Do you recall that before the New Year of 2000 there were many predictions circulating. One of the most popular expectations was of a Y2K computer bug that would crash many computers on midnight of January 1, 2000 and cause malfunctions leading to major catastrophes worldwide. The warning was that society would cease to function and that God was passing judgement on this day. In other words, many were waiting for an Apocalypse.

Let us look at the meaning of that word. The primary meaning is the complete and final destruction of the world. The second definition is that of an event involving the destruction or damage on an awesome or catastrophic scale.

What we just witnessed on October 7th was truly an apocalypse because the scale of destruction was unfathomable. The devastation it brought to the families of the victims - Israelis and Jews all over the world - is still to be assessed in the future. Right now we are in shock trying to make sense of what happened. But we cannot fully comprehend the long term implication on our personal world and our collective society, let alone the impact on Israel.

Let me throw in another word. It is “renaissance”. What comes to mind when you hear that word? That’s right - it describes a period in European culture that was artistic, ushering an economic and political rebirth after the dark period of Middle Ages.

Micah Goodman, Jewish philosopher and writer who lives in Israel, spoke in his address to the rabbis of North America this past week, calling the events of October 7 the Renaissance of Cruelty. He is right - the repeated reports of the cruelty of ISIS and Taliban of the past became a gruesome reality for hundreds of Israelis in a very short period of time.

I think all of us will suffer from PTSD in one form or another going forward even though we are thousands of miles away. The shock waves caused by the brutality will continue to reverberate for decades to come. And that is exactly what Hamas was trying to achieve. It was a message not only to Jews but to the whole world. The message was – “we are capable of anything and we have no mercy - fear us.”

Ironically, in this week’s Torah portion, we come across the word “hamas”. No, not the Hamas which rules Gaza Strip and is an abbreviation for Islamic Resistance Group Ḥarakat al-Muqāwamah al-ʾIslāmiyyah.

Instead, in this Torah portion of Noah, the word Hamas means “wrongdoing” or “violence”. We find it in Chapter 6:11,13: “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence (hamas) ... And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence (hamas) through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.”

God makes it clear that the fate of those who practice hamas is destruction. It was hamas that brought on the Flood as God’s punishment for people’s corruption, wrongdoings and cruelty. Only Noah, his family and animals of each kind were spared. That means that everyone else - old, young, babies - everyone were killed by the flood due to “hamas” of the majority.

What happens in Israel now is also hamas – a violence caused by the dark forces that seek the destruction of the State. But “Hamas,” the terrorist organization, made a great mistake. They miscalculated the effect their actions will have on Israelis. Israelis united almost instantaneously in the face of the disaster, which took them, like Yom Kippur War, by surprise. Months of protests and the societal divisions were put on hold. Instead Israelis did what they do best – they came together in the face of the threat of losing Medinat Yisrael.

In my last year’s sermon on Israel, I quoted Golda Meir, whom President Biden mentioned on his visit to Israel two days ago, remarking that she said to him back in 1973, “We Israelis have a secret weapon. We have nowhere else to go.”

This was true then and it is still true now.

Despite the fact that Jews live in the US, Europe and elsewhere around the world, the only place where Jews can go at any given time to seek safety if prosecuted, is Israel. During the 75 years of the State of Israel, it took a massive aliyot from Eastern Europe, Germany, Russia, Yemen, Marocco, Iran, Iraq, Argentina, France, Ukraine and list goes on.

The Kishinev pogrom in 1903 increased the desire of Jews to have their own State, which was discussed at the first Zionist Congress in 1897. The scale of the pogrom was close to that of October 7. Many Jews made Aliyah to the Land of Israel. It took three and a half decades to finally have our own State - the State of Israel.

The Jews who witnessed the birth of Israel in 1948 could not believe that their dream finally came true. Despite of all the challenges the new country had faced: from economic problems, tough climate and tough neighbors who wanted Israel’s destruction from day one, Israelis were ecstatic to have their own country. They fought for it, cherished it and wanted to raise their children there.

By the fourth generation we started seeing that the patriotism, the devotion, the love for Israel, was different. The fact that there was a Jewish State was taken for granted by Israelis and Jews outside of Israel. Yes, there were constant conflicts but there was certainty that Israel will always be there.

With what is happening now, unfortunately, there is no such certainty. Israel very much depends now on the support of United States. Fortunately, Biden and his administration have reaffirmed that commitment.

And yet, as I stated, Israelis are united as they have not been since 1973. They are determined to win this war!

The flood destroyed people because of hamas. Right now, Hamas tried to destroy Israel. But we believe that the result will be the opposite - Israel will destroy Hamas. It is a tough battle, not only because Hamas is backed by Iran, but it is a tough battle because we are up against the world media, which most of the time is on the side of “poor Palestinian civilians”. We will continue to face criticism. But we must stay focused on the ultimate goal. First Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion said: ” It doesn’t matter what nonJews will think - it is important what Jews will say.”

Friends, we know what we need to say in the face of Jewish rhetoric - Ein Li Eretz Acheret - I have no other land. There is no room for apologizing for the right of Israel to defend herself. Hamas has sinned against humanity and so they have to be eliminated. Whatever effort it takes.

And when Israel - we - win this war, the appreciation for Israel will be so much higher than we ever had before! The fourth generation of Israelis and Jews outside of Israel will have an understanding of the importance of having Israel just like the first generation had. And that will be the miracle which we all need at this time.

After the flood God promised to never destroy all life. After this mabul (flood), after this disaster, Israel will be stronger and more united than ever.

Ken Yehyi Ratzon - May it be God’s will.