

*Do what is right and good in the eyes of Adonai your God
(Deuteronomy 12: 28)*

Amidst these difficult and painful days; while our soldiers are fighting in the Gaza Strip; and while over 130 hostages are being held by Hamas in appalling conditions – an event was held on Sunday to promote the renewal of Jewish settlement in Gaza. In a time of mourning and pain, we were horrified to see government ministers and elected representatives dancing with messianic joy in times of war and bloodshed. We were appalled by their calls to transfer the Palestinian residents of Gaza. The participation in this event of rabbis employed by the state, and their public support for extremist political statements, is utterly unacceptable.

Forced migration and transfer of population is a war crime. In the face of the cruelty and inhumanity shown by Hamas, we must maintain “Tzelem” (humanity), moral values, and adherence to international law. In the face of the extremism shown by certain elements in the government, the Jewish and democratic State of Israel must preserve human rights. Even in these difficult times, we must reject manifestations of racism and hatred, and condemn those who forget that “beloved is the human, who was created in the image of God.”

Last Shabbat, in the Beshalach Torah portion, we read the Song of the Sea. We recall the comment of our Sages: “The work of My hands are drowning in the sea and you are singing songs?” These words warn us not to oppose the humanity of our enemies, and certainly not that of residents of the Gaza Strip who are not engaged in hostilities.

We pray for days of peace and calm and urge the Israeli government to avoid discourse of hatred and incitement, and to adhere to our obligation to avoid harm towards innocent civilians whenever possible.

We – Jews and Arabs – will continue to live together on this land, even after this bitter war. Accordingly, it is our duty to maintain the fabric of shared society based on the values of dignity, equality, and tolerance.