

Will Zion Prevail?

✖ If ever there was a justification for despair and terrorism, the Holocaust provided it. After the Nazis and their allies systematically murdered 6 million Jews, it would have been easy for survivors to abandon their faith in God and humanity and succumb to hate. Yet the Jews who survived the Holocaust never sought revenge or destruction. They wanted only to get on with life, to build families, homes and cities.

This embrace of life characterizes Israel down to the present day. But those who wish to destroy Israel—and the Jewish people—remain. They have armed themselves and continue to attack. Meanwhile, the Israelis continue to build.

Every time I go to Israel I am struck by its progress. The Tel Aviv skyline continues to grow broader and push higher. An ever expanding list of Israeli companies churns out a steady stream of innovations that improve our daily lives. Israeli culture produces books, poetry and music at astounding rates.

Israel has absorbed immigrants from around the world into a beautiful Mosaic. This beauty extends beyond the physical to the spiritual. Israelis are truly beautiful in their passionate embrace of life in the face of so many threats of death. Yes they can be brusque and pushy. And Israel has produced its share of crooks and men of violence. But the overwhelming rule of the day is to inspire humanity under the toughest of circumstances.

While this embrace of life is difficult to convey, certain scenes capture it well. For example, there was the night I, along with students involved with Christians United for Israel, attended a concert by Shlomo Artzi, one of Israel's most popular musicians. Artzi's concerts are vibrant, energetic and hopeful. At one of his concerts, you find families, sometimes three generations, dancing together to

music that is neither simplistic nor saccharine.

Artzi's songs pay homage to the importance of family and the beauty of life. In one song, he issues a parent's lament over children growing up and leaving home, but exults that "it is fun to get old." In another song, Artzi recalls a trip abroad with his aging father, and the panic that struck him at the thought of his father's mortality. "Oh father," he cries, "how much time do we have left?" Not exactly the stuff of an American pop hit.

In one of his most famous songs, Artzi sings of a soldier who learns that some of his comrades have fallen in battle. The recruit responds by running out to a disco, where he "dances with soldiers dead in their hearts." It's a moment of despair, yet at the concert we attended, groups of soldiers were dancing to this very song with anything but despair.

They were expressing a painful emotion in a hopeful way. They danced with mothers and children, and were very much alive in their hearts. There is a difference between venting pain and succumbing to it.

Israel's enemies often predict their eventual victory over the Jewish state because they embrace death, while the Israelis are allegedly weakened by their love of life.

Israel's enemies are right. Israelis do love life. And the terrorists who intentionally murder innocents clearly do worship death. But Israel's enemies are tragically wrong about which sentiment will ultimately prevail. On this point, the Judeo-Christian tradition speaks clearly. To cite Paul's famous formulation, "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."

It takes faith to build. It takes hope to build. And most of all, it takes love. The attacks keep coming. And Israelis continue to live out their creed by building homes and families, offices and companies, cities and culture.

From America, Israel's situation can appear bleak. We see the danger and the bloodshed on the evening news. Yet from up close, Israel is brimming with energy, progress and love. Israel is producing beautiful people who go out to defend their country both aware of the necessity and the tragedy of the task. Their hearts are big enough to hold both patriotism and humanity. Their heads comprehend both action and restraint.

Dear friends, we are privileged to stand with our Israeli brothers and sisters. They are proving the resilience of democracy. They are demonstrating the power of love. They are living our Judeo-Christian values, and they are prevailing.