

## [Letter from Jerusalem, October 29, 2023](#)

[View PDF](#)



David Olivestone, a former Teaneck resident, was director of communications at the Orthodox Union for many years. He retired in 2013 and he and his wife Ceil made aliyah and live in Jerusalem. David is production manager of our Institute's journal, *Conversations*. This article is reprinted from the Jewish Link of Teaneck, NJ.

I've stopped asking people, "How are you?" Because the usual answers, "*Baruch Hashem*" or "*Beseder Gamur*" just don't roll off the tongue right now. Instead I ask, "How is your family doing?" because, more likely than not, anyone you speak to has one or more sons or daughters, sons-in-law or grandsons, serving in the IDF, and that is what is uppermost on their minds.

My wife Ceil and I were in Teaneck on October 7, having gone to spend Sukkot there with two of our sons and their families. Our flight home on El Al was packed, with so many people bringing extra duffel bags full of supplies for soldiers. We were warned by our friends here that we would be returning to a different Israel, and clearly the bubble has burst. We were living through one of the most fortunate times for Jews in all of our thousands of years of history—in our own land, strong and prosperous, fully confident of a bright future for our people. It turns out that we were overly confident, and it is going to be a long time until we will feel that way again.

Just about everyone here is a little nervous, but obviously the level of anxiety and how you deal with it depend on your personal circumstances. As instructed, we have stocked our mamad (safe room) with bottles of water and some food, as well as a battery-operated radio, and checked that the heavy metal closure for the window moves smoothly. But B"H, there were only one or two sirens sounded in Jerusalem near the start of the war, and there have been none since we returned.

However, my brother and sister-in-law in Rechovot, which is 20 miles south of Tel Aviv, have had to run to their mamad many times when they hear a siren signifying incoming rocket fire from Hamas. My brother keeps a bottle of scotch in the mamad, and takes a shot whenever he has to go in. We are betting on which will last longer—the war or the bottle.

The daily mincha/ma'ariv minyan in our apartment complex has moved from the courtyard to the lower level of our parking garage (I now call it the Marrano minyan.) After mincha we say tehillim, and tefillot for the IDF, the hostages, and the injured, and then we sing "*Acheinu Kol Bet Yisrael*." The sound of the voices of some 50 men and several women reverberating through the garage and up through the stairwells of all the buildings is very moving.

Our son Elisha lives in a yishuv just south of Kiryat Gat. His house is below the flight path of Israel's F16s on their way to Gaza, just 25 miles away. Moments after they pass overhead he hears the booms in Gaza and his whole house shakes. Today the family came to Jerusalem to celebrate our granddaughter's eighth birthday with pizza and ice cream on Ben Yehudah. Actually, life in Jerusalem seems very normal. But even though the cafes are busy, there are less people on the buses and, of course, no tourists, so many businesses are suffering. The hotels are filled with families evacuated from towns and villages both in the south and in the north, and Ceil is one of those helping to cook meals for them.

As for me, I am busy sending off what I hope are reasoned letters of protest to the editors of *The New York Times* and other such publications whose reports are so clearly one-sided. I have no illusions that my letters will get printed but it's something that I can do, and they have to be placed on notice, at least, that their prejudice is just not acceptable.

Israel's slogan for this war is *Beyachad nenatse'ach*—Together we will win. We will all play our part and with God's help, Israel will do what it has to do.

*Beyachad nenatse'ach!*