

Gap Year Reflections since October 7th



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Our generation's time has been split into two. The world before the October 7th 2023 and a tangibly different reality since. We have been living in October the whole year.

As a people, we have been simultaneously mourning and moving. We have been suffering yet striving to do more good. Having been in Jerusalem on October 7th itself and living the rest of the year in Israel, here are a few reflections.

I was lucky to have been able to volunteer with Magen David Adom, as well as learning and volunteering with my yeshiva, Eretz HaTzvi. This meant that I was able to interact with a wide spectrum of Israelis, able to understand a bit more fully, the true Israeli experience.

Whether it was the volunteering as custodial staff in Hadassah Hospital or packing food in factories in Atarot, clearing out people's rocket shelters or doing night shifts on the ambulance, one thing struck me: no matter how hard a blow is delivered to us as a people, our faith in each other, and in God, becomes stronger.

My main reflection is that it is such a privilege to be part of *Am*

Yisrael. The good and the bad. We are a collective. *Mi k'amcha Yisrael?* Who else is like our nation? Simchat Torah may have awoken our inner strength but it is our mission to push forward with it.

We have seen such incredible moments of unity and humanity. Restaurants in Tel Aviv kashering their kitchens to be able to provide food for the soldiers that are protecting us. Almost daily *chesed* (kindness) drives, amassing thousands of people in cities and towns providing goods, space, food and services to those in need. Whether refugees displaced from their homes because of the fighting, soldiers travelling, families affected directly by the

grief of the war, our generosity has no bounds. This was shown to me very clearly in the hardest moments of my year. I was privileged to be able to attend soldiers' funerals this year. Some of these were lone soldiers, heroes of the international community who had dropped everything to help us. It was thought that the funeral services may not be well attended and so, of course, my friends and I would go to help make up the *minyan*. At each service, there were over 1,000 people at Har Herzl. I was in awe.

My experience has been one of unity. I look to all of us to see how we will continue our response to this trying time.

