

What can we do?

Rabbi Dr. Reiss Medwed

It is October 10th, just three days since one of the most horrific pogroms against Jews, in Israel, alongside a mass abduction of innocent civilians, among them babies, children, and elderly alongside all the men and women violently grabbed. We are hurting, we are angry, we are devastated. We are hearing terrible news out of Israel, we are experiencing loss of proportions unheard of. It is natural to feel powerless and it is also in our human nature to seek something constructive we can do.

We can do – we can be present, we can actively support, engage and provide during difficult times:

1. Tell the stories of what is happening! There is nothing more important than keeping the world's attention on the humanity of the hundreds of Israeli victims. Tell the story, personalize the tragedy, share the diversity – did you know over 40 Arab Israelis are victims in this tragedy? Have you seen the number of countries whose citizens are hurt? Use your platforms, from casual grocery store conversation to any social media and continue to keep this personal and real.
2. Financially support at whatever level of giving you are able, while being thoughtful and intentional. There are immediate needs today for supplies, for food, medical supplies and more. There will be longer term needs to sustain a country and its citizens through this war. Seek out resources in your local Jewish community of verified foundations who will be able to share resources in equitable ways to ensure they get into the hands of those most in need. Rabbi Rebecca Sirbu, Executive Vice President at The Jewish Funders Network, offered this comprehensive compilation of resources:
https://www.jfunders.org/israel_crisis?fbclid=IwAR3AxZbH8XpIhobVqcFYcEH9qOJ6mro8iDto2FIh3p7SW3aRC1HHZof2SX8
3. Learn more about the situation and speak about it. One great resource I have found extremely helpful is The Center for Israel Education, under the leadership of Dr. Ken Stein (<https://israeled.org/>) There are many additional organizations offering an overview of the history of Israel and the context of this situation. Take time to explore the nuance.
4. Stay current on the news coming out of Israel. You can rely on different news sources, many report directly in English. Pay attention to the differences between the US news reports and those from Israel. It will help you stay connected and understand the ways the story keeps shifting depending on audience. As a starting point you might want to explore the centrist Yediot Achronot, <https://www.ynetnews.com/category/3083> or Times of Israel <https://www.timesofisrael.com/>.
5. Follow Israeli thought leaders on social media and allow yourself time to take in their nuanced understandings of this situation. Two diverse and interesting

people I follow include Einat Wilf

(https://twitter.com/EinatWilf?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor) and Ariel Beery

(<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7117216502889549824/>)

. There are hundreds of others – seek them out, follow them, engage with them.

6. Connect with community. If you have friends and family in Israel send them notes daily letting them know you are thinking about them. This is the time to enact our saying, כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה, All of Israel is Responsible For One Another. We show up for each other. Check in with your local community, they have friends and family in Israel and need someone to talk to.
7. Surround yourself with Israeli culture right now to remind yourself that you are a part of this incredible Jewish experiment of a State of Israel and of its important success. Listen to Israeli music on Spotify or other platforms. Binge Israeli tv. Not sure what to watch? Esther Kustanowitz has you covered - <http://www.estherk.com/category/big-ideas/tvgonejewy/>
8. Talk to your children and empower them with the knowledge of what is happening. Our children are going to hear about this in their schools, on social media platforms. Give them the tools to understand what they are hearing, to feel secure in how they can respond, if they want to respond. There are resources from [The Jewish Education Project](#). Or follow Jewish Educators such as Dr. Samantha Vinokor-Meinrath , Dr. Sivan Zakai, and Beverly Socher-Lerner for their insights on how to talk to children about Israel right now. Older children? I regularly check out the resources from [Hillel](#), [ADL](#) and [AJC](#) for resources for high school and college age students.
9. Show up with your support! Synagogues are hosting not only rallies but also adding to their repertoire of minyan special minyanim and services to support Israel and mourn the dead. Federations and Jewish organizations are hosting ongoing rallies and communal gatherings. Not ready to be in person with large groups, zoom in or join their livestreams. Every night events across the country are being hosted and we can come together as community to demonstrate our support.
10. Self care – prayer, music, walks, disconnecting from social media and the news, calling a friend. Take the time to also step away from what is happening. It is all consuming, but our role, living in the Diaspora, is to pace ourselves for the advocacy and support that is going to be needed across the days, weeks and months ahead.