

# God's Mighty Hand Strengthening and Unifying Israel

In the summer of 2014, my 17-year-old daughter knocked on my bedroom door late one night shortly after my wife and I had gone to sleep. She asked us not to come downstairs, saying that she had just brought two guys home.

But she didn't use the word guys: aid soldiers. Israel was embroiled in what became known as Operation Protective Edge which began a few weeks after the kidnapping of three Israeli teenagers, one of whom was our neighbors' nephew.

The seven week-long battle saw the Islamist terror organization Hamas fire thousands of rockets at Israeli communities, and the elimination by Israel of many top Hamas terrorist leaders, and much of their infrastructure.

It was also one of Israel's longest military operations, but remained mostly isolated to the south of Israel. Because our Judean-mountain community is the largest in the area and close to where the boys were kidnapped, it became the base for hundreds of soldiers to operate from.

Nearly a decade later, my son and son-in-law has joined the hundreds of thousands of soldiers called up. Remarkably the army called up 300,000, and 360,000 have showed up. And remarkably, we're seeing the same sense of solidarity, even more perhaps as we did then.

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Respect. Solidarity. Unity.

My son was called up to his combat unit on Saturday. He's a newlywed; his wife is home alone now at her parents' house. There's a paradox of the injunction in Deuteronomy 25 not to call up men for war as newlyweds. But then, it's war. He's been taken away from his wife, to defend her, us, our people and our country.

Just like in 2014, the army is putting him and others in public spaces in nearby communities so they can be close to any operation they are called for, and not have to sleep in hastily erected tents in the desert, or outside. That's a comfort.

The sense of solidarity is extraordinary. It's uplifting. We are all in this together.

I pray the war will accomplish the goals of eliminating Hamas' and will end soon, but that the unity and solidarity will last for a long time.

We have also been strengthened by support from across the world, from the heads of many governments and on a grassroots basis. All this is super important as those who hate Israel wasted no time blaming Israel, even as the death toll from the brutal massacres of our citizens including babies, young children, elderly and entire families, was rising and their blood had not even dried.

We're angry, scared, and grieving. Today, we got the horrific news that one of my son's high school classmates had been killed. But we're strong, unified and the solidarity is just as great.

And it's even greater because of the wide support from overseas. We are indeed stronger together. {eoa}

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