

Day 4 - Rabbi Aaron Melman's Message to the CBS Congregation

Dear Friends,

I must begin today by thanking all of you. Your outpouring of love and support has been overwhelming. It is almost impossible to keep up with the e-mails and Facebook posts. I also thank you for reaching out to Elisa during my absence, I know it has meant a lot to her.

As you know I wasn't supposed to be here today. Our visits today were late additions to the itinerary and we were once again one with Israeli society when we made our first stop. We traveled north to the village of Ramat Yishai, not too far from Haifa. There, we went to pay a shiva call to the family of Lt. Bar Rahav z"l. Bar was killed in action on Sunday. His family was so grateful for our visit and thanked us profusely for coming to offer our condolences. They were so touched that we had come so far just to say how sorry we were. As a rabbi, I often deal with death. Like yesterday, with our time with Rachel Fraenkel, but this visit was different. Next to the shiva candle were the numbers "21", Bar's age, along with a picture of him in his Army uniform. I cannot possibly understand what they are going through. But like the other families that have lost loved ones thus far in Operation Protective Edge, they understand, on an intellectual level, the sacrifice.

We switched gears a little bit on our second stop. The Ramah Noam overnight camp had to be moved this summer. It was supposed to be located in the middle of the country but because the camp would have been located within rocket range it was moved to a location just north of Tiberias. We spent time with the staff and campers. We learned about their activities. It was just like any other Ramah camp - an environment infused with Judaism and fun. We were able to join with staff members for lunch, tour the camp and learn about how they are dealing with the current situation. Many of the campers have older siblings who are currently serving the Army, some even have parents who have been called up. One staff member we met today was the commanding officer of Bar Rahav z"l in basic training. As I wrote yesterday, there is not one person in this country who is not affected by what is going on.

As we head toward Shabbat, our solidarity mission has come to a close. Please join me in continued prayer over Shabbat. Take a moment at some point to stop and think about those who are risking their lives for our homeland. *Adonai oz le'amo yi'tein, Adonai yevarech et Amo ba'shalom.* May God bless His people with strength, and may God bless His people with peace.

Shabbat Shalom from Jerusalem,
Aaron