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[BY ELIZABETH CAMPBELL](#)

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Ira Savetsky (far right) leads worship services while Lizzy Savetsky and daughters Stella and Juliet (lower left) join in prayer in a bomb shelter at King David Hotel: LIZZY SAVETSKY *Courtesy*

Marvin Blum and his wife had just returned home from a family vacation in Israel when they got a chilling text message from their daughter: “We are under attack.” Blum, a Fort Worth attorney, said his sense of peace was shattered when he began receiving texts from his daughter, Lizzy Savetsky, who grew up in Fort Worth and lives New York, describing how she, her husband and their three children crowded into a bomb shelter at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, where the family had spent a happy vacation. Blum said he and his wife, Laurie, had left the country hours before Hamas’ attack on Israel on Saturday.

Blum said he and his family were in Israel to observe Sukkot, a week-long holiday that celebrates the harvest and commemorates the protection of the children of Israel who came from Egypt. Sukkot begins five days after Yom Kippur. He was also in Israel for his grandson’s third birthday, a time when some Jewish boys get their first haircut. The birthday celebration was on a rooftop overlooking Jerusalem. Blum said the attack was especially brazen and egregious because it occurred on a holy day, Simchat Torah, which commemorates the conclusion of the annual cycle of Torah readings. “They picked a holy day to do the attack when they feel that our guard is down,” he said.

Blum described how he and his wife were on “pins and needles” as they read the series of text messages from their daughter describing how Blum’s 10-year-old granddaughter Stella said there was a “bomb drill.” But Lizzy Savetsky said Israel does not have bomb drills and everyone crowded in to the bomb shelter at

the King David Hotel in Jerusalem. His daughter and her family decided to drive to Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv, where they caught a flight on the Israeli airline El Al. The other major airlines canceled their flights after the attack.

When the family was on the plane, Hamas began firing rockets at the airport, Blum said. The pilot turned off the plane's lights and took off a different direction, Blum said, describing the text messages from his daughter. Blum said it is more important than ever to speak up on behalf of Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East. Blum serves on the board of the Anti-Defamation League and the Fort Worth Multiculture Alliance. Blum said his friends and family in Israel are safe for now, but he can't stop worrying. "It's been a harrowing several days," he said. "I've been scared on a level that I don't remember ever being this nervous in my life."

He added that it is important for people to understand that Israel was formed after the Holocaust and that the Jewish refugees had nowhere else to go. "I know that in some way, Israel has to survive; it is the only democracy in the Middle East. Israel needs America, and America needs Israel," he said.

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