**Fifteen Seconds to Impact – Never Again**
**Rabbi Dan Moskovitz – Temple Judea**
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[Count to 15]… Impact!

Fifteen seconds, that is how long you have from the time you hear the air raid siren till the impact of the rocket. Fifteen seconds – how far could you run, if your life depended on it in 15 seconds? How many flights of stairs could you descend from your apartment building to the shelter in 15 seconds? What if you were carrying a baby, what if you were in the shower, what if you were sound asleep? Fifteen seconds it is at once a lifetime and at the same time not enough time.

If you live is Sedrot, or Ashkelon or Beersheva 15 seconds and the prayer that the fire and forget rocket with no guidance system or targeting device will hit some place else is the best chance you have. But these are close knit communities so you can't pray too hard that it hit someplace else, because that other place could be your neighbor, your school, your market, your business.

For three years since Israel unilaterally and completely pulled out of Gaza that 15 second drill has been run 6,464 times. The question before us is not why did Israel respond to these rocket attacks with an attack on Gaza, the question is why did it wait so long?

Professor Benny Morris of Ben Gurion University suggests, "Many Israelis feel that the walls - and history - are closing in on their 60-year-old state, much as they felt in early June 1967, just before Israel launched the Six-Day War and destroyed the Egyptian, Jordanian and Syrian armies in Sinai, the West Bank and the Golan Heights."[i]

More than 40 years ago, the Egyptians had driven a United Nations peacekeeping force from the Sinai-Israel border, had closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping and air traffic and had deployed the equivalent of seven armored and infantry divisions on Israel's doorstep. Egypt had signed a series of military pacts with Syria and Jordan and placed troops in the West Bank. Arab radio stations blared messages about the coming destruction of Israel.

One of the reasons Israel struck back is that Israelis, or rather, Israeli Jews, are beginning to feel much the way their parents did in those apocalyptic days. Some will argue that Israel is not in any real danger, that Israel is a much more powerful and prosperous state today than it was in 1967, that with US backing and Israeli's arsenal of Nuclear weapons the nation has fulfilled the commandment of never again. But the bulk of the population looks to the future with deep foreboding, we are a people that knows our history and we have never known a significant period of time in all of our years that some did not seek our destruction. We have been

exiled from the land of Israel twice before – we would be foolish to think that it could not happen again.

According to Professor Morris the foreboding of Israel's demise has two general sources and four specific causes. The general problems are simple. First, the Arab and wider Islamic worlds, despite Israeli hopes since 1948 and notwithstanding the peace treaties signed by Egypt and Jordan in 1979 and 1994, have never truly accepted the legitimacy of Israel's creation and continue to oppose its existence.

Second, public opinion in the West (and in democracies, governments can't be far behind) is gradually reducing its support for Israel as the West looks disapprovingly at the Jewish state's treatment of the Palestinians both in and outside their control. The Holocaust is increasingly becoming a faint and ineffectual memory, made the more so by it overuse as an analogy for ever act of violence and mass murder around the world. And the geopolitical shift from the ideological Cold War with the Soviet Union to wars, hot and cold over natural resources, namely oil has made Arab states increasingly powerful and assertive.

More specifically, Israel faces a combination of four dire threats. To the east, Iran is frantically advancing its nuclear program, which most Israelis and most of the world's intelligence agencies believe is designed to produce nuclear weapons. This, coupled with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad's public threats to destroy Israel - and his denials of the Holocaust which underscores his irrationality - has Israel's political and military leaders on the ready.

To the north, the Lebanese fundamentalist organization Hezbollah, which also vows to destroy Israel and functions as an Iranian proxy, has thoroughly rearmed since its war with Israel in 2006. According to Israeli intelligence estimates, Hezbollah now has an arsenal of 30,000 to 40,000 Russian-made rockets, supplied by Syria and Iran - twice the number it possessed in 2006. Some of the rockets can reach Tel Aviv and Dimona, where Israel's nuclear production facility is located. If there is war between Israel and Iran, Hezbollah can be expected to join in.

To the south, Israel faces the Islamist Hamas movement, which controls the Gaza Strip and whose charter promises to destroy Israel and bring every inch of Palestine under Islamic rule and law. Hamas today has an army of thousands. It also has a large arsenal of rockets - home-made Qassams and Russian-made, Iranian-financed Katyushas and Grads smuggled, with the Egyptians largely turning a blind eye, through tunnels from Sinai.

The fourth immediate threat to Israel's existence is internal. It is posed by the country's Arab minority. Over the past two decades, Israel's 1.3 million Arab citizens have been radicalized, with many openly avowing a Palestinian identity and embracing Palestinian national aims.

Demography, if not Arab victory in battle, offers a fourth recipe for the dissolution of

Israel. The birth rates for Israeli Arabs are among the highest in the world, with 4 or 5 children per family (as opposed to the 2 or 3 children per family among Israeli Jews). If present trends persist, Israeli Arabs – not those living in the occupied territories but those legal and legitimate citizens within Israeli's pre-1967 borders could constitute the majority of Israel's citizens within 30 years. [ii]

Professor Morris cites four threats to Israel's survival but there is fifth - Jewish ambivalence. I am pleased to see so many people here tonight – but there should be more. Israel is at war and where is the Jewish community? Israel is getting hammered in the press and on the internet with claims of disproportionally, of arguments of moral relevancy between Israel military action and Hamas terror attacks on civilians and where are the Jewish voices rising to its defense? World opinion is decidedly against Israel at this moment, only 41% of Americans support Israel's action in Gaza - a battle is waging on the streets of world capitals - Israel is being blamed for its very existence being an incitement to terror and it seems to me that the majority of American Jews are just not that interested in what is going on. Or if they are they have lost their voice and courage to say so. While Israelis dodge rockets in their streets, some dodge and avoid coming to Israel's defense.

It has been 60 years since 1948, since the world last knew a time without a State of Israel. The last of the holocaust survivors are slipping away, veterans of World War Two are dying at a rate of more than 1,000 a day. We are at a transitory moment in history when the caretakers of our collective experience are handing it over to us now as historical memory. Will we hold fast to that memory and keep it alive or will we drop it and the lessons learned through the world's darkest hour?

For the majority of the world's population a world without Israel is a historical footnote, like the experience of the Great Depression that we hear so much about these days – it happened to them, but not to us. We didn't experience it and therefore we don't own it, and as happens with history, we will choose to remember it selectively. As the memory of the concentration camps, the refugee ship the Exodus, the siege of Jerusalem and battle for Israel's existence fade, so too will the voice that shouts to the world, Never Again! And when we lose that voice, when the world forgets where we came from, how we got here - they will no longer appreciate where we are or worry enough about where we are going. If we are silent they too will be silent, if we forget, they most certainly will choose not to remember. The philosopher Santayana is always right, those who do not study the past are bound to repeat it.

And so I call on our congregation tonight to find its voice, to rise up to your computer keyboards, log on to a news site, comment on an article and remind the world of Israel's right to exist; just as a congregant did on our Temple Judea Blog when he presciently wrote, "If Israel had no weapons there would be no Israel. If the Palestinians had no weapons there would be peace." Israel is our eternal homeland the hope of 2,000 years, we have built cities, schools and universities. Our people

have planted forests, made advances in medicine, science and the arts that benefit the entire world. We were promised this land by God, given it by the United Nations and our grandparents – some just out of the ashes of Auschwitz fought and died for it – we will not lose it again, Never Again! Rise up and remind the world, we are here, we are in our land and we are here to stay.

[i] "***Why Israel Feels Threatened"*** Benny Morris, professor of Middle Eastern history at Ben-Gurion University 2009

[ii] ibid