



*"Mama..."*

## What is going on with the war in Israel?"- A Jewish Mom's Reflection



The question came just after bedtime. My 8-year-old daughter, snuggled under her blanket with her favorite stuffed bear, looked up at me with wide, serious eyes. "Mama, why is there a war with Israel? Are we going to be okay?"

It stopped me in my tracks. The kind of question that makes your heart beat a little faster, not out of panic, but out of the sudden, sacred responsibility to answer gently, truthfully, and in a way that holds her world together.

I took a deep breath, sat down on the edge of her bed, and realized: I had not prepared for this moment. Not as a mother. Not as a psychologist. Not even fully as a Jew. But I knew instinctively that how I responded would shape the way she understands not only this war, but what it means to be a Jewish person in an antisemitic world.

Being a therapist gives me tools, but being a mom gives me perspective. That night has taught me so much about what our children really need.

1. Start with Safety and Love: before facts and history, she needed reassurance. I told her that we are ok, we are safe and that I am always here for her. Children, especially younger ones, need security. In this extremely chaotic world, our calm presence is their anchor.

2. Let Them Lead with Their Questions: I first asked her what she heard. She told me her counselors had been talking about it in camp and sharing videos on Instagram. Her mind was filled with worry. Our job is not to flood them with details, but to help them understand what they have seen or heard. Sometimes, it's not about giving more information. It's about making sense of the information they already have.

3. Use Jewish Values: I am not very observant, but my kids say the Shema every night before bed. That night, I realized my daughter did not truly know what it meant, it was just part of the routine. This felt like the right moment to share its deeper meaning with her: that it is a declaration of faith, of oneness, of connection. More importantly, that it is a reminder that we are part of something enduring and sacred.

4. Empower Them to Take Action: In a world full with uncertainty, it felt important to help her turn her worry into action: small steps that teach kindness, responsibility, and hope. I told her that we can pray for our fellow Jews in Israel and all over the world and we can help our fellow Jews here. We talked about how she used to visit the Kosher Food Bank when she was little. She said she would like to help again. We talked about other things we can do: praying, giving Tzedakah, lighting shabbat candle, going to synagogue.

Of course, talking about something so heavy can be really tough, especially when it feels like the question comes out of nowhere. I understand the temptation to just brush it off with a quick, "Do not worry, everything will be fine". But the truth is, there is no perfect script. There is only presence, honesty and the courage to sit in hard places with our child, anchored in love and Jewish values.

We do not need to pretend to have all the answers. What our children need most is our steadiness, our hearts, our warm embrace and the reminder that even in a world of war, we, the Jews, are a people who believe in peace.

So, if your child asks, lean in. Be the calm in their storm. And when in doubt, come back to our Jewish value: that life is sacred, that kindness is strength, and that hope, like the Jewish people, will always endure.

