

Thursday, January 17, 1991, 00:05

Too much has been happening lately for me to wait and try and summarize it all at the end of a week. I'm far from sure that I'll find the time to write on Shabbat, and at present the weekdays have a way of getting filled up much too quickly and fully for me to have much time to write then. So now, a bit after midnight, when Tzippi has gone to sleep and I'm not really very tired and have already done some work on my weekly summary for the kvutzah (and anyway, at this stage it's hard to summarize much since anything can still happen before the week is over) I'll try and write a bit about what's been happening here.

I've got another reason for writing this more as a journal than as a letter. In my last letter I found myself purposefully censoring myself, not writing about certain things which might cause too much anxiety. My guess is that this was rather obvious to you when you read that letter — any discussion of preparations for what seemed then to be a rather unavoidable war, or mention of our fears about that war, were conspicuous in their absence. On the other hand, I do want to give an accurate play by play of what's happening here, so perhaps the best way of doing that is by keeping a journal and only sending it when things calm down more.

Last week we received phone calls both from Tzippi's mother and father. Ostensibly they called to wish me a happy birthday, though it seemed to us that that was a rather transparent excuse for calling to find out what was happening. And since many other parents have been calling to find out how things are going here, it becomes a rather obvious question — why hasn't Mom called yet. I have what seems to me a fairly good answer. Mom is fearful that if she calls she'll learn that I've been called up, and living with an ambiguous situation may be easier than living with one that causes even more anxiety. Tzippi and I have been discussing when would be the proper time for me to call. I'm hesitant to call because though I'm quite confident that things are going to be fine here I'm not sure that I'll be able to convey that feeling to Mom and I'm not sure I want to take chances.

So what's the situation here? I guess that an answer to that question depends on when it's asked. Today is different than yesterday which was different than the day before, and even I, who has been able to hold on to an aura of confidence that nothing is going to happen, have slowly but surely begun to admit that it looks like a war is inevitable, and that if war breaks out, chances are good that something will take place here as well. And each day, as the American (is it really the U.N.?) ultimatum approached, and then passed, we began to take more and more precautions. At first things were very hypothetical. What will we do if... Many of us had the feeling that the people responsible for preparations on Hatzor were going overboard with all the steps they were taking. Each day we would tell the teacher from Kibbutz Revadim who comes to our class what preparations we were taking, and each day she would laugh at how we were going overboard. I would agree with her. One of the ongoing jokes was that if an Iraqi missile were to attack our area it would be directed to Kibbutz Hatzor because we were the only kibbutz prepared. Tzippi reported that at the orchestra the situation was very similar — other members of the orchestra laughed when Tzippi would tell them what preparations were being made here. Today, of course, everybody has taken the same precautions, and more, and the atmosphere is much more apprehensive.

Thursday, 09:50

I just finished speaking with Mom on the phone a few minutes ago. It was good to speak with her since that's now one less thing that I have to be anxious about. Knowing that you there are relieved (and I trust that Mom will pass the word on to everyone else) is a relief for me as well.

Mom spoke of her feeling that even though she doesn't want to see a war happen to anyone she's relieved that the threat to Israel which Saddam Hussein's Iraq not only epitomized but also outrightly brandished has apparently been eliminated. It's hard for me not to say that I agree with her. Yes, Saddam Hussein was/is a real threat who has continued to cause us great anxiety. Yes, we're presently breathing a bit more comfortably. Still, it's hard for me to say that I'm really all that relieved. I'm one of those people who believes that it's much easier to start a war than to end one and I find it hard to join the general euphoria which seems to be gaining speed in Israel over the swift American victory. What's more, apparently like Mom, I'm well aware that war isn't the honor and the glory that the American soldiers we've seen interviewed seem to think it is. People get killed and maimed in war,

and there's always an aftermath which is much less glorious than the thoughts of a twenty year old who's gung ho to use the weapons he's been trained to kill with.

Thursday, 18:00

I'm not sure whether it's been a relatively long or short time since I last sat and wrote. For a change, not that much has happened, and I guess that that's a rather welcome situation. Throughout much of last night and this morning we were glued to the television, and although I'm now listening to the radio, and although we're still being told that we should stay inside our protected homes, the tenseness of the last few days has most definitely relaxed. So although we're still anxious and hungry for whatever morsel of news we can get the situation is such that I can try and give an overview of all that has happened over approximately the last week.

Last night I started describing some of our preparations for the possibility that we might be attacked. For a change, being attacked in this case didn't mean that enemy armies would invade Israel but instead "only" that Iraqi missiles, quite possibly with chemical warheads, would be sent to Israel. Security precautions were of course taken. Over two months ago gas masks and other emergency equipment were distributed to most of the urban population of Israel, but it wasn't until this week that the rural sectors, meaning mostly kibbutzim and Arab settlements, received theirs. As I type this the radio is reporting that at present the distribution of gas masks continues, mostly in the Arab sector. For a long time this was the only means of protection spoken about, but last week additional precautions were advised. Each household was told that it should seal off one room in its home where it can sit for perhaps five or six hours in the event that an alert is declared. The kibbutz collectively purchased materials for this sealing off last week and on Thursday evening we received enough for us to close off our bedroom window and door. Children's houses were also instructed to seal off one or two rooms and I received materials for that purpose for my kvutzah. Sunday afternoon, when Tzippi and I were in Rechovoth, we saw long lines of people outside hardware stores, waiting to buy plastic and tape for this sealing off. Other stores posted signs in their windows that they no longer had any more of these materials.

Monday evening I taped the plastic above the bedroom window and door. Though I've been most sceptical about anything happening here, that doesn't mean that we shouldn't take the necessary precautions. Tzippi was leaving the next morning for two days with the orchestra and she was fearful that perhaps I'd be called up while she was away. We agreed that the least we could do was prepare the room for sealing off before she left. As things went, neither of us was surprised when she returned home Tuesday afternoon. Although the previous week people had laughed at the precautions she had told them that Hatzor had been taking, by Tuesday something rather similar to panic was setting in and there was nobody in the orchestra who was willing to sleep away from home that night.

Friday, January 18, 00:20

I'm not really going to write much now. It's late (though I'm certainly used to going to sleep much later than this) and tomorrow, since it's been decided that children are going to remain home once again (as they, and all the rest of the kibbutz did, yesterday) I'll be spending some time picking oranges. This evening a hot meal was served in the chadar ochel. Certainly nobody starved during the day — milk and bread were brought to the kibbutz, and perhaps vegetables as well, and the kitchen was open for part of the day so that people could take things they needed. Still, even though most of the day had a very relaxed, Shabbat-like, atmosphere to it the meals that people took the time to prepare were quickies and not the sort of meal after which you felt that you'd really eaten. But undoubtedly a hot meal was only a secondary reason for serving a real meal in the chadar ochel. First and foremost, even though much of the day people certainly weren't confined to their houses, on the whole we didn't wander around more than was necessary. In the evening people wanted to see other people and to feel a bit of a release from the tension that had built up through the day. The chadar ochel was full, and noisy, and everyone was pleased that we had a chance to eat there. Apparently in order to serve a "public" meal our "defense" committee had to receive permission from the regional authorities. The army still urges people to stay in their homes but apparently it wasn't difficult for it to be convinced that going up to the chadar ochel wouldn't be going to far away from our apartments. And now, as I'll

finish these notes for tonight I should add that over the last hour we've been hearing reports that Saddam Hussein is still threatening to attack Israel — he simply hasn't decided on the proper time. I wouldn't take such a threat too lightly. It seems all too believable that with his back to the wall Saddam Hussein might decide that he's got nothing else to lose and will attempt, with whatever limited missile-power he still has, to try and lash out at Israel. So though we'll be sleeping well tonight, it's still too early to say that our fears are behind us.

'Erev Shabbat, January 19, 16:30

This is the first opportunity I've had to do a bit of writing today, though not because I've been overly busy. When I finished writing last night I expected that I'd wake up in the morning and go to our orange groves to pick some oranges, perhaps for about half a day's work. During part of the evening I'd prepared materials for the cakes that I traditionally make on Shabbat. I figured that even though the kids would be staying in their parents' homes and that thus we wouldn't be having a Kabbalat Shabbat it would still be nice to prepare some cakes for the neighbors — at least that would give us a bit of a Shabbesdik feeling.

But though the actual preparing the cakes this afternoon took up a much longer time than I'd expected, from around 13:00 until 16:00 (with the last hour being devoted to cleaning up and reading a bit of the paper while the cakes were in the oven) that doesn't explain how I filled up the rest of the day without finding time to sit and write. The explanation to that is I guess evident from the date of this writing. This morning, at around 02:00, the first Iraqi missiles landed on Israel and not only a planned good night's sleep went awry, but so did any plans of today being a regular day in which we might go out to work. (Since it had already been decided that the children's houses would be closed I made plans to spend the morning in the orange groves, as I've already noted.)

But though I want to report about what happened last night I prefer to try and write in a more chronological order so at this time I'll only make notes to myself of all the things I want to write about and then I'll try and cover as much as I can.

Shabbat, January 19, 09:30

Last night we went to sleep early. Actually, we turned off the lights at around 10:45, but that's still very early for me. We were very tired, after having gotten up in the middle of the night two nights in a row. I wanted to go to sleep even earlier because I figured that we'd probably be awakened once again that way, but we were lucky — Saddam Hussein was apparently considerate and let us sleep through the night. At around 20:30 we went into our sealed rooms when there was an alert for a possible attack, and then this morning the alert worked as our alarm clock when it went off at around 07:15. Yesterday evening's alert was a false alarm, but as we're presently discovering from the news reports (we've been promised a fuller television news broadcast at 10:00) this morning a number of missiles once again landed in the Tel Aviv area, causing damage to buildings but only minimal injuries. It's strange, but we've adjusted to this present reality incredibly quickly. I feel extremely strange when I seal off the bedroom and then put on my gas mask when the alert siren goes off, but it's not the sort of thing that we're going to play around with. Everyone is advised to carry his or her gas mask with him/her if we have to be outside our homes. There are people on the kibbutz who do this, though it seems that at least half of us are willing to take our chances for the short period of time we're outside.

I admit to feeling a bit uncomfortable about this. At first we were led to believe that in order for Iraq to attack us with missiles they would need a couple of hours of preparations, meaning that we would get pre-attack warnings. But two missile attacks have landed, and it seems that the alert sirens went off more as a response to those landings than as an advance warning. That's not exactly calming information and I guess that's the major reason that, even if I feel uncomfortable closing off the room and putting on a gas mask, we behave as we're told to when alerts go off. I don't really know, but it seems that the vast majority of people, on the kibbutz at least, are behaving in the same way — perhaps for the same reasons. Actually, I have an additional reason for carrying out these instructions properly. I'm known as a skeptic who doesn't believe that there's much we can do to protect ourselves if a massive attack really comes. Other than actively pursuing peace, I don't think that there's much that we can do, and certainly when an alert siren goes off nobody is thinking about just how to go

about pursuing peace at that moment. Whatever, being identified as a skeptic I find it important that I behave in as correct a manner as possible and not flaunt any sort of nonchalance which comes to me too easily. And of course there's an additional reason for this behavior. For many years I was single and could make whatever decisions I wanted without them affecting anyone other than me. Over the last couple of years I've been learning to behave differently. (By the way, the advance warning we're supposed to receive before the launching of missiles is apparently only for chemical warfare warheads, and none of us are complaining that so far the missile attacks have only been "conventional" warheads.)

I guess that I'll have to forego my intention of yesterday evening of giving a chronological rundown of what's been happening here. Things seems to be happening too quickly for me to review them in that way.

And perhaps as a way of proving that statement (though in a banal and non-belligerent manner for a change) I've just spent about half an hour between that short paragraph and the start of this one doing a bit of work. Someone from our factory just came around our neighborhood with a few boxes of bolts that have to have nuts put on them for a shipment to the Soviet Union that's supposed to go out tomorrow. We've been asked to prepare as many as we can of them so that war or not we won't miss the shipment. Our next door neighbors and us did a bit of the work on our lawn while the two families in the house next to us did the same. We've still got more to do, but for a while we'll be taking a break since word has come that hot food is being distributed for an hour in the chadar ochel and that we can pick up clothes from the laundry.

Motz'ei Shabbat, January 19, 1983

We've been doing a lot of eating in the apartment, something that we're really not that used to. I'm good at washing dishes so that's something that I don't mind doing and we've been having an interesting time preparing meals. I mention this because as I write the soup is simmering and since Tzippi is practicing I'm jumping over to take a look at it every few minutes. Our eating habits are really the smallest of changes that these past few days have brought on us.

I personally think that it's in the kibbutz's interest (and probably that of Israel as a whole) to try and get back to some sort of regularity as soon as we can. We've now had three days of "vacation" in which we've done close to no work and in which we've occupied ourselves with little more than watching television, listening to the radio, visiting with neighbors, and of course occasionally taking the necessary precautions to protect ourselves. Our course last night was the first night in three in which we got a full night's sleep, and yesterday I doubt that many of us could have accomplished much in the way of work because of how tired we were, but if we have to adjust ourselves to a protracted situation of being awakened to seal off our rooms and the like, then I guess that we'll learn to do so. It's worth remembering that in Beirut kids apparently continued going to school every day even though buildings were being bombed and street fighting was rampant. If kids there could adjust to that reality, and for such a long time, then I guess that we can learn to do the same.

There is a difference (if not numerous differences). Israel has a strong central government (no matter how much I dislike its policies, or more significantly in this instance, no matter how good it is at doing nothing) and it sees it as its responsibility to protect its citizens. Every Israeli is sure that s/he is an expert in just about everything and we're all quick to criticize the defense measures that the government and the military have instructed the citizenry to take. Thus it's important to note that even if I question certain civil defense decisions I most certainly feel secure that these issues are being seriously considered by the proper authorities. At least on this issue, we're not going to be another Lebanon.

And this brings me to another related issue. So far we're sustained two missile attacks. There have been only very limited injuries, although over 100 apartments have been damaged, and apparently some public buildings have been damaged as well. For us in Israel, as I suppose that it would be for any country, this is an act of war and an attempt to injure the civilian population. I personally hope that Israel will decide not to retaliate since for me keeping our pride is much less important than keeping out of a war (and once again, it's easier to get into a war than it is to get out). But that's not the point that I wanted to get to at the moment. If we've sustained the injuries we have, and find them very significant, I shudder to think what the Iraqis must feel about the injuries being inflicted on them. Yes, there's a difference. We're not at war and have even conspicuously tried not to

be, whereas the Iraqi citizenship must have known that it would be at war, even if they are not responsible for Saddam Hussein's actions. We hear reports that the U.S. is being very careful not to hurt civilian targets, but I admit that I find this very hard to believe. Saddam Hussein, for instance, could almost believably state that he aimed his missiles at Israel's military headquarters and only missed by a few kilometers (though he's made it clear that it's not the Israeli military that's the enemy, but Israeli existence in and of itself).

Here's an interesting story that bears being written down here. On Friday's news it was reported that at the same time that Iraqi missiles were landing on Israel, 140 Soviet olim were also landing at Ben Gurion airport. They were immediately taken to sealed off rooms, given instructions on how to use their gas masks, and they remained there until the all clear signal was sounded. Only after that were they processed. That's certainly an interesting way to be greeted into your new country. I ordinarily avoid waxing patriotic (and sadly over the past few years I all too often haven't had enough reason to be) but I admit that as much as I laugh at this rather strange reception into Israel I also find it exciting and moving that we're able to continue to absorb people at times such as this, and that people prefer to come here than to stay where they were.

Motz'ei Shabbat, 22:15

We seem to be getting used to this. A couple of minutes ago we heard the alert sirens going off and rather swiftly went into the bedroom where Tzippi started sealing off the room while I started phoning a number of people. I'm the first name on one of the kibbutz's information networks and I call five people who contact others. While we were still performing these tasks the all clear was sounded and we very quickly got back to business as usual — whatever that means anymore.

I stopped writing last time in order to sit down to dinner, and after that I washed the dishes, and of course we watched the news (which have been uncommonly long these past few days). It was just as the news were about to end that the sirens went off. And though I'd like to continue a number of thoughts that I started developing before dinner, different things come to mind now.

The night that the war started, between Wednesday night and Thursday morning, the sirens were quite weak and not everyone woke up. We did, even though I'm a good sleeper, but we also received a number of phone calls to tell us that the war had started and that we should be aware of that. At that time we didn't have to go into our sealed rooms, but only to be prepared to do so. One of the lessons of that night was the information network which has now been activated.

But it's not about the information network that I wanted to write. Only that same morning did the kibbutz learn that many, if not most, of the roofs of the kibbutz's apartments weren't effective against the penetration of gas (or apparently air, for that matter). Almost all of the apartments of the vatikim were of this ineffective sort, though ours is fine. The kibbutz thus tried to distribute those people whose apartments couldn't be effectively sealed off either to usable shelters or to the apartments of other members. (Since gas apparently gathers in low places, only shelters that are above ground are usable.) We were asked to take in Bennie and Ruchama, and we of course readily agreed. But after talking with them they decided that they preferred to try and sleep the night in their apartment and only come to us if such a step was called for. I arranged to have a car available through the night so that I could drive over to pick them up if called for, and as things turned out, I needed it.

Sunday, January 20, 20:00

This morning I went to my kvutzah and distributed the clean clothes that had arrived from the laundry into each kids' closets. Since the children's houses have been closed, since Wednesday evening, there's been very little laundering done, but the kids' clothes have still been getting dirty. So it was important to distribute the clothes that arrived yesterday. But that was the only task that had to be accomplished in the children's houses so afterwards I went to our orange groves where I spent most of the day, until 16:00, picking oranges. The chadar ochel still wasn't open — food was distributed, but not served and we took food home to eat (Tzippi was working there serving) so I ate at home and then went back to work.

It was when I got back home that Tzippi informed me that Libbe had called. It seems to me that this is the first time that I've received a call from Libbe since being in Israel (though I may be wrong) and I'm sorry that I wasn't at home to speak with her. On the other hand, it gave Tzippi a chance to

speak with her, and they apparently had a pleasant conversation. Yes, it's quite clear to me that Mom, and everyone else, is worried. I simply don't see the point in calling after each missile fails to report that all is well. As Tzippi explained to Libbe, if all isn't well, you'll be among the first to know. Tzippi reported to me that Libbe exclaimed a number of times that the situation was "amazing" — that she found it hard to believe that we could live "normally" with missiles landing on us. I guess that it is rather strange, but I have to admit that I'd find it even stranger if we didn't take it in stride. I've lived with numerous dangerous situations for many years already so perhaps it's not at all strange that I've adjusted to them. But it seems to me that all of us have adjusted to many dangerous situations that other people, not familiar with those situations, would find it amazing that one could live with them and still function normally. We, for instance, have often wondered how kids can grow up in a healthy manner living in New York, but since it's been done, I guess that we shouldn't be so amazed. But of course we've learned to adjust to something else which someone else would find, until they've lived with it, impossible to adjust to

And now back to Wednesday night. When we received word that the war had started I called Bennie and Ruchama and then drove over to pick them up and bring them here. There was no alert that night and thus no need to enter our sealed off rooms. We were awakened about 02:30 and I brought them here by 03:00. We sat and watched the beginnings of the unfolding war on television and then Tzippi and I drove to my kvutzah to pick up some mattresses. We gave Bennie and Ruchama the bedroom and slept ourselves in the living room (if in an apartment the size of ours that's what it's called) but it's hard to say that we got much sleep. When we got up at about 07:00 it was after having slept little more than an hour since word had reached us on the start of the war.

The next morning nobody went to work, but since at that time we'd felt no threat to Israel it was a strangely calm and comfortable day. We ate in our rooms and Ruchama and Bennie were with us through much of the day, until around 15:00 when all of us figured that there was no reason why I couldn't take them home. After all, it wasn't particularly comfortable for us for them to be by us, and even more difficult for them. That evening I called to tell them that I had a car so that I could pick them up if called for and they reported that they preferred to take their chances in the event that something really did take place. For them the change of venue was too difficult and not really worth the effort. Ruchama really isn't well and for her to sleep in a different apartment, or to go to one in the middle of the night if called for, is more difficult than to take her chances. Of course at that time no missiles had fallen on Tel Aviv yet, but even after they had Bennie and Ruchama preferred to stay at home. (And we really didn't know that the ceilings weren't effective at stopping the penetration of gas, but only that perhaps they weren't.) We've since learned from other people in our neighborhood that their elderly parents are also refusing to stay by them and prefer to stay in their own apartments, regardless of the chances they're taking.

Tzippi and I thus have a rather large apartment with only two people staying in it, while in many other places whole families and even more people are cramming in. We've volunteered to take in boarders if it's called for, but so far nobody has been found who doesn't have a "safe" place to stay, or who prefers to sleep somewhere else than their own apartment.

Monday, January 21, 22:30

In many ways we seem to be well on the way to being back to normal. The civilian defense authorities announced toward the end of tonight's news report (as has become quite usual, it was much longer than the traditional half hour and it only ended about twenty minutes ago) that throughout the country all work is returning to a regular format. Of course the schools will still be closed, and that means that many mothers (what? you thought it would be fathers?) will have to stay home and be with their children, but a definite attempt is being made to bring us back as much as possible to a semblance of normality.

Last night's news was, it seemed to me at the time, the first news report since the start of the war that carried reports on additional news worthy items other than what's happening in the gulf, or in Israel as a result of the war. Today's even carried a bit of sports news, meaning that in that respect as well things are returning to normal — or at least we're getting used to the situation. Since the beginning of the war Israel's radio stations have been broadcasting as one station on all channels. For a while, after we'd heard preliminary reports that the allied surprise attack had knocked out the Iraqi air

force and its missile launching capabilities, some of the stations started broadcasting separately, but after we woke up to reports that missiles had landed on Tel Aviv the stations were reunited and are yet to be separated once again.

It's important to make one thing most clear — we're not at war. Israel isn't a combatant in this conflict, and just about all of us here hope that it won't be. That's an issue I want to relate to (when I succeed in catching up with numerous other things that are waiting very impatiently to be reported) but for the moment I wanted to mention it in connection to our slow crawl back to normality. On the kibbutz Thursday, Friday and Shabbat were for almost the entire population days in which we all stayed at home or in our neighborhoods. The atmosphere was calm, even after missiles had landed in Tel Aviv both Thursday night and Shabbat morning. Though when we wandered farther than our neighborhoods we took our gas masks with us few of us were really fearful that something would happen — on the kibbutz at least. It was only when we started getting reports over the phone from friends that we really started to realize that real damage had been done, and that the population of Tel Aviv was definitely shaken. We now have numerous guests on the kibbutz who prefer to be here than in Tel Aviv (or, in a couple of cases, in Haifa) and though it's now been quiet for two days, chances are good that additional missiles on Tel Aviv will bring more people to the kibbutz.

This is totally understandable, but it rubs us a bit wrong. Israel, it's well known, has a very confident self image. We're supposed to be the people who defeated the united Arab armies in six days back in 1967, who designed and carried out the Antebbe operation, and the like. We're not supposed to be the type of people who start falling apart and running away when a few missiles land in our backyards, no matter how uncomfortable that situation might be. Over the years Tel Aviv has become the recreation center of Israel — a city that never sleeps as it advertises itself. Though many of the recreations that Tel Aviv offers are often far from what I find desirable as cultural activities, they're most definitely part of what we Zionists used to refer to as "the normalization of the Jewish People". Even if we become "normalized" in directions that are distasteful to me, having a state means that we can wage a struggle over the definition of our culture, so I have little reason to complain. It's certainly another aspect of being normal that we have people who prefer to leave a city that's in danger of being attacked by long range missiles rather than continue to stay there day after day. It might be better for our own self-image were we to withstand a couple of days of bombing like the people of London withstood the German blitz in World War II, but of course most people in Tel Aviv are staying put, so there's little reason to get too excited over people leaving. This isn't a war, the vast majority of miluimnikim haven't been called up, and we're learning to adjust to a different sort of stress than the stress of war that we've sadly grown to be used to. Numerous times I've admitted out loud that it would be easier for me to be called up at the moment than to be glued to the news reports. In the past I've often said that wives and mothers have had a harder time on the home front than those of us called up who don't have to do much at all during the long periods of waiting that are the bulk of wars. We're learning that maintaining a semblance of normality takes great strength.

These thoughts somehow connect me to one of the items on this evening's news. We saw a report on the response of American Jews to the present crisis in which one woman expressed her hope that Israel would respond to the Iraqi attacks. She said something like "I don't want to see us go like sheep to the slaughter again". This puts me in a bit of an uncomfortable position. I'm pleased that world opinion has swung toward us, but it's strange to realize that this is because a few missiles have landed on us. It's amazing to realize that with his back to the wall Saddam Hussein has little else to do besides attacking Israel which is clearly not a side in this issue at the moment, but as much as these attacks hurt, they certainly don't represent a danger to our existence. (I wonder whether attacks such as this convince some old friends that it's not Israeli belligerence, or particular Israeli policies, that Saddam Hussein sees as the enemy, but instead quite simply our very existence.) Yet this woman, with her strange conception of vicarious Jewish pride, wants us to attack Iraq, something that even the present Israeli government seems to think will in the long run be destructive for us. If being normal means having a city like Tel Aviv that not only never sleeps but also starts falling apart when the missiles start falling, then it should also mean being able to live in peace. And achieving that peace, more than anything else, should be our major objective so that we can finally establish our normality — and let people live it up in Tel Aviv whenever they want.

It's now after midnight. One additional sign of our slow return to normality (this time not in the classic Zionist sense, but in regular, day to day, terms) is the fact that I've been sitting and typing until

now while Tzippi went to sleep over an hour ago. I'm still a night owl, and she usually wants to turn the lights out early. Since the beginning of the war we've been shutting the light off together. This was actually the first chance I've had today to write and I didn't want to forego it — there's still a lot of catching up to do, and things about today that I wanted to report.

I enjoyed working in the orange groves yesterday. It was a nice change of pace, and it gave me a chance to speak with numerous people whom I'm not often in contact with. Today I worked in our pecan orchard, and once again I had a chance to speak with some different people. But that was only for the morning. Toward the late morning we had too strong a drizzle for us to continue the work (though hardly enough to really call it rain) and we came back to the kibbutz. The people I was with went to work in the factory, but I had about two hours of folding and distributing laundry in my kvutzah and I finished my day by doing that.

In the late afternoon I brought Bennie and Ruchama to Rechovoth for an eye check up for Ruchama. While I waited for them I wandered around a bit, and I was surprised to notice that only about half the people out on the streets were carrying their gas masks. Though I'm not in Rechovoth often enough to be an expert, the streets seemed only a bit less busy than normal.

And then in the evening I sat by the central telephone for two and a half hours, until 21:30. This wasn't much of a job since nothing of any significance happened that I had to deal with. If I'm presently writing about how much things are presently back to normal, the fact that we're keeping this "nerve center" working throughout the day is a sign that these are still rather irregular times.

Our "security authorities" on the kibbutz decided that it's still too early to open the childrens' houses. Tomorrow only a few of the kvutzot will be operating, and they only for a few hours at most. In terms of security it's a question of will we be able to quickly deal with a missile attack if one occurs, and the "authorities" preferred to stay on the safe side. I argued against such a decision. To my mind it would be much more healthy for the kids to return to the children's houses for the day, or at least part of it, and of course that would also allow most of the mothers to return to work as well. I trust that by Wednesday either enough of us will complain so that we'll once again open the houses. I'm convinced that doing so is for the better. Perhaps it's good public relations for the world to see that we've been attacked even though we're not involved in this war, but rather than continuing to win points in the public relations battle I'd prefer simply to get on with things.

Wednesday, January 23, 00:10

It's now almost four hours since the latest Iraqi missile attack on Tel Aviv. Tzippi and I were sitting and watching television when we heard the siren from the base. I turned on the radio in order to hear the first reports and to learn whether or not we were to go into our sealed rooms and put on our gas masks. Only a short time earlier we'd finished making plans for what's now this morning — the children's houses will be open for most of the day, meaning that I'll finally be getting back to my job, and Tzippi will be going to a rehearsal of the orchestra, although there's still the possibility that in the morning we'll get a phone call telling her that there's been a change of plans. In other words, even though it was clear that Iraq still had the capability of launching missiles against us, we were getting back to normal. The latest reports tell us that we're continuing with the process of normalization, even though this time our luck wore out and instead of causing rather minimal damage like in the last two missile attacks this time a two-story building was directly hit and there are many injured — we're still waiting for more definitive reports, and we're bracing ourselves for the possibility, or more probably, the probability, that those reports will be discouraging.

Yes, I know that Saddam Hussein is trying to achieve some political gains by bombing Israel. It's clear that he's interested in bringing Israel into the war in order to undermine the coalition that's acting against him. It's amazing to realize that Syria has said that it would understand an Israeli retaliation, and that suggests that Saddam Hussein won't succeed in achieving that particular objective. We're of course used to being "responsible" for anything and everything that happens in the world and I have no doubt that many friends from long ago will find some way to explain that an attack on Israeli civilians is understandable and justified. For me it's depressing to realize that, even conceding him a certain amount of political cunning (no matter how irrational), with his back to the wall Saddam Hussein seems more concerned with attacking Israel than with trying either to win the war he's in, or even with protecting his people from more and more destruction.

I've now been typing for half an hour and haven't gotten very far. I started writing after the



midnight news and have been listening to the radio with earphones since Tzippi has gone to sleep. I haven't been writing very quickly, partially because it's been hard for me to find the right words, partially because I've been listening to the news reports in between the songs on the radio with as much diligence as I've been devoting to writing, and partially because this whole evening has simply put me in a depressed mood. A couple of moments ago the radio reported that three people were killed in the missile attack, and about three more persons critically injured. I admit that I was expecting a more distressing report, as though this isn't distressing enough. And since I haven't been getting very far with my writing, and because my vigil of listening to the radio is over, I'll stop here and go to sleep. Of course the major question, and according to the radio reports the question is being debated not only in Israel but in all the capitols of the anti-Saddam Hussein coalition, is whether or not Israel will be able to permit itself not to respond this time. I still believe that in the long run it's preferable for Israel not to respond, but I won't go into that issue again tonight.

Thursday, January 24, 21:45

It's been a long time since I last sat down to write. Almost two full days. In that time a great deal has happened, but above all else, we've returned to our regular work (more or less) and I've got my hands full with numerous activities that keep me from sitting and writing when I might want to. Yesterday and today the children's houses were open, though only for part of the day. Maybe that means that I didn't put in a full day's work, though I certainly felt exhausted enough for at least one full day by the time I got home both days. School hasn't started yet so we're keeping the kids busy with other sorts of activities and that means that I'd really like to wash a floor or some dishes already instead of being with them all the time. I'd been hopeful that they'd be rather calm when they returned from almost a full week of being in their homes and neighborhoods. Yesterday I was proven wrong — it seemed much more that these trying times were taking their toll on them than that they were trying hard to cope. Today, I'm happy to report, was much better. It's as though we have to relearn to be together in the kvutzah.

This is a good place to report something I've made a note of but haven't known where to include here. In our kvutzah I'm responsible for the kids when they're in their junkyard/playground. Partially this means being referee and policeperson, but it also means that I've got a chance to see them from up close and get to know what they're building. Last week, before the start of the war, they were very busy building various types of "protected" buildings. Some of them were building shelters, some "sealed off" rooms, and in general it was quite obvious that the general atmosphere on the kibbutz was taking its toll on them. That's of course to be expected. Their drawings show planes and tanks and their conversations are frequently heavily seasoned with references to the Americans or to Saddam Hussein. And of course when they come to the kvutzah in the morning they come with their gas masks. Both yesterday and today we had drills to see whether we're prepared if something happens during the day when the kids are by us. Some of them can put their masks on themselves, and some of them need help, but all of them seem to take all this in stride. And this is supposed to be childhood? Then again, we've read that this year parents in New York are sending their kids to school with flak jackets, so we're back to the fact that it's possible to adjust to anything.

Tuesday I spent the day working in the chadar ochel. That's not work that I much enjoy, but in many ways what I most enjoyed about the first three days of this week was the fact that each day I worked someplace else. That gave me a chance to see lots of people whom I don't ordinarily see, to do different jobs than what I ordinarily do, and perhaps best of all, not to be at any of those jobs long enough to get bored with them. By Tuesday evening we were really feeling back to normal, but then the third missile attack that I wrote about when I last wrote occurred, and we all too easily realized that this is a situation which we'll probably just have to find some way of adjusting to because it's quite possible that we'll be living with it for quite some time.

Tzippi went to an orchestra rehearsal on Wednesday, and on her way home, since she had a ride all the way, she picked up her horn teacher and brought her here. Sally is in her eighth month of pregnancy and her husband is a respiratory therapist in a large hospital in Tel Aviv and has hardly been home since the start of this crisis. One missile from the first attack landed quite close to her home, and in general it's been a stressful time for her, and since we have room here, we were happy to put out a mattress for her and make her part of the family until she'll feel ready to go back to Tel Aviv.

Until Wednesday our "sealed off" room was our bedroom. It was easy to close off because we only had to seal off the bedroom window and the sliding door that's the entrance to the room. But on the other hand it wasn't that easy because sealing off the sliding door was a bit complicated and we ended up leaving it only slightly open and squeezing through each time we had to get into the room. For Sally, in the event of an alert, getting through this opening would have been a bit too difficult so we decided to seal off the entire room, and I succeeded in taking care of this task in about three hours so that by yesterday mid-evening everything was taken care of and all we have to do in the event of an alert is seal off the entrance door instead of the bedroom door. And of course it's much more comfortable to be in the apartment under these conditions, if for no other reason that we can now get to the toilet if we have to while we're supposed to be in our "sealed off" rooms.

Two projects that I've been involved with lately have kept me from sitting down and writing as much as I'd like. (Why, you may ask, do I want to sit down and write so much? After all, sooner or later, and probably sooner, I'll start repeating myself. There can't be that much of interest that bears reporting.)

And just about five minutes ago (it's now 22:20) we had a full alert throughout the country. I started shutting down the Mac (we don't want too much electricity running while an alert is on) and then started sealing off the front door. I'd barely finished that task when we heard the all clear signal and we returned to normal almost as quickly as we started getting ready for what's become almost our daily exercise. I still haven't heard just what it was that happened, if anything, but I'm happy that it seems to have been nothing. (It turned out to be only a false alarm.)

Shabbat, January 26, 10:30

Only a few minutes ago Mark and I finished talking on the phone. I apologize for not recognizing Mark's voice, but since Sally has been by us we've gotten used to phone calls being for her. Still, it didn't take very long under I knew who was on the other side of the line and we readily started conversing. I don't mean to sound so nonchalant on the phone, but it's really true that we've adjusted quite quickly to this abnormal situation. Of course if we were living in Tel Aviv we might be relating to things quite differently, and perhaps a missile landing only about thirty kilometers farther south than they've been landing so far is all that's needed for us to lose our calm and to become quite nervous and fidgety. It was nice to speak with Mark on the phone (as always) and I trust that he'll the pass word on that at present all is well. This past Wednesday, while Tzippi was away at her orchestra rehearsal her brother Phil called and I spoke with him for a few minutes, and then Tzippi got up early this morning to give her mother a call. Thursday afternoon I also received a call from Ariel Malek who reported that it was 4:30 in the morning by her and that she couldn't sleep so she decided to try and call. We had a nice conversation, and she promised to call Mom and tell her she'd spoken with me. Perhaps because I don't really enjoy using the phone to say that everything is all right (though it was definitely pleasing to speak with Mark) I want to print at least part of this journal today so that I can have something in the mail and give you at least some picture of what things have been like for us here.

Yesterday evening we made plans to bring Bennie and Ruchama to our neighborhood to celebrate Ruchama's 71st birthday. My kibbutz brother, Ian, lives just down the walk from us and it made more sense for them to come to our neighborhood than for all of us to go to Bennie and Ruchama's as is customary on 'erev Shabbat. And of course they don't have a large enough "sealed off" room like both Ian and we do. So we made plans to bring them here, and then later decided that we'd all congregate by Ian since Sally's mattress takes up part of our living room. Ian's daughters, eight and six years old, were a bit disappointed by this decision. They like coming here to play the piano and the electronic keyboard, and came over a bit early in order to visit with us and make some music. When I took a car to pick up Bennie and Ruchama (and Ruthi who's been on the kibbutz for about four days now) the girls came along with me. And just as I was pulling up in front of Bennie and Ruchama's apartment the sirens started going off. The most logical thing to do was bring the girls back home — about a two minute drive — and then to go home myself and wait until the alert was over. It was as I was heading home, driving north, that I saw two large orange streamers streaking downward across the sky. I knew that I was seeing either SCUD missiles or Patriot missiles on their way to intercept them. Since the path was downward I figured that it was SCUDs, though the angle of decline didn't

seem to me to be large enough for them to be coming from very far away. Then again, I knew that I was looking at something from quite far off, and it was hard to tell just what it was I was seeing. The SCUDs were apparently intercepted, but that took place too low on the horizon for me to see.

All this took place at 18:00. It was only about 45 minutes later that I once again went to pick Bennie and Ruchama up. We had a rather low keyed birthday celebration and then instead of going up to the chadar ochel to eat I drove Bennie and Ruchama home and at the same time brought Ruthi to the chadar ochel to take food for us and picked her up on the way back. She stayed by us and visited, and watched television (our, and just about everybody's, main activity for the past ten days) for a few hours before she went back to the room where she's staying. We of course watched the news and followed the various reports tensely and with trepidation, and then somehow easily and almost naturally laughed heartily at the comic segments of the talk show we were watching.

This is perhaps a good place to note that one of the things that probably make things so tense for us is the fact that we've always got the radio or television going. Late last night Tzippi and I permitted ourselves the luxury of playing ourselves a compact disc of a Schubert octet. It was incredibly relaxing to listen to that instead of to the news reports and Israeli songs — nice as they may often be — that has become what we almost constantly hear. This morning the classical music station started rebroadcasting, and apparently other stations have also started returning to their regular scheduling. Until now, except for a short time before the first missile attack, all radio stations have been broadcasting as one. Now I can once again listen to radio that I like to hear and still be sure that important announcements will reach me. But over the past ten days I've become addicted to the news and I doubt that for the duration of this crisis I'll be able to listen to anything else than what I've become used to.

One of the things Mark asked about on the phone was what things were like in the occupied territories. We really don't know, but just a moment ago on the radio I heard a report on that subject. Apparently things are relatively quiet in the territories, though yesterday the first reported murder of someone suspected of cooperating with the Israeli authorities took place. Curfew is lifted for a few hours each day to allow people to purchase whatever they need for their homes. There have been reports of demonstrations in support of Saddam Hussein's attacks on Tel Aviv during the hours that curfew is lifted, but in general things have been quiet. It's definitely disturbing to think that Palestinians think that support of Saddam Hussein can achieve anything for them. They must be aware that sooner or later their great hope is going to take his final curtain call and they'll be back to a rather hopeless situation. It would certainly make much more political sense to realize this simple fact and act in accordance. Even if it would just be putting on an act, making statements to the effect that attacking civilian populations, on either side, is not the proper way to solve our mutual problem would certainly be a much better way of getting positive press coverage. And at a time like this, when the attacks on Tel Aviv are causing such large waves of sympathy and identification with Israel, it seems that the Palestinians are intent, once again, on showing that their leadership doesn't have the slightest idea of how to actually help its people. It's almost inevitable that when this war is over new pressure will be placed on Israel to solve the Palestinian problem and thus include the middle east into the "new world order" (something that I'm very suspicious of and don't see as particularly positive for most of the peoples of the world, but is probably rather unavoidable at the moment). Though much of Israel will see this pressure as the Americans returning once again to their old position of selling out Israel, for me this will be a positive step since only in that way can we really achieve peace, no matter how tenuous that peace will be. But the Palestinians could certainly be doing a lot more to help themselves at the moment were they to behave a bit more realistically.

The other item which I've heard on the news reports this morning since I've been writing is about the extent of the ecological damage done by the oil spills being created by Saddam Hussein's bombing of the Kuwaiti oil fields. I'm not really too well informed about this issue, but it seems that major damage is being done, and that this is just the beginning. What's more, because there's a war going on, at this point nothing is being done to try and clean things up.

Shabbat, 14:30

I've just reread all this so far so that I can prepare it for printing. In another half hour I go to the health center for my monthly four hours there. And I'll finish up now with one more "ecological"

note. We've finally been getting some rain. Israeli news hasn't been reporting the weather, apparently so that the enemy won't know whether it's a good time to bomb us or not, or with what. This whole issue seems strange to me since weather reports in the Israeli media is certainly not the only way to learn what it's like here, if Saddam Hussein really wants, or needs to know. But happily, we've had over 100 millimeters of rain over the past three days, and it looks like we'll still be getting more. The rain keeps us in our rooms more than usual, even for this unusual times. For me, it's caused me to shut down the Mac a couple of times when I thought that lightning might cause a power failure, and I wanted to be sure not to lose what I've been writing.

Motz'ei Shabbat, January 26, 23:20

It was an hour and twenty minutes ago that our quiet evening of watching the television news was interrupted by an alert. I guess that we were almost expecting this. It's somehow become a more or less daily event for us, and since we hadn't had a missile attack yet today it was rather logical to assume that one should be coming. On the other hand, though we promptly swung into action, Tzippi and Sally putting on their gas masks, me sealing off the door before doing so, I distinctly felt to myself "this really shouldn't be happening". After all, we're sitting in a comfortable Israeli living room, watching a rather new color television that's bringing us news from around the world. We've become used to the fact that we're the comfortable observers who are supposed to hear about what's happening to other people, instead of other people getting reports of what's happening to us. There doesn't seem to be any logical reason that our quiet evening should be interrupted by a missile attack. After more than a week of this, there are still moments when I'm sitting with Tzippi with our gas masks on, either listening to the radio or watching the television, when I find myself watching myself from outside, scratching my head in disbelief and wondering how all this is happening. Though this might be a political question, on the whole it's much more a sort of existential question — how is it that this sort of thing is happening to me. Yes, there's such a thing as chance. It's possible to have your home destroyed by a tornado, or you can be in an automobile accident, or maybe accidentally be caught in the crossfire of two warring gangs or something like that. So it's also very possible to be hit by a missile. But to be the object of missile attacks day after day just doesn't seem to fit. And then I remind myself about the people of Beirut who probably asked themselves similar questions. They were bombed by us, they were bombed by the Syrians, warring militias made street fighting a daily sport in their streets. And they got used to the situation.

But this isn't a situation that we want to get adjusted to. Just two weeks ago we were being told that it was most improbable that any missiles would be shot at us, and that if they were the damage would be minimal. And here we are, after six such missile attacks, thinking we're lucky that damage has been as small as it's been, and bracing ourselves for more. And our leaders are telling us that we should learn to live with the situation. I don't need my leaders to reach that conclusion. I need them to find ways to get out of a situation which it's best not to learn to live with. (And we should remember that when the intifada started we were told that it wouldn't last more than a couple of weeks.) So do I think that our leaders should do something to get us out of this situation? If the expected answer to that question is that I think that they should attack Iraq, or Iraq's military potential, the answer is no, I don't. After more than a week of this I still think that attacking Iraq would be highly counterproductive.

This is a good point at which to note that the political goals of the United States in this war are not necessarily Israel's goals. Even I, avowed leftist that I am, won't really complain if Iraq's military potential is destroyed (though unlike other Israelis I won't think that that's the end of our problems). That's not necessarily the goal of the U.S. and it would be good for the Israeli population to realize this. I don't think there's any reason to complain that the U.S. is waging a war that I stand to benefit from in the end, but I also don't think that we in Israel should expect the U.S. to function according our desires.

I also can't resist an additional comment which most Israelis and American Jews would probably be quite opposed to. It seems to me that most Americans who are now reacting with the waves of sympathy that Israel is now receiving are doing so because they can identify with the highly western looking people whom they see on their television screens. Yes, there's often a good deal of sympathy for the Palestinians but that sympathy is often a form of slumming whereas in our case many Americans feel that what's happening to us could be happening to them and this causes a deeper sort of sympathy. I don't mind the sympathy and the identification. Far from it. But even in these hard

times I still have to remember that in the long run we need to find a solution to our ongoing political problem of how we're going to continue to live in the middle east, and the demonization of the enemy, either in our eyes or in American eyes, isn't going to bring us any closer to such a solution.

And that's my answer to my question of a couple of paragraphs ago as to what I think our leaders should be doing to get us out of this situation. Sooner or later we'll have to realize that only through territorial compromise and international guarantees for our security will we be able to avoid another war of this sort in the future.

It's now after midnight. I'd wanted to relate to a couple of different issues tonight, but when there's a missile attack at 22:00, and then just as the radio tells you, at 22:20, that you can take your mask off another alert goes off, your thoughts turn to different things than a review of what you did during the day. At least I can finish these thoughts with the positive reports that tonight's missile attacks apparently didn't cause any injuries.

Sunday, January 27, 16:30

I'm intended to print this up and get it into the mail, but somewhere along the line I realized that no matter what I'd do I wouldn't have this ready to be in the mail by this morning so that there really wasn't any good reason to have the printer making noise relatively late into the night. (I wanted to start printing at 22:00, after the news, and of course missile attacks have a way of causing sudden changes in the best laid plans...)

Though when I went to sleep last night I felt that I'd finished writing all I wanted to write on those particular thoughts, this morning I realized that there was one additional part of those musings which I'd left out — one of those four letter words that in this particular case is spelled with seven letters — linkage. Yes, I'm one of those few Israelis who don't object to linkage. Quite the contrary, strategically placed to linkage to my mind can be a very effective measure, and I'd be pleased if Israel could figure out how to use it.

So do I think that there's really a connection between the Iraqi invasion and take over of Kuwait and the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip? Not particularly (and certainly the American invasion of Panama is much more analogous to the Iraqi invasion than anything Israel has done). Though I'm opposed to the Israeli occupation and know for a fact that there are many too many Israelis for whom the conquests of the six-day war satisfied expansionist desires, it's still clear that for the most part Israel originally found itself surprised with the occupied territories and didn't know what to do with them. A justifiable war of defense gained us territories which at the time we should have used to negotiate with for peace, but instead of this the occupation became a fact of life and slowly but surely became an indivisible part of Israel in the eyes of much of Israel.

And yes, I'm not quite naive enough to think that all of our problems will be solved and that we'll be accepted with open arms into the family of nations of the middle east the minute we return territories. Still, it's clear that our continued occupation of the territories is at the foundation of our inability to reach any agreements with our neighbors, just as it also (as I've written all too often in the past) is destructive for Israeli society internally. It's quite clear today that a "new world order" will place finding a solution to the Palestinian problem high on its agenda, meaning that as soon as this war is over pressure will be on us to reach some sort of solution. I don't see anything wrong with such pressure, basically because I think that finding a solution (and freeing ourselves from the occupied territories) would be good for Israel. So why shouldn't we have called Saddam Hussein's bluff and said that we accept the idea of linkage? There are those who say that by doing so we would have shown that we were giving in to pressure and to terror, but we could have made a good case to show that actually we were the only people who were willing to think about the entire world and not just about our own well being. By doing so we could have picked up a good deal of points which we could have converted into international guarantees when an international conference on the middle east actually opened. And of course we would have gained losing the territories. Yes, I agree that there would have been a certain amount of risk involved in such a move, but once again, during this still relatively short war everyone seems to have learned over and over that it's easier to get into a war than it is to get out of one, and it's still unclear what Saddam Hussein still has in store for us, or we for him. In the long run I think it would have been better to have found an elegant way of avoiding the conflict.

It's already quite a long time ago that I started to mention two projects that I've been involved with that have been taking up my time. Somehow I succeeded in being involved with numerous other things that kept me from finishing that thought. And though it's presently my intention to review here a bit of what else I've been involved with besides the war (and listening to the news, watching television and I guess being at work also, more or less in that order) other things come to mind as well, so I can only hope that they'll lead me in a somewhat roundabout manner to what I'd intended to write.

And before getting into that, it seems that I should explain why it is that I've got an hour and a half difference between this entry and my previous entry. After all, it should have taken me about an hour to write that last entry, so why should I stop and start again? My last entry brought closure to my thoughts of last night and I then prepared everything I've written so far for printing. And while the rest of this is being printed in the background I figure that I might as well continue now with some additional thoughts and by the time the rest of this is printed I'll be able to add this on as well.

Yesterday afternoon I spent my monthly four hours in the health center, but this time I only had one person to look after. Though plans were made to care for our paying recuperants, meaning basically that we allocated space for them in our shelters, when the war broke out it was decided that we couldn't be responsible for them in the event that something actually happened. I personally don't think that this was a necessary decision, especially since we only accept people to the health center who are functional and not dependent on constant care, but that was the decision made. So the only person who's still there at the moment is a member of the kibbutz who is a stroke victim and has been in the health center since it opened (and of course I've been working with her a long time already). Her oldest daughter is a member of the kibbutz and her two other children are often here on Shabbatot to visit her so that although I'm experienced with working and caring for her, I frequently have little contact with her when I'm working on Shabbat. When I learned that she was the only person presently in the health center I asked whether I was really needed to work — perhaps her daughter would take care of her during my work hours and I'd be free to do some other work that was needed. In the end it was decided that my four hours were a time when the daughter (who's understandably under a great deal of pressure because of having to care for her invalid mother, and is also preoccupied with her sister and niece who are presently staying by her because a missile landed uncomfortably close to their home in Tel Aviv) could be freed to relax a bit. So even though I had very little work to do my presence was desirable.

Having time on my hands during what's considered working hours I was able to devote some time to one of the two projects which I've been involved with. Throughout this year and much of last as well I've been the facilitator for the term paper of one of our twelfth graders. This has meant working with her to define the subject of her project, finding source material, helping her get a handle on the subject, edging her on to do the work and get something written, and lately, since the time has come to turn the paper in, reading what she's written, editing it, and even doing some writing in order to act as a catalyst and give her some direction. Over the past few weeks we've been sitting together at least a couple of times a week to go over what she's prepared, or for me to show her some ideas I have for how she can present her conclusions. The last few times of course she's been coming over to here with her gas mask, and on Wednesday evening I had to postpone a meeting with her because I was busy sealing off the entire apartment. Yesterday afternoon we were able to sit and work for about an hour and a half, and it happily looks as though she'll be able to turn in her project very soon.

My other project is I guess an additional sign of normalization. The kibbutz has been making plans for a "song festival" of home made material. I traditionally prepare a song for these "competitions" and invariably I'm quite far out in left field, not appealing to the taste that song festivals have to pander to. Quite a while ago I decided that next time I'd write something so banal that I couldn't help but win. Work with an arranger from outside the kibbutz (whom we've worked with in the past and with whom I have good contact) started about a month ago, and of course when the war broke out everything looked like it would be put on hold. But last week the arranger came a couple of times and we started working again, and I had to find the time to get to a couple of rehearsals. If all I'm busy with is watching the news then it shouldn't be that hard to find time for this, but it turned out that just when I should have been getting to rehearsals I had other tasks like

meetings to determine what the daily schedule of our kvutzah would be. And I hope that this short review of activities gives a bit of a picture of what other sorts of things are happening by me besides the war.

Motz'ei Shabbat, February 2, 1945

It's been almost a full week since I last sat down to write. To a great extent that's a function of the extent to which we've become accustomed to the situation around us. There seems to be a limit to how much you can write about missiles landing somewhere near the center of Israel, though I certainly don't want to sound as though I'm complaining about a lack of excitement. The code word for Israel for the past week has been חירום שגרת (shig'rat kheirum) which I guess should be translated as "emergency routine". Yes, that's most definitely an oxymoron, but apparently a very real and functional one. For quite a while already we've been learning that it's very possible to get used to an emergency situation, and somehow it sounds a bit blasphemous, or at the least irreverent, to write that now we're also learning that it's possible to get bored with that situation.

In the past week we've had two more missile alerts. Two a week isn't that bad, I guess, especially when they don't cause damage, only a few missed heart beats. It's strange to note that the last two missiles have apparently landed in the west bank. (I write apparently because of the Israeli blackout on precise details, apparently so that the enemy won't be able to calculate precisely by how much he's missed the mark and thus hit the target more effectively the next time. Of course it's pretty hard to keep information from leaking out, and even ministers of defense and retired generals seem to have a way of saying things that they apparently weren't supposed to say.) I suppose that if a missile were to cause significant damage to a west bank village someone could find a way of explaining that the casualties were martyrs in the cause, or even that it was really Israeli belligerence that brought about the destruction. After all, in yesterday's paper we read that the New York Post reported that Patriot missiles weren't fired at one SCUD missile because the Israelis saw that it was going to land in the west bank and didn't want to do anything about it. As someone who doesn't have too much trust in the humanitarian values of most Israelis (meaning that I think that they behave more or less like all the rest of the world behaves when faced with moral choices) I still have to admit that I found this particular report a bit too much to swallow. Of course the world is used to hearing about the terrible things that we're capable of perpetrating (and is somehow very experienced at not paying attention to what others do) but I have a feeling that in this case it's a bit difficult to become convinced that in the short time span available to a Patriot missiles crew to prepare to intercept a SCUD someone was able to quietly calculate that only Arabs were going to be injured so that there was no reason to get excited. But I've gotten involved in reporting all this when all I really

Motz'ei Shabbat, 22:45

That sentence was interrupted by the emergency part of our emergency routine. At 20:30 Tzippi and I heard the alert siren going off. For a few seconds we looked at each other as though we were asking "is this really happening again?" and then I started closing off the room as we turned on the radio and the television, and I turned off the Mac. After almost three hours all we know is that the all clear was sounded about two hours ago. It seems that one SCUD missile landed somewhere around the green line in the general middle of the country, and either the army had a hard time finding it, or didn't want to report too much. As of this

Motz'ei Shabbat, 23:30

It looks as though I'm not going to get around to all the catching up that I wanted to get to tonight. This time I was interrupted by Mom's call, and we spoke for around half an hour. Some of what we talked about were things that I intended to write here but after having reported them to her I feel that I can now wait until tomorrow to write. So I'll only do a small bit of catching up at present and I'll sit down to write more tomorrow.

The interrupted sentence should have read that as of this writing there have been no reports of casualties or of damage, and that's a good sign that we've come to hope to hear. Within half an hour

after the alert most of the country had been told that it could remove gas masks and to leave the "sealed off" rooms, and within 45 minutes the entire country was off the alert, and we could all return to the "routine" part of the emergency routine. Before the alert I'd intended to write until the news at 21:00 and then take our dirty clothes to the laundry and then sit and write some more. But the alert changed things slightly and we sat and watched the television (and listened to the radio simultaneously) while waiting for the all clear or for the news to start, whichever came first. They came at about the same time. I did succeed in getting to the laundry before I returned to writing and before Mom's call.

I guess that routine is routine and shouldn't be played around with too much. We've more or less gotten used to the idea that just about once every 48 hours a SCUD missile is launched from Iraq toward Israel, and 20:30 this evening was definitely the right time in order to keep us on schedule. Thursday evening's missile attack came while Tzippi and I and our guest Sally were sitting and watching a movie on the kibbutz's video. Like all good citizens we promptly sealed off our room and put on our gas masks and turned on the radio. And it was then (with definite qualms of guilt toward those who quite possibly had just had a missile explode around them, but also with the feeling that there was nothing that we could do to change the situation, and perhaps as an attempt to carry out the "emergency routine" which is the country's present catchword) that we decided that we might as well continue to watch the movie on the video. It was a strange feeling, but after all, what difference would it really make it instead of watching the movie we'd sit and do nothing except wait for an all clear from the radio or television. In conversations with numerous people the next day we discovered that we weren't the only people who felt this discomfort but who all the same continued to watch the movie.

The motz'ei Shabbat missile ended what was thankfully a peaceful Shabbat. We were able to get a good night's sleep and relax throughout the day, and it was perhaps because we'd had a relaxing Shabbat that we were able to take the missile in stride and without too much anxiety. Our guest, Sally, felt that she'd rested well during the approximately ten days that she was by us and this morning friends of hers picked her up and brought her back to Tel Aviv — I almost wrote "to the front". Sally's husband worked 24 hour shifts through much of this week and when he had a full day off on Monday and on Wednesday he came to kibbutz and stayed the night. Since he doesn't have a car I found rides out for him on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Friday instead of coming here he spent time arranging their apartment in such a way that Sally will feel more comfortable there than she did during the first missile attacks before she came to stay by us, and they're hopeful that with the new arrangements, and of course also with the relative lull in missiles from Iraq, they'll be able to weather the remainder of this trying period together in Tel Aviv. It was nice having Sally with us, and nice to feel that we could do something to "aid the war effort", but it was just as nice to have her go home and once again have the apartment to ourselves and to be alone.

A number of items in this evening's news were definitely distressing. The last item was a report from German television about the extreme right wing there. I wrote that items on the news were distressing, yet in some strange and devious way there was actually something reassuring about the report. We saw young (and older) Germans who are volunteering to aid the Iraqi war effort, and we heard them explain that (wouldn't you know it?) the Jews are responsible for the murderous attacks being made on Iraq and they want to help Iraq defend itself. Once again, with his back against the wall it seems that Saddam Hussein, instead of helping his own people, seems intent only on trying to destroy Israel, and that the neo-Nazis in Germany are happy to publicly applaud this attempt. There were numerous demonstrations in Israel this week against Germany and the sale of chemical weapons and technological aid in the development of such weapons to Iraq. Yes, there's something disgusting about German involvement in this, though I find it hard to get too excited over the issue. George Bush, who compared Saddam Hussein to Hitler, quite elegantly forgot that the U.S. heavily armed Iraq during its war against Iran. Apparently, back when it wasn't in his interest to do so, he didn't choose to think that Saddam Hussein was like Hitler. We in Israel are particularly sensitive to what Germany does, but we shouldn't let this blind us to the fact that our great American ally did a good job of aiding Iraq as well.

This is perhaps a good place to add that, as I've written previously, even though it won't hurt Israel if Iraq's military potential is destroyed I still believe that in the future Iraq will be a possible partner in a peace agreement that has to be achieved in order for Israel to survive. When people ask, with expressions of disbelief on their faces, how one could possibly make peace with such a person, it's perhaps easiest to respond that even after these missile attacks the amount of damage that Saddam



Hussein has caused to Israel is much smaller than that caused by Sadat in the Yom Kippur war and most Israelis understood quite well that it was in our interest to make peace with Sadat when the opportunity presented itself. (And I should add that Egypt's behavior during this war has most certainly justified those among us who said that a real peace with Egypt was possible.) Saddam Hussein has certainly presented himself as the sort of person whom you love to hate, and whom there's good reason to be weary of, but as we've said all too many times in the past, you make peace with enemies, and you don't choose your enemies.

Still, in this light, the second item on the news that I wanted to report on is definitely distressing. The news carried a CNN interview with Yasir Arafat. Arafat presented himself in such an unflattering light that even someone like me who thinks that the Palestinian people have an absolute right to determine their own representatives will find it hard in the future to see Arafat as a potential negotiating partner. Arafat repeatedly claimed that Israel was already actively involved in this war, launching missiles from the Negev and the like. Plausibility has always been one of Arafat's problems, and this interview certainly didn't help his image much. After all, if he really believes all the things we heard him saying this evening, it will be very hard to reach any sort of agreement with him, and the same is true if he's purposefully lying. Frankly, he looked as though even he didn't believe what he was saying, but that hardly makes things more comforting.

Sunday, February 3, 18:15

I sat and wrote last night until much later than I'd originally intended. It was only after 1:00 this morning that I decided to stop, take my shower which I'd forgotten about earlier, and crawl into bed. I guess that it was only about ten minutes later, around 1:30, that we were awakened by the second alert of the night. I suppose that it's another example of our "emergency routine" that not only the radio announcers who were on the air at the time of the alert, but also the army spokesperson with whom they spoke (who over these past couple of weeks has come to be known as the major calming factor during these tense moments) joked about the fact that it was really unfair of Saddam Hussein to launch an additional missile, especially in the middle of the night, after we'd gotten used to only one missile every two days. It was as though we've reached a gentlemen's agreement about how to go about this business of the missiles, and suddenly Saddam Hussein isn't playing by the rules. That alert was a short one and I fell asleep almost immediately after we were told that our area was cleared of danger. Tzippi is always jealous of my ability to fall asleep so quickly and it apparently took her quite a bit longer to get back to sleep.

Yesterday's missiles once again apparently landed somewhere in the west bank. I've started a rumor that Israel has a secret anti-missile mechanism which produces a very strong wind that blows at the missiles that Iraq launches so that they can't reach Tel Aviv but instead land in the west bank, short of their target. It sounds like a good idea, which means that I should be careful about spreading it because there's no lack of people who will be happy to believe it. Today someone told us that a Canadian paper reported that the missiles that were landing in the west bank were really being launched by Israel. And once again, once you make certain assumptions about the present situation (namely, that the Jews are always guilty) anything is believable.

One of the issues that we've been involved with here has been the preventive detention of Sari Nusseibeh. Nusseibeh is known as a moderate Palestinian leader, and though he hasn't come out against Saddam Hussein he also hasn't defended the launching of missiles against civilian targets in Israel. In general the moderate Palestinian position has been to denounce the missiles launched against Israel and also to denounce the massive bombing of Iraq, or to state that the bombing of civilian targets in Israel won't lead to a just solution to our joint problem, just as the continued occupation (and the present curfew) won't lead to a solution. I have to admit that though I would be pleased to hear a stronger moral position I find these positions definitely acceptable and even moreso, considering the circumstances the Palestinians currently find themselves faced with, understandable.

Sunday, 22:15

It's now after the news. Among other things the news reported that today a judge ordered that Sari Nusseibeh's preventive detention be reduced to only three months. He noted that it's fair to think

that three months is long enough for the war to end and it's only during the war that there's a fear that Nusseibeh might present a danger to Israeli security. That's of course begging the point. Israeli security forces didn't say that Nusseibeh might reveal secrets and that he should thus be detained. They said that he'd already revealed secrets — the precise locations at which missiles landed. The left was quick to demand that if there was any truth to the charges made against Nusseibeh then he should be placed on trial for a very serious crime, and if he didn't do what he's been accused of doing then there was no justification for his preventive detention. Today's decision only strengthens that position. It's frightening to think that the Israeli government is making the most of the present touchy situation in order to take care of some long range objectives such as finishing off the moderate Palestinian leadership of Jerusalem and the territories. To my dismay, not every rumor you hear, or every wild idea you can dream up, is necessarily in the realm of science fiction or paranoia. Yes, it's absurd to think that Israel is launching missiles against the west bank and accusing Iraq of doing so, but it's sadly believable that Israel is taking this opportunity to crush the moderate Palestinian leadership.

And now, after I'd done a bit of catching up, I can take a deep breath and write about what's been happening on a more personal front. In a way I'm happy that I had a chance to talk with Mom last night and tell her this news because having done so already allows me to tell these events more or less in chronological order, and that's a better way for me to review them and in that way reexperience them.

It was shortly after the beginning of the war that we, and of course especially Tzippi, began to happily suspect that Tzippi was pregnant. As the war progressed it became more and more apparent that that was the case, and about ten days ago Tzippi took a blood test which returned the next day — positive. Slowly but surely we started thinking seriously about pregnancy — reading numerous books, making different calculations, and remaining careful about our excitement. There was something strange yet also pleasing about having this special private excitement in the midst of such a different public excitement.

Last Sunday night, after I'd finished printing out the first part of this war journal, I sat down to watch some late night television while Tzippi went to sleep relatively early. Our guest, Sally, had caught some sort of virus and it was a hard night for her. I continually asked her if my watching the television was bothering her (her mattress was in the living room) and she continually responded that actually it was a good distraction for her from her nausea. I crawled into bed very late, and by that time Tzippi was already feeling somewhat sick. Early in the morning she woke me and told me that she was bleeding. Just what this meant wasn't clear to us, but it was clear that it wasn't a good sign. We waited until a bit later in the morning and called one of our nurses who told us that Tzippi should go to the hospital. I called the people I work with to tell them that I wouldn't be coming to work and we ordered a taxi and went to the hospital. Tzippi underwent a number of tests and rather quickly we were told that she'd undergone a spontaneous miscarriage. This wasn't what we were hoping to hear, but we had little choice but to adapt to the fact quickly. I think that Tzippi did so more quickly than I did, perhaps because she was still undergoing somewhat painful physiological changes and didn't really have the time to deal with psychological changes. The miscarriage took place very early in the pregnancy — when an ultra-sound check was made no fetus was discovered at all. This caused the doctors to fear that perhaps Tzippi had an extra-uterine pregnancy and because of this they suggested that she stay in the hospital until things were more definite. After Tzippi was admitted I went home for the afternoon and returned in the early evening. Tzippi was in need of a great deal of rest but had a hard time getting it in the hospital. We were lucky that the woman in the bed next to her was a pleasant woman with whom she got along very well.

It was at about 21:00 during that first night, when we were thinking that perhaps I should start getting home already and let Tzippi get some rest, that an alert was sounded. All the women in the ward, the few people visiting at the time, and the nurses crowded into a small room that had been prepared to be sealed off. About fifteen of us crowded into the room, with two women being wheeled in on their beds. The nurses did a better job of panicking than of taking care of sealing off the room. I offered to help and ended up sealing off the room along with another husband who was visiting at the time. At home we're definitely relatively calm when we have to go through this procedure. If anything Tzippi has to convince me that it's necessary to fulfill instructions and not be too flippant about our not being in any real danger (after all, we live far enough from Tel Aviv to breathe rather comfortably). Of course one shouldn't judge people in a hospital too harshly. It's not only not their

home, but being in a hospital is anyway a trying time and it's all the more difficult to function properly when you're supposed to put on a gas mask and stay calm. It was most definitely a different experience — one that we would have been willing to do without, but which also gave us a chance for us to share a distinctly Israeli experience with other Israelis with whom we might otherwise not have any contact.

The next day, Tuesday, I visited in the morning until the afternoon when we were told that once again the doctors wanted Tzippi to stay for an additional test, and then I returned again in the evening. Since the missile attack the previous day had been at 21:00 I stayed at the hospital until almost 22:30 — until it seemed that nothing out of the ordinary would be happening that night.

I didn't work on Wednesday either, but instead went to the hospital in the morning intending that this time Tzippi would come home with me in the afternoon. By Wednesday morning Tzippi was feeling quite well. She'd slept well and was able to wander around the ward a bit. It was clear that she was well enough so that a hospital bed wasn't the proper place for her to get better. One more blood test was run in the morning and we waited until it returned in the afternoon at which time we were told that she could go home.

We've been home since then, gaining strength, visiting with people, sealing off our own room instead of being in a hospital when an alert is sounded, and getting used to this new reality. Yes, this isn't what we'd planned, yet at the same time we know that we'll adjust to it and get over it. At present, a week later, I'm a bit surprised at how readily both of us are able to see this whole episode as part of an already fading past, but perhaps that sort of reaction is for the best.

Monday, February 4, 15:30

In addition to the woman whom we became friends with there was another woman in Tzippi's room from a very ultra-orthodox sect. It was in discussions with her that Tzippi learned first hand that large segments of the ultra-orthodox community weren't putting on their gas masks, or even sealing off their rooms, even though many of them live in the B'nai B'rak neighborhood which is part of the greater Tel Aviv area. And if they weren't putting their trust in the defense precautions that Israeli authorities were advising be followed, in what were they putting their trust? In God, of course. During the missile alert that we spent in the hospital we noticed that this woman was reciting psalms, or praying, throughout the entire time. I suppose that she was hoping that God would intervene in some way that would keep everyone safe, though even doing that seems a bit strange since if you're going to pray to try and protect yourself you might as well put on a gas mask as well.

The response of the ultra-orthodox community to the missile attacks has become a major issue in Israel. The chief rabbis decreed that it was permissible to shave off one's beard in order to be able to use a gas mask, though it seems that nobody who ordinarily turns to the chief rabbinate for guidance has so far heeded this decree. At the same time that many leaders are explaining that there's no reason to put on a mask since God will take care of everything, many of those same leaders have been demanding that Israel issue gas masks that can be used by people with beards, claiming that not doing so is a form of discrimination against the orthodox community. Last week Israel prepared to distribute gas masks that bearded people can use, and then it became known that these were the same masks that were supposed to be issued to young children and to people with asthma. A very understandable stink was raised over this since many young children who should have been issued these masks received masks of distinctly inferior quality. The same thing happened with asthma sufferers. The rather reasonable demand was made that first children should be issued the masks and only later, if there are any left over, should those who can take off their beards in order to put on a gas mask receive them. I expected that the ultra-orthodox community would quickly realize that a conflict of interests between little children and orthodox men wasn't the sort of conflict it would like to find itself publicly involved with and that it would thus back down from the demand for masks. I was in for a surprise. It turned out that the same people who have been saying that there's no reason to put on a gas mask but instead only to pray are unwilling to publicly state that young children should have priority over grown men with beards.

It's interesting to follow the ultra-orthodox communities during this crisis for other reasons as well. Many groups have been claiming that we're witnessing the start of the messianic era, starting with the war between Gog and Magog. Clues from gamatria are "proving" that the gulf war is the fulfillment of various biblical prophecies. When the war broke out I noticed an advertisement in a paper placed by one group which claimed that the start of the war was the fulfillment of that week's

parashat shavu'a. It happily proclaimed that God was hardening the heart of the tyrant (Saddam Hussein) so that we could go to war against him. Of course I'm one of those weak Jews who'd rather have peace than have the opportunity to kick the shit out of somebody because God has hardened his heart. I find it hard to understand why it is that if there's a god who can decide to harden someone's heart and thus make him fair game for destruction, why that same god couldn't make things easier on everybody by softening and changing the bad guy's heart. But I guess that these thoughts only go to show that I should keep my nose out of theology.

Sunday, 20:30

Yesterday morning we were back at the hospital for an additional blood test. It's very hard to get blood out of one of Tzippi's veins — hard enough so that a routine blood test can be a trying experience. But it looks as though the "trauma" of the blood test is the worst we have to deal with and that everything is now fine. The doctors seem to be believable people and our contact with them has been reassuring, though I should write that in this particular case it's clear both to Tzippi and to me that she's now doing fine and that we're back to normal (as much as that's possible). It's reassuring to have the doctors report the same thing, but in this particular case it's more as though they're confirming something that we already know rather than giving us new information.

It seems that in addition to trying to quietly destroy the moderate Palestinian leadership the Israeli government is also making the best of the war and the general atmosphere of unity the war has caused in order to further some additional political goals. Specifically, yesterday the government ratified the inclusion of Rehav'am Ze'evi of the Moledet party into the government as minister without portfolio. Ze'evi is the main proponent of the policy of "transfer". Of course he maintains that he's only in favor of "willful transfer", but it's clear that he has ways of convincing the Arabs that they really want to leave Israel and the territories. Ze'evi has already suggested in the Knesseth that Israel make the best of the present gulf war in order to carry out his transfer plans, and there's no doubt that he'll take every available opportunity to further that idea. Our Prime Minister claims that the inclusion of Ze'evi into the government is in no way an acceptance of his ideas, only an attempt to strengthen the present coalition, but there can be no doubt that even if that's true, accepting an outright racist into the government is a moral stain on Israel. It's to the credit of a number of Likud ministers that they state this publicly and voted against Ze'evi's government appointment. Since it looks rather definite that the Knesseth will also ratify the appointment all we can do at present is be very embarrassed.

Tuesday, February 5, 18:00

I'll take the opportunity of having the last few days of my catching up presently printing to bring myself fully up to date. School started today for elementary schools in most of Israel, including kibbutz Hatzor. Thus today was the first time in three weeks that the children from Kibbutz Revadim came to Hatzor. It was a regular day of studies — except of course for the fact that it's been so long since we've had a "regular" day of this sort that it was a bit hard to readjust. Until now the kids have been coming to the children's houses at 8:00 and staying until their parents pick them up at 15:00. Today, with the start of school, we started on a new schedule — the kids arrive at 7:30. We expect that if all goes well (and there weren't any missiles last night, breaking the every 48 hours schedule in a much more comfortable manner than the surprise missile of late Saturday night) next week's schedule will be fully "normal" — the kids will be in the children's houses from 7:00 until 16:00. With that arrangement in effect I'll probably have a break in the middle of the day, or I'll work only until 14:30, and I can't say that I'll mind being back to normal, though I also have to admit that there's something strangely enjoyable about the frantic and intense schedule we've been keeping until school started again. At the beginning of this week the kids started getting a couple of hours of lessons each day and that meant that other people were occupying them so that we didn't have to find constant activities for them throughout the day, but our days were still very intense and long. Now that school has once again started I can happily do some cleaning, like washing dishes or folding the laundry, and in that way get a bit of a breather from constantly being with the kids.

The return to school definitely suggests a general return to normalcy throughout the country.

Many of us feel quite comfortable walking around without our masks, for instance. In this light perhaps I should note that someone reported to me yesterday that her brother had returned to the kibbutz from Tel Aviv and reported that numerous emergency measures were being taken there because of a growing fear that the next missile attack will be chemical. Of course we don't know whether Iraq has the capability of launching missiles with chemical warheads, but apparently the general feeling within the defense establishment is that Iraq has its back to the wall and also knows that things are returning to normal in Tel Aviv, and that the combination of these two facts increases the chances of a chemical attack. And of course that's one more characteristic aspect of this strange war — that we continue to function normally as we prepare ourselves for the possibility of something perhaps too frightening to imagine.

And from the frightening to the banal. Though today was on the whole clear and warm, and even yesterday it didn't rain, we've been getting lots of rain. Since the start of the war we received about twice the amount of rain that we received throughout this winter before the war. Since our apartment is prepared for being quickly sealed off — all we have to do is close the nylon of the front door — it's become very damp inside. The shower hardly dries during the day and even when it's warm out the apartment stays cold. Last night we noticed that the tape was peeling from one of the windows in the shower. This morning I took advantage of that fact and peeled it further, letting the nylon drop, and then opened the window, giving us some fresh air through the day, even though we weren't home. When we can, we leave the front door open for the same reason, and it seems that our neighbors are doing the same thing. When we only had the bedroom sealed off the rest of the apartment was less damp, but it's much more comfortable to be able to move around the whole apartment freely during an alert, even though we've learned that those alerts are quite short, and happily, at present, relatively infrequent.

Shabbat, February 9, 11:15

I'd originally thought that I'd sit down this morning and perhaps even write a "regular" letter. After all, the last time that a SCUD missile had landed in Israel was last motz'ei Shabbat and many of us were even willing to take our chances on declaring that, for us in Israel at least, the war was over. We went to bed relatively early last night, quite confident that the night was going to be a quiet one like all of the nights of this past week. But of course, we were wrong — the alert sirens awakened us at 2:30 in the morning. It took us only a short while to get our bearings, swear a bit at having a good night's sleep ruined, and then take the necessary measures to get the apartment sealed off. While I did the sealing off Tzippi made the phone calls on our information network. In addition to sealing off our door I also had to close off a window in the shower since we'd left the nylon partially open since it started falling off. When these tasks were done we sat up in bed and listened to the radio, waiting to be told that our area was out of danger and that we could go back to sleep. At about 3:00 the all clear was given and we turned out the light and the radio. By then we knew that one missile had landed in Israel, though we still didn't know where, nor whether any damage had been done. I suppose that we'd also gotten used to the idea that no damage would be done, as was the case in the past few missile attacks.

This morning, when we turned on the news, we learned that we'd been mistaken. A residential neighborhood was hit, about 25 people were injured, apparently none of them seriously, and from the television news we saw this morning, property damage is rather extensive. Two weeks ago we might have waited up until quite a bit later than we did last night in order to get a fuller report of what happened but the slogan we're supposed to live by is "back to normalcy" and among other things that means getting a good night's sleep and finding out what happened in the morning.

Though damage to property because of the missile attacks has often been rather large, probably much more economic damage has resulted from the emergency situation we've been living with for the past three weeks. For quite a while already most places of work throughout the country have returned to their regular schedules, but that doesn't always mean that all the people who work at these places have returned to work. Many mothers have been unable to return to work because there are still parts of the educational system which aren't yet functioning (and only since the middle of last week have most schools outside the greater Tel Aviv area returned to their regular schedules) and of course somebody has to stay home to be with the kids. (Did anyone really think it would be fathers

who would stay home with the kids? There's nothing like a war to make people revert to old tried and true behaviors which just maybe you'd thought we'd grown out of. After all, in this war, when the home front is really the only front, and men aren't away fighting a war to defend their families but are instead sitting in their "sealed off" rooms along with the rest of the family, and are as frightened and as vulnerable as everyone else, you might get the idea that the sexes are really equal. But when it was possible to return to work it was "natural" for just about everyone to think that the men had to support the family while the women stayed with the children. And of course few people noted that taking care of the children, creating an atmosphere of security and safety in very trying times, is at least as important to the "war effort" — and, I should add, as difficult — as going to work.)

Motz'ei Shabbat, 22:20

When I last stopped writing Tzippi and I went up to the chadar ochel for lunch. While on the way I realized that Tzippi wasn't taking her gas mask with her. Other than to work, or if I intend to be someplace for an extended period of time, I don't take mine with me, but Tzippi has been more disciplined than I have and has continued to take hers whenever she goes out of the apartment. But even though only last night we had a missile attack it was apparently hard for her to remember to take hers with her. And that reminds me that last night, when the apartment was sealed off and we sat in bed and listened to the radio neither of us put on our gas masks. People in the Tel Aviv area are probably more conscientious about this sort of thing than we are (though they're also well aware that all of the missiles that have been launched on Israel have carried conventional warheads) but their general behavior also suggests that they've learned to adjust to our new reality here, and not to make too big a thing of it.

Yesterday's papers reported that movie theaters will once again be open in the evenings, and other aspects of Tel Aviv night life will probably get started again as well. Concerts are apparently more problematic because today's movie theaters are small meaning that only small groups of people will be at a screening, whereas concert halls and theaters are much larger, with larger audiences, and apparently the authorities in charge are still fearful of having too large a concentration of people in any one place. On the other hand, a soccer game was played today, but it took place in Be'er Sheva which is quite far from the Tel Aviv area. Interestingly few people showed up for the game.

Culture has definitely been hurt by the war. I certainly don't doubt that people want to go to cultural events, but as long as the authorities don't permit them, nothing takes place. Actors and musicians have been temporarily out of work while everybody sits home and watches television. Television news will apparently be returning to the pre-war format of only half an hour. Until now the reports have been at least an hour long and for almost a full week it's seemed as though there hasn't been much to report on. One interesting change that took place on television is that since the war started the television has been broadcasting 24 hours a day. Sometimes this is very nice — when there's a late night program I'm interested in seeing. On the other hand, sometimes this is terrible — when there's a late night program I'm interested in seeing and I really should be going to sleep instead. I was up late too often this past week and I expected that I'd get a long and full night's sleep last night. I guess I forgot to arrange things with Saddam Hussein. From my experience, when you're up for half an hour in the middle of the night because of a missile attack it can really ruin your plans for a good night's sleep.

Sunday, February 10, 22:30

Today the educational system of kibbutz Hatzor returned to as much of a regular schedule (meaning like that of before the war) as it looks as though it ever will. The major change that has taken place on Hatzor as a result of the war is that the move to children sleeping in their parents' apartments, which was to be a gradual and well planned move (even though things were already beginning to fall apart and parents were taking their kids "home" without regard to the decisions made by the kibbutz as a whole) was in the end rather immediate and total. At the beginning of the week the war started the children's houses started a schedule of a different parent sleeping each night in each house. This was in order to ensure that the kids would sleep more securely at night. But by the second night of that week it was already decided that kids should sleep in their parents' apartments

because if something were to happen during the night it made much more sense for parents to be with their kids than for one or two adults to be with an entire kvutzah. Had the war ended after a day or two then perhaps we would have returned to the children's houses. But since each night there's still the possibility of a missile attack it's impossible to return and it's thus necessary to quickly take the steps necessary to make the parents' apartments compatible with children spending the night in them. Four weeks later, all this seems like ancient history already. The kids have adjusted to sleeping in their parents' apartments, whether they like it or not (and some do and some don't) and nobody thinks about going back to sleeping in the children's houses.

Normalization doesn't only mean that kids go back to school and parents to work. It also means that the curfew in the west bank and Gaza has to be lifted. This is a major issue today because many Israelis are fearful that letting the Palestinians of the west bank and Gaza return to their jobs in Israel will be opening the door on an additional front for Iraq. So far during the war there have been very few acts of violence by Palestinians against Israeli Jews, and apparently even in the territories themselves things have been relatively quiet. I doubt that the curfew was as bad as it's probably made out to be, but that certainly doesn't mean that it's a good thing and it's definitely impractical to continue to deny these people their means of livelihood. (Many families that have had to stay together in their "sealed off" rooms report that they argue too much and that there are many other expressions of stress. It's hard to believe that Palestinian families, which are generally large, can stay all day in their small homes without feeling much greater stress. And that's without the added tension of not being able to earn money to feed the family.) I guess that if we learned to live with the reality of rock throwing every day, and then knifings and the like, and now we're also learning to live with an occasional SCUD missile, then we can learn to live with all of these together. But I'm against getting used to this sort of situation, though not like all too many Israelis who think that we can simply drop a bomb, or expel the Palestinians, or find some other instant solution. Seeing missiles and knifings and rock throwing as inevitable parts of our living in a garrison state, or simply building a higher and stronger fence so that we'll be "safe", just isn't a part of my Zionist ideology.

That was certainly a run on paragraph that sort of lost it's point as it got toward the end. The basic point should be that we can't continue to keep the Palestinians under curfew, no matter what the possible consequences of lifting that curfew might be. Palestinian support for Saddam Hussein in no way can justify this ongoing "punishment" of the Palestinians. (When there are missile attacks the radio announcements on what safety measures should be taken are broadcast in numerous languages. I've yet to hear one of these announcements in Arabic. I hope that this is because there's a particular channel that broadcasts in Arabic, or perhaps because I've missed the announcements when they've been on. There is an Arabic radio channel that's apparently been broadcasting continuously, but that doesn't necessarily mean that people listen to it. Israel is responsible for the well being of the Palestinians in the occupied territories and the fact that these people apparently applaud the SCUDs as they come toward Israel in no way releases Israel from that responsibility.)

The property damage caused by the last SCUD missile was apparently the most caused in any of the attacks. The pictures on the television are definitely distressing. But once again, without belittling this destruction, as one commentator recently noted, the total poundage of bombs on Tel Aviv is still less than that carried by one Phantom airplane. There's no justification for Iraq trying to bring us into this war (and there's certainly something beyond the cynical and bordering on the sinister in making trying to harm Israel the major Iraqi accomplishment in this war — even if it's "reassuring" to know that, no matter what, we're always the bad guys) but it's beginning to look more and more as though the war for the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait has not only become a war for the smashing of Saddam Hussein, but also a war against the Iraqi people. In the long run this can only be harmful for Israel as well (though I guess that once again I'm in the minority when it comes to attitudes such as this). It certainly looks as though the U.S. is making the most of this opportunity to try out as many new technological weapons as possible, and without expressing too much love for Iraq I can still be fearful for Iraqi society after this war. And once again, this isn't only a humanitarian thought. In the long run, even though the neutralization of Iraq's military force is good for Israeli security, Israel won't benefit from a decimated Iraq that will seek to rearm itself as soon as possible. There's just no replacement for a political solution.

I guess that it's about time to end this journal. Yes, we can still be surprised by a missile attack, and yes, in numerous other ways these times are distinctly different that whatever "normal" was before the war started, but even though tonight's news report took up an entire hour (and we were

promised only half an hour) the reporters were hard put to fill the time up with much of interest. I haven't had too many opportunities to feel guilty during this war (watching a movie on the video during a missile attack was the first time, I think) but Tzippi and I have been keeping secret the fact that last night we didn't even watch the news. We knew that there wasn't anything of earth shattering importance that we had to know about, so that other than being a part of the Israeli experience by stopping everything you're doing and watching the news there was little reason to watch. And yes, it's definitely an exaggeration to write that everyone else in Israel was watching the news last night.

The radio still plays almost solely Israeli songs, but we're tuning into the western classical music station much more often since it returned to broadcasting independently. Almost all of the articles in the Shabbat newspapers are in some way related to the war, and there's much more to read than usual, but it's not hard to find the time to sit and read. Tzippi will be going off to play with the orchestra this week, and in many other ways things are back to normal. On 'erev Shabbat we once again brought Bennie and Ruchama over to us rather than going over to them, but that was less because their apartment isn't equipped to hold all of us during an alert and more because this was a good way to get Ruchama out of her room for a while.

Tonight's news reported that General Schwartzkopf is apparently suggesting that the air war against Iraq continue for another month before starting the ground attack. This suggests that there's still a long way to go in this war, but basically for us the war is over. Yes, it's still very possible that a SCUD missile will land in Israel — tonight, tomorrow, this week, this month — but it seems as though we've learned to incorporate that possibility into our everyday reality. And that means that I can finish with this journal — the next time I write it will be a "regular" letter.

Wednesday, February 13, 18:00

I know, I know. Just a couple of days ago I promised that I'd stop with this journal business and start writing regular letters, but it seems as though the exceptional has become the normal and I find I'm having a hard time releasing myself from the sweet pleasures of being in an emergency situation. I'm certainly not reporting things in "real time" anymore. This is partially because we've got numerous other things to be involved with — like a meeting last night that kept me from sitting and writing (finally evening activity is starting to return to normal) — and partially because one or two more missile attacks just isn't that interesting anymore. Is that a cynical thing to write? Perhaps, but I think it's definitely true. Tzippi frequently remarks that she feels a bit guilty about being far enough away from where missiles are falling so that she can go about her business while listening to reports about what's happening to other people and not be fearful for her own well being. Each time she says this sort of thing I tell her that there's no particular heroism in living near where missiles land. I really don't feel that I'm missing out on the action, and don't feel sorry, or guilty, about that.

But Monday evening and night, for a while at least, we started having second thoughts about just how much this war was really over. We were preparing to go up to the chadar ochel at 19:00 when the alert sounded. The SCUD missile that caused this alert apparently ended up in the ocean (specific details are still censored and everybody's information comes from a friend of a friend who...). I don't know whether it caused damage in the ocean but to Israel-proper no damage was caused. The alert was short and it wasn't long before we were on our way up to eat. The missile that caused our second alert of that night was apparently directed toward Saudi Arabia and as soon as that became clear the all clear was given, only a couple of moments after the alert was sounded.

I'm not just keeping myself busy looking for synonyms when I write that the all clear was "given". Up until a couple of weeks ago an all clear was sounded throughout the country and there were apparently many people who had difficulty distinguishing between it and the alert signal. (The two are very different, but when you're excited I guess that it's possible to become confused and perhaps start to panic.) Because many people were confused and didn't know whether it was an all clear or another alert it was decided that all clears would only be announced on radio and television and no longer be sounded as sirens.

The third alert of that night came at 1:30 in the morning. We woke up from the siren and called the people on our information network before we were called, and we sat up in bed and listened to the reports until our area was cleared (last). I didn't bother sealing off the room any more than it was already sealed off. Altogether it took half an hour. I had an uncomfortable feeling about this particular



alert. We've learned to listen to what isn't reported as well as what is and something left me with the feeling that there were major casualties this time. Tzippi had to get up that morning at 6:00 in order to travel to the orchestra and I woke up with her to hear the news. Actually, I didn't sleep that well through the rest of the night though I'm usually able to sleep through anything. We were relieved to learn that although property damage occurred there were relatively few injuries and they were only light.

One aspect of getting used to this situation is how our apartment is prepared for being sealed off. I've wanted to return to having only the bedroom sealed off but Tzippi prefers to have free reign of the entire apartment (and be able to watch television) during an alert. We now no longer need a nylon sheet covering the front door and instead only have to put tape over parts of the door which aren't fully sealed if an alert is sounded. It's nice having a door that you can walk through without having to bend over. Our windows are still covered with nylon though we'll soon open at least one of them so that more air can get into the apartment. The shower gets mouldy incredibly quickly, even though we've now got a window open there as well almost full time — the door to the shower is also easily sealed off so that it isn't very hard to simply close the door and put some tape on it if there's an alert, and get some circulation and let the towels dry and the like the rest of the time. And of course we're relatively confident that even if the last missile against Israel hasn't been launched yet, we're not in the direct line of fire and can relax our own personal defenses a bit. Tzippi and I don't see fully eye to eye on this, but on the whole we agree that we can ease up a bit.

In the kvutzah I'm much more conscientious about carrying out defense instructions than I am at home. After all, I've got responsibility for a large group of kids and I want them to understand that there are times when what's important isn't one's personal opinion but accepting the decisions reached by the proper authorities instead. Yes, as a rule I question authority, but sometimes when you question it you can reach the conclusion that in certain cases it's right or justifiable.

As I've been typing this one of the major items on the news is the Iraqi report that perhaps 1000 civilians were killed when a shelter in Baghdad was bombed by American planes. The Americans are claiming that the shelter bombed was a military target. I'm saddened by loss not only of civilian lives but even of the lives of mothers' sons who are soldiers, so I find this to be a distressing report. And once again, a report of this sort puts our own troubles in a certain perspective.

Thursday, February 14, 00:15

I'd intended to sit and write a bit much earlier, but of course there was the television news, and then letting myself get caught up in something else on television. Tzippi came home around 20:00 from a late afternoon concert and she was pretty tired so she's now sleeping and I'm still not that tired so I can take a bit of time to try and think of some "profound thoughts" with which to try and conclude this journal.

It's now almost a full month that this war has been going on. It's already hard to remember all the different stages that we went through as we adapted to the reality of the war and the ways in which it effected us. I still remember quite clearly that one of the first reports we received, right at the start of the war, was that in only a few short hours the U.S. Air Force had succeeded in destroying both the Iraqi air force and Iraq's missile launching capabilities. I remember that we were relieved to hear these reports and were happy to think that Israel wouldn't be endangered during the war (and of course that it would be short). I also remember, however, that I wrote then that it's easier to start a war than it is to end one. I was in no way prophetic — it was simply a case of the experts letting their "expertise" get in the way of their common sense, and I didn't have any expertise to blur my vision.

I've admitted numerous times that I'm a news addict. I have a strange attraction to up to the minute news reports even though I know full well that whatever happened has already happened and that there's no reason to be in a rush to hear about it. I'm not the only addict of this kind — it seems that CNN, and the other networks as well, thrive on this addiction. And it's definitely fascinating to be able to experience the war in "real time". But of course feeding our addiction (and selling air time for commercials) leads to the mass production of the news. We've all become experts in countless aspects of the war that we'd probably have been happy to never know anything about — various weapons technologies, how the troops spend their free time, countless press conferences that are often highly uninformative, and the chit chat of reporters explaining how they got a story that wasn't that

interesting to begin with, to name just a few. And there's the churning out of stories as well. Since the first SCUD fell on Tel Aviv Israel has been restraining itself from responding and the U.S. has been applauding that restraint. But every day someone has to be asked, in the light of a particular press conference, or the color of the tie that the Minister of Defense wore, whether that policy still stands. I'd be willing to leave well enough alone, but then how would we fill up an entire hour of news. People have become bored because for quite a while nothing particularly photogenic has been happening in the war. I feel uncomfortable writing this, but it seems to me that today's tragedy in Baghdad gave the networks a story they've been wanting for quite a while, and with lots of video coverage that can be broadcast they probably feel that they're getting out of the rut they've fallen into. The networks and the home audience are probably urging Schwartzkopf to get on with the ground war — that'll give them lots of photo opportunities. I've remarked numerous times that I don't doubt that, among other reasons, the U.S. is interested in this war so that it can try out numerous new technological weapons that it's developed but hasn't found the opportunity to use. Perhaps there's also an element of entertainment involved as well — there's nothing quite as crowd pleasing as a nice juicy war broadcast straight into your living room. I'm not sure just what the right word for it is, but it seems that were on the verge of a new art form — newstertainment, or something like that.

Our work days are back to full days (I've even had a break in the afternoon and returned to work until 16:00 twice this week) and Tzippi has returned to the orchestra, passing through Tel Aviv to get to her rehearsals and concert. Throughout the country all the schools have opened and today, for the first time since the war started, I saw the Palestinian builders who work on Hatzor. Even though there isn't much evening activity I did have a meeting last night, and I guess we've simply assimilated the possibility of a SCUD landing somewhere in Israel with hardly more than a couple of moments notice into our daily routine.