

Remembering the Rabbis...

May G-d comfort their families who mourn in Zion

I was watching the morning talk show this morning when all of a sudden there was a news update - terrorists had burst into a synagogue in Jerusalem and people had been killed. As the details came in, we learned that two terrorists, armed with guns, axes and butcher knives, attacked men during their prayers. They were in the middle of the silent prayer, immersed in silent and serious communication with the G-d of Israel, not paying attention to what was around them, until the noise and the mayhem interfered. They ran, fought



back and called for help. But within minutes, four people had been murdered. Several others were wounded seriously, including a policeman who was the first on the scene. All four men lived on the same street. They left four widows and a total of 24 children between them.

One of the murdered men was Rabbi Moshe Twersky. Originally from the US, he was the grandson of Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveichik, one of the greatest rabbis and Jewish thinkers of the 20th century. His father was also a great rabbi and professor of Jewish studies at Harvard University in Boston. Rabbi Moshe Twersky was an important rabbi in his own right, head of a Jerusalem yeshiva. Rabbi Moshe's aunt is a friend of mine and we study Bible together each Sunday morning. His uncle was my sons' teacher and rabbi.

Another murdered man was Rabbi Kalman Levine. He had also made aliyah from the US. His wife, now his widow, is Marilyn. I grew up with Marilyn in Cleveland, OH. She is a few years younger than me and her cousin lives across the street from me here in Karnei Shomron. I always enjoyed catching up with her at her cousin's celebrations. This week, when I pay a condolence call to her, the atmosphere will be totally different. What will I say to her,

as she sits shiva (in mourning) for her husband of more than 30 years? How do you comfort her 9 children and 5 grandchildren on the loss of their father and grandfather in the middle of his morning prayers?

It really doesn't matter that I know some of the family members of the murdered. They were all wonderful people who left close family members who will mourn them the rest of their days. But what Israelis and Jews all over the world are asking today is why it is that when Jews are killed, the international media and national

leaders everywhere rush to "explain" the context - it is Israeli "radicals" who have the audacity to want to visit and even pray on the Temple Mount. It is Israelis who are building new homes in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria.

Well, I'd like to set the record straight. Jerusalem is the capital of Israel and there is only one people on this earth who have called Jerusalem their own for more than 3,000 years - the Jewish people! And our roots in Judea and Samaria go back 4,000 years. And the Temple Mount is the holiest place for the Jewish people and has been for more 2,500 years. So why wouldn't we want to pray there.

But there really is no need for these responses. When Jews want to pray, whether in a synagogue or on the Temple Mount, why does that make us a target of murderers? We don't want to stop the Arabs from praying on the Temple Mount nor in any location of their choosing. People should have the right to pray as they believe wherever they want. Only the most despicable and immoral of human beings would attack people as they are praying.

I pray that G-d will bring comfort to these four families, a speedy recovery to the injured, wisdom to the people of civilized countries everywhere to recognize evil where it resides and the courage to fight against it where and when it rears its