stones hurled through the windshield of her car when she was a tourist and got lost on her way to Jerusalem. If it were Rae’s parents or children, bombarded in their beds night after night with grenades and Katyushas, would she be as benevolent and understanding?

Justice for all is a noble pursuit. But at what cost, Rae? Would you turn the other cheek if your own loved ones were involved? Would you fault your parents for trying to protect you? I do not fault Rae in the least for the aching in her heart for peace in the Middle East and elsewhere. But peace is indeed a two-way street. If Rae is reviled by other Jews, perhaps it is because she too can see only one side: the side that the media choose to cover; the side that has learned to use the media to further its goal of ridding the Middle East of the nation of Israel; the side that celebrates the existence of a Jew who condemns her own.

Alitta Kullman
Laguna Hills, California

Rae Abileah replies:

I HEAR IN YOUR LETTER A GENUINE concern for the future of the Israeli state and your—our—Jewish brethren there, and a fear about the dangers they may face, and I share in your concern. I thank you for asking me questions rather than jumping to conclusions about my beliefs and actions. Here are my responses to just a few of these questions:

I do have family in Israel and hold compassion in my heart for the stress of living under fear of attack. I have learned from groups such as the 9/11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows, which in the wake of the devastating loss of their loved ones on September 11 one decade ago cried out for our nation not to seek vengeance, not to retaliate and kill more innocent people. I believe seeking understanding and empathy is one of the first steps toward ending the violence.

If I am one day blessed with children, I would not be willing to live in a country where compulsory military service mandates that my child might serve at an illegal checkpoint, demolish a home, or face serious PTSD from serving in an occupying army. My heart goes out to all the mothers (and parents) who have suffered the untimely and unnatural death of their children whether by bus bomb, bulldozer, or gun, and it must stop, in all forms.

What Alitta fails to acknowledge is the systemic, racist oppression of the Palestinian people, which fosters roles of occupier and occupied, not just two sides that hate each other. The “side” I now stand on is the side of peace and justice, which is neither (and perhaps both) pro-Palestinian or pro-Israeli, and for which I have received tremendous support even within the Jewish community. This side is actually rarely portrayed in the mainstream media, but is growing in numbers globally as increasingly more people join the cause for freedom and equality for all people living in Israel and Palestine. Won’t you join us?

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