The Fast of Esther 1996

by Rebecca Saxe

Have suffered. Continue to suffer. Because, far too often, our very survival has been called into question. And because even today, there are those who believe in the complete obliteration of our nation from the world's memory.

Rebecca!

In disgrace because I hadn't eaten the wholesome granola, I was alone in the living room, while the others watched TV in the back.

"Rebecca! Another bomb!"

Another bomb. "Bomb" is one of the most horrifying words in the English language. But he didn't say "bomb." He said, "another bomb." Another and another and another.

The TV commentator noted that the Israelis know very well what to do in this kind of situation. In 15 minutes, everything was normal. Except that bodies were being carried away.

Except that instead of studying, rabbis were in the streets collecting body parts.

"Another bomb" is infinitely more frightening than just "bomb." And the fact that from those two words I understood where, who, and why. And the fact that it wasn't even a complete surprise.

Dizingoff Street was the focus of a CNN special. Dizingoff Street. Where in January I walked into the Hard Rock Cafe for the first time. Where I sat and chewed gum, and traded life stories with Sara, and considered buying a new lipstick.

But no one there needed lipstick. There was enough red to go around. In wars, in movies, we've become jaded to seeing scenes of violence, shattered glass, bodies. Even on the news, it's not real. Just a scene. "People far away about whom we know nothing," said Chamberlain.

But not Dizingoff Street. Because Dizingoff Street is real to me. I was there, shopping, charting, drinking fruit juice, just being. And everyone who was there today was probably doing the same thing.

Everyone but one.

And that's all it takes.

Better to be hungry than....

Rebecca Saxe is a Toronto high school student who is very active in United Synagogue Youth.

Rochelle Rubenstein Kaplan is a Toronto painter, printmaker, fabric and book artist. Her work has been widely exhibited in Canada, the United States, and Europe, and is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art (New York) and the Irish Museum of Modern Art, among others. Themes explored in her work include: personal and institutional power, seduction, roots of creativity, family, history, and repression. She has three children.