

Israelis: Frustrated and Scared, but Strong and Resilient

This week, I had that very uncomfortable and awkward conversation with one of my kids. Actually, I had the same conversation with most of my kids.

No, not *that* conversation. We talked about the situation of increased terror, heightened tension and fear that's been plaguing our lives in Israel these past weeks and for which there seems to be no end in sight.

At different levels, each of my kids and I discussed the overall situation. One daughter going off to college and who normally travels through a part of Samaria with large concentration of Palestinian Arabs didn't need me to tell her that it wasn't safe and she should go the longer, safer, way. Usually, she pushes back and resists my telling her not to drive that way, noting, "It's our land and our country, and we can go anywhere we want."

Of course I know she's right, and I am proud that I am raising her and her siblings in Israel to appreciate this reality. But as her father, I am still responsible for her safety and well-being. It's a conflict I don't relish, but am glad in this case she didn't argue with me.

Because I have been traveling abroad, another daughter felt the need to recount the week's victim list and locations of terror attacks in case I wasn't aware what was going on. On one hand, it's considered "normal" for Palestinian Arabs to attack Israelis in Judea and Samaria where we live, but she was shocked that Arabs, many of whom are Israeli Arabs, are attacking us in Tel Aviv, Kiryat Gat, Beersheba, Afula, Hadera, Nazareth and not to mention Jerusalem and other parts

of the Galilee. I had heard of most of the instances but let her continue because it seemed therapeutic.

In discussing walking around Jerusalem, the same daughter understood that she needs to avoid talking on her phone—something teenagers have a hard time doing as it is—in order that she should be aware of her surroundings. Then she said, “Don’t worry Abba, I’m so scared to walk around that I am going to be looking at everyone as if they were a terrorist.”

The same day, my youngest son matter-of-factly told me that his friend in a nearby town had a hard time getting to basketball practice because there was a terrorist in his community and the whole town had been shut down with nobody allowed in or out.

Since I was traveling, I told my wife where I keep the extra pepper spray, which probably won’t do much anyway, but can’t hurt. She related to me running errands in Jerusalem and feeling uncomfortable around all the Arabs, knowing full well that most were harmless, but that these days one with a knife makes them all suspect. We’re not racist, just careful.

These are the “normal” conversations we’ve been having that serve as part venting, part therapy and part just catching up on “What’d you do today?” In short, as one blogger put it, we are frustrated, scared and feeling helpless. I have an extra measure of guilt being overseas and away from the family.

In our community, notices went out to have everyone save the emergency services number in their phones as the first contact. We’ve been told to discuss security precautions with our family. Some suggestions include:

- Be alert to anything suspicious and report suspicious behavior or situations.
- Car windows should be made of plastic, resistant to

stone throwing.

- If you legally own a gun, carry it at all times.
- Buy pepper spray for you and your teenagers, and learn how and when to use it.
- Familiarize yourself with the laws of appropriate use of force and how to respond in specific instances:

For Stoning, Molotov Cocktail and Shooting

- In a dangerous situation, keep driving with two hands on the steering wheel until you are in a safe area.
- Call and report the location of the incident.
- When you reach the nearest army checkpoint, or entrance of the nearest community, report the incident again.

For Shooting From a Passing Car

- If you see a suspicious car trying to pass you in an attempt to shoot, drive faster to create a greater distance between you and the car.
- In the case of a passing car that cannot be avoided, brake in order to interfere with his ability to shoot accurately.
- As soon as you have stopped, quickly turn the car around and drive away as fast as you can.

For a Rock Roadblock

- Avoid driving over the roadblock. Your car may turn over or the car might get stuck or stopped.
- If you cannot drive around the roadblock, brake before it and then drive away from the dangerous area.
- The car is damaged and cannot be driven, leave the car and get away as fast as you can by foot.

Preventing Carjacking

- Lock your car doors when you leave your community.
- Avoid stopping in or close to Arab villages, including fruit and vegetable stands along the road.

- When travelling on roads that are more prone to attacks, do not travel alone; wait for more cars and travel in a convoy
- Try to travel with at least two passengers carrying guns.

Various self-defense organizations, such as the Israeli Counter Terror and Security Academy, are promoting an increase of security precautions. They offer the following courses at discounted prices:

- Krav Maga for children, youth and adults, women and girls
- The sale of and proper use of pepper spray
- Basic and advanced shooting (pistol) courses
- Safety and security awareness
- Defensive driving in dangerous situations
- And sales of self-defense items such as pepper spray and “shockers” as well as weapons and ammunition to those who are qualified.

Yes, Israel is weary, frustrated, scared and feeling helpless. But we derive strength and comfort from knowing that it is by divine promise that we have returned to our land, and that the God of Israel still protects us. Our response is not more violence, but prayer.

When my wife dropped off our son at school one day, the entire school—several hundred students and all the faculty—was outside singing Psalms, blowing shofars and calling out to God to continue to protect us and foil the plots of those who wish to harm us. Seeing and experiencing this, she broke into tears, leaving the person on the phone whom she was talking to think she had lost it.

I’m on my way home and will join in the prayers and active parenting. I will be more careful and be more aware of my surroundings and of my kids’ needs.

But we will continue to win, to overcome, to survive, and to live and thrive because, though God may not have promised us that it would be easy, He did promise us that we would return and thrive. We will survive with strength and resilience.

Please join us in solidarity, in prayer and support of Israel at this challenging and stressful time.