

Community

# Rabbi Meir Soloveichik: 'Our strength will come from our unity'

American Orthodox figurehead tells JC of the 'miraculous' resilience of Jewish people prior to talk at west London shul



BY ROSA DOHERTY  
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Israelis queue up to give blood inside MDA vehicles

Rabbi Meir Soloveichik had no way of knowing that his planned participation on a panel titled Jewish Resilience and Wisdom In a Time of Crisis would be so poignant this week following the terror attacks in Israel.

Rabbi Soloveichik, flew into London from New York on Wednesday to deliver his talk at Lauderdale Road Synagogue in West London.

Speaking to the JC ahead of the talk, he said as the community came to terms with the loss it had suffered, it was important to notice moments of reliance of the Jewish people.



Rabbi Meir Soloveichik

“Those moments are even more miraculous in the face of the horror today,” he said.

“One moment that has really stood out to me was the IDF soldier attending his son’s Brit Milah over FaceTime.

“As soon as I saw it, I was so moved by it. If you unpack everything that is going on there, there is no place a father wants to be more than there.

“And as he is going out to fight and in the midst of all that death, he says Shehecheyanu — ‘Thank you God for keeping us alive and to endure this moment.’ Right there you have Jewish fortitude, the Jewish love of life. Those who are going off to fight against those who love death.”



Hassan Nasrallah (Photo: Screenshot)

Rabbi Soloveichik, whose event was meant to be a chance to discuss his book *Providence and Power: Ten Portraits of Jewish Statesmanship*, said that in recent days, he has been thinking about a quote from Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Hezbollah, who said: “We are going to win, because they love life and we love death.”

Rabbi Soloveichik responded by saying: “Of course they will not win, but he is right that we do love life.”

The New York Rabbi praised the spirit in which Israelis had continued to celebrate weddings, had arrived at the airport to welcome home soldiers or had gone to give blood.

He said in times like these there were “metaphysical bonds that unite the Jewish people. Leaders must draw on those to get the community through these challenging times.”

He said his book explored what there was to learn from the great leaders of Jewish history, both men and women, religious and political.

He said one of the lessons he was planning to talk to attendees about was the story of Menachem Begin, the sixth Prime Minister of Israel, and the Altalena, a ship carrying weapons for Israel when the state was created.



Menachem Begin (Photo: Getty Images)

He explained: "A disagreement developed between him and Ben Gurion as to how the arms should be allocated and Ben Gurion ordered his ship to be fired upon.

"Despite this, Menachem Begin ordered his men not to fire back," the rabbi explained.

"There is a memorial there today on the beach in Tel Aviv and it say: 'Never a war among brothers.'



“He always said that was his greatest achievement.”

Rabbi Soloveichik said this story had direct relevance today when you looked at what had been “very real divisions in Israeli society” about the judiciary.



Protests in Israel over Benjamin Netanyahu's reforms (Photo: Ben Cohen)

He said: “But now you see unity in society against terror. That unity reflects the bonds that were always there.”

Rabbi Soloveichik urged the Jewish community in the UK to show the same resilience and unity in the coming weeks.

He said: “The pain of what has happened will not disappear and nor should it. The most important strength of the Jewish community is its capacity to remember and come together in the face of evil.”

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