

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Living with neighbors

DESPITE THE DISCONCERTING feeling that came over me as I read the interview with Zvi Yechezkeli (Arab Culture, *HaMizrachi* Tisha B'Av edition, Vol 4 No 4), I felt that a voice was finally given to an opinion that is rarely expressed in the public discourse and the media, even in the midst of riots, and that itself brought me some comfort.

During the disturbances, there was much media discourse discussing the continuation and preservation of "coexistence." That this discussion arose at the same time that rioters were attacking our brethren is unbelievable.

Even now, a few months later, these discussions are difficult to stomach. The fact that a few months have passed does not dull our anger nor our concern for the peace of our friends and family. I'm not saying it should not be discussed, but it's still difficult.

In the interview, Yechezkeli argued that it is possible to live in coexistence with the Arabs as long as it is clear to everyone who is in control. But this, of course, is inconsistent with the will of those rioters. Therefore, I think the question needs to be readdressed: Is there a possibility of coexistence? What degree of coexistence are we interested in? Is it really possible to live with neighbors when there is always an underlying fear that every demonstration of weakness will lead to riots or even death?

M. Y.
Alon Shevut

Sitting on the sidelines

I ENJOYED READING Rabbi David Fohrman's article from the Tisha B'Av edition of *HaMizrachi* (Vol 4 No 4) entitled "From Passive Observer to Active Participant," and it made me reflect on the distinction between active and passive approaches to Israel in our own generation.

I once heard Rabbi Jeremy Gimpel quote Rabbi Yehuda HaKohen who explains that there is a difference between being "pro-Israel" and being a "Zionist."

Football fans are dedicated to their football team; they go to every game and cheer for their favorite players. Ultimately, however, they are only observers sitting on the sidelines. On the other hand, a football player is someone whose every move affects the outcome of the game. Both the fan and the player want their team to win

the game, but only the football player plays an active role in the victory.

Being "pro-Israel" means being a fan, a passive observer who wants to see Israel succeed but who is not actively involved in making that happen. The true Zionist, however, shares the same vision but also actively works to help Israel succeed. Zionists perceive themselves to be players in the game, active participants in the story of the Jewish people and their return to Eretz Yisrael.

There are many ways to be a Zionist. Naturally, some will be available to those living in Israel and others to those in *Chutz LaAretz*. But being an active player on *Am Yisrael's* team is as important today as it was in the time of Jeremiah.

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