or the bathroom. But even if you're just sitting on the couch watching TV, when that siren goes off, your brain isn't sure what to do first.

Stand up. Do I put on my shoes? Do I grab my phone or my wallet? Do I grab a water bottle in case we're stuck in the shelter for a long time?

No, just go, just run. Take cover. This is no video game. This is no movie with fake special effects. Someone is actually trying to kill you!

When that siren goes off, your entire world goes into a panic. And it takes hours, or sometimes days or weeks, to fully recover. Or so I thought.

I thought I had recovered. That is until 10:05 Thursday morning, when the sirens went off again, suddenly and without warning.

What was this, I wondered? Is this an attack?

I stepped out into the hallway at Maoz, and no one was in a panic. It wasn't like it was two months ago when we all ran to the stairwell.

"Is this real?" I shouted to our receptionist? "No," she assured me. "This is a regular test they had planned."

Her words were of little comfort. As relieved as I was that this was not the start of a new war, still that wailing sound instantly took me back to those terrifying days from late 2012. All the old emotions came back. Not just the panic and fear, but the confusion.

Who are these people, and why are they trying to kill me? What did I do to them? Do they even know my name?

My idea of murder, I suppose, is a personalized version—a deranged gunman with a vendetta. He has a specific mission in mind. He's looking for his target, purposely. He's not just shooting bullets into the sky, hoping they'll strike someone, anyone.

But here in Israel, murder is very impersonal. Jihadists don't target individuals. They don't want to kill just one. They go for mass casualties. They blow up buses and buildings and trains and airplanes; cafes and restaurants full of innocent people. That's their modus operandi.

Thursday, I had the slightest tinge of what PTSD must be like. I say slight, because I have never fought in an armed conflict like our heroes doing battle in Afghanistan, or like those who served in Iraq, Vietnam, Korea, or the world wars. Or, like the Israeli soldiers who have fought so valiantly every day since 1948 to protect our tiny nation.

I could never compare my situation to theirs. But as the sirens wailed today, and the memories came flooding back, I had new empathy for the horror they must suffer after returning from war.

Most days I feel like we're already in World War III. For me, that war began on September 11, 2001. That was the day Muslim Jihadists declared war on the world. They attacked New York and Washington. Since then, they've attacked the U.K., Spain, India, Bulgaria, and, of course, Israel too many times to mention here.

If that's not a world war, than what is?

So many of our leaders seem lulled into a perpetual state of apathy. We can't even get the European Union to label Hezbollah as a terrorist organization. A non-state actor with 60,000 rockets in southern Lebanon aimed at Israel, and they're not a terror group? They've just been found liable for blowing up a bus full of Israeli tourists in Bulgaria, in July

of 2012. If they're not terrorists, then who is?

And just this week in his state of the union address, President Obama again called for negotiations with Iran. Negotiations? The day after, Iran announced it has begun upgrading their uranium centrifuges. That means they're moving faster towards having a nuclear bomb. The day before Obama's speech, North Korea conducted a third nuclear test. Many think they did so in concert with Iran.

And yet so many in the world insist that sanctions are still the way to go. Sanctions? North Korea has been under sanctions for decades. No problem, they say. We are happy to starve our own people and use all our resources to continue building nuclear weapons. Iran is now doing the exact same thing. Sanctions clearly have no impact whatsoever.

Syria is under sanctions. This week, the number of dead in their civil war was upped to 70,000!

Where is the outrage? Where is the plan of action? Where are the Churchills and Roosevelts of our day? When will the free world wake up to realize that the war has already begun? When will we fight back in a resounding way?

Why are we so afraid to say that there are "good guys" and "bad guys" in this world? Right now, the bad guys are winning. The bad guys are winning because they know their objective and they have no fear. All the while, the good guys are afraid even to offend people with words of truth.

Consider God's Word:

"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight! Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine, and valiant men in mixing strong drink, who acquit the guilty for a bribe, and deprive the

innocent of his right!" (Is. 5:20-23)

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