

Thoughts from a Foxhole

We were all shocked and horrified by the barbaric atrocities committed by Hamas in Israel on October 7 2023, but we cannot allow ourselves to take our eyes off the bigger picture. The bloody mayhem the world witnessed cannot and must not be viewed in the same way we view a mass shooting in a school. It was an act of war.

Six hundred years ago, England and France were engaged in a long struggle over the succession to the French throne called the Hundred Years War. It actually lasted for 116 years until the French finally won in 1453. They did not fight every day during all those years. Most of the time they did not fight, but there were continual periodic eruptions of the fighting. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a 75-year war and counting, with no end in sight. This latest attack was the most recent periodic eruption, perpetrated in the hallowed tradition of the Romans, Huns, Mongols and other barbaric fighters of a similar savage bloodthirsty ilk.

There will now be heavy retaliation, as there should be, with many thousands of casualties on both side. Then an agreement will be brokered, the fighting will subside, and an uneasy stillness will return. And we will all wonder when the inevitable next eruption will occur, just as we wonder after every horrible school shooting.

How will this ever end? All wars end either in victory, defeat or a negotiated peace. We know how the Palestinian side envisions victory, but it is hard to imagine how Israel envisions victory. Does it conceive that the Palestinian people will eventually throw up their hands in defeat and submit to the status quo? Not a chance. Are we then headed for a two-hundred-year war? A three-hundred-year war? Israel has no prospect of victory, only for a negotiated, equitable peace, and therefore, all its unceasing efforts must be in that direction.

In the meantime, however, a little humility would be in order. The Israelis have to realize that their capabilities, albeit great, are limited and

that they can use all the help they can get. The foundation of Israel's claim to the disputed land is that God gave it to Abraham over three thousand years ago. Perhaps they can turn to their erstwhile Benefactor for a little divine assistance in achieving peace and some protection until we get there.

I do not believe that anyone at the festival or in the border villages that came under attack did not at one point cry out to God for help; in the most dire straits, we all believe in God. I suggest we make a place for Him in Israel. I'm not suggesting that everyone in Israel become strictly observant and that the state become a theocracy. But we can do something distinctly Jewish that would characterize Israel as a Jewish state. We can put an end to public Sabbath desecration.

I'm not advising people about what to do in their private lives, but I am suggesting that businesses and traffic in the public arena throughout Israel come to a halt during the Sabbath, nothing more. God will reside in that sanctified island of time, and perhaps we will then merit that His Presence will protect us.