

## **Report from Mission 2 of 5785 (RCA mission 9).**

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It's challenging to summarize our experiences during this brief mission because we've encountered so much and met so many individuals. Each person is an olam maleh and represents a unique world. If I had to distill our observations, I would say that **the needs here are greater than we initially imagined, and the challenges are more profound.**

In the north, there is significant devastation. Regardless of the number of homes directly impacted by rockets, the area has remained largely abandoned for over a year and a half. This means that many homes and buildings must be repaired or rebuilt, complicating the timeline for returning residents. People are understandably hesitant to return to homes in disrepair, and many are uncertain about the prospect of moving back at all. Some have experienced the advantages of living in larger cities—whether it's parents seeking better options for their children or individuals finding improved job opportunities. Additionally, there is a pervasive uncertainty about security; while there may be a semblance of safety now, many residents realize that true safety is elusive, making them reluctant to return.

We've met injured soldiers and bereaved families. These tragedies represent not just personal grief but the loss of exceptional

individuals and soldiers, making the situation even more difficult to comprehend.

**Despite these challenges, we've also witnessed remarkable resilience.** Though we primarily meet with leaders and not those who may be more despondent or confused about the future, there is a strong determination to rebuild. Many view this as an opportunity to create something better than before, affirming their connection to the land—not just Israel as a whole, but to their specific communities. While we may see various choices available to them, they feel a deep sense of mission to stay and rebuild.

This sentiment transcends the observant; we've encountered a profound faith—even among those who may not appear traditionally observant. Their belief in God and their commitment to rebuilding is truly inspiring.

In summary, we are witnessing a country grappling with layers of trauma far greater than is reported. Many individuals are returning to their homes and communities after time spent on the battlefield, and the threats from neighboring regions are more significant than we anticipated. Yet, there is a prevailing sense of hope that, somehow, the country will emerge stronger from these trials.

Finally, today marks the burial for the Bibas family. There are no words to describe the mood of a country burying such beautiful souls

Rabbi M. Penner

