YAD L'AMI יד לעמי

a helping hand to my people

September 2024

The Netherlands has an Israel Sunday every first Sunday in October, when extra attention is paid in church services to Israel. It is beautiful, but sad, of course, that it is only one Sunday each year. Israel should have a place in church services every Sunday or Sabbath. A year ago, on October 1, I was allowed to share something in a church in the Netherlands. I only had a few minutes, but those few minutes were for a reason. We had a lovely gathering after the service. Exactly one week later, on October 7, 1,200 people, including babies, small children, and old people, were brutally murdered, burned, held hostage, and young girls were raped. Following October 7, those few minutes a week earlier left a big impact on the church members and they immediately gave a nice offering for the people in the south. It will be very interesting to discover how the Israel Sunday this year on October 6 will be commemorated in the churches. If October 7, 2023 remains uppermost in our minds, it will not be as in previous years. But unfortunately, if I understand correctly via friends, there are those who don't know how to relate to Israel and would prefer to skip that one day. Many prefer to keep the peace in their congregations and want to please everyone (= pleasing another for the sake of our reputation). Oh, God, forgive us! We are living in a time when we need to make choices; let us seriously consider preferring to please God.

Things can change quickly. Now, almost a year later, 101 people, children under the age of two and elderly people in their eighties, are still being held hostage in Gaza. Few minutes go by without us being reminded of this tragedy on the radio and television; in squares and on the streets, in the shops, and on cars there are posters displaying photographs of the hostages, along with yellow flags demanding their return. Our thoughts and prayers are constantly with them. Edit Yerushalmi, 22, was shot dead in a tunnel a few days before her body, weighing only 36 kilos, was retrieved. We can understand the desperate parents and family members who are demonstrating hopelessly on the streets, screaming for their loved ones to be rescued and brought home! Imagine if your child, husband, wife, mother, father, or grandparent were being abused and kept prisoner in an underground tunnel. When I drive out of our town, there is a large poster of Eliya Cohen. Outside his parents' home in our community, a flag hangs with hundreds of imprints of children's hands pressed on it; the children have hung their self-made figures in a tree. "Eliya we are waiting for you, come home!"

Tension is rising in the country. This letter is not about what is happening in the country. Rather, we are letting you know what we can do on your behalf to ease the pain and anguish and, if possible, bring light to the hearts of the people.

This time we are passing on the thank you notes we have received, thus enabling you to know where your donations are going.

Sara, a leader of an elderly club, writes:
I want to thank you and all the people who invited us to a special musical concert. We are a group of Holocaust survivors from Beit Hoffman. We are immigrants from the ex-Soviet Union and from North African countries. The musicians were very professional and most of us have not had the opportunity to see a show at such a high level. At the end of the concert, everyone said it was a very special experience. We would like to thank Ria, the members of the association and the donors for all your donations. **Thank you!**

Most people have returned to the south; maybe not directly to their kibbutzim or communities, but to somewhere closer to their place of work and the children's schools. It has been, and still is, a catastrophe in the north, on the border with Lebanon, for the people who have been evacuated from their homes there. Does Hezbollah think that those 50 to 100 rockets per day that they have rained down on the Israeli border communities for the past eleven months can just continue? In the last few days, Israel has said: 'Enough!' We can't imagine how most people's lives have been turned upside down. These sudden changes have been particularly difficult for the elderly and for Holocaust survivors. Someone who used to function independently is an example of this: following the evacuation, he has completely changed and now spends most of his time in a wheelchair. That is why we also try to do something for the elderly, to enable them to escape from the grind of everyday life: to meet others, have breakfast together, and listen to beautiful music. Then they can live on for a while. And what an impact music makes!

In our previous newsletter, we wrote about the music room at Kibbutz Yad Mordechai.

One of the elderly from Yad Mordechai writes:
And then finally the time came for us to return to our homes on the kibbutz, each family in its own time, at its own pace. Slowly, the Yad Mordechai community has come together again, and we are all trying to restore order. Business is returning to normal, but the reality is far from it. No two days are the same; there are days with air strikes when the booms and the shooting don't stop. We feel that we are living on a battlefield and it is impossible to get used to it! And on other days, we manage to hear the chirping of birds in the sky and feel like this is our private paradise.
These fluctuations in the feeling of security and protection give us all great stress, constant anxiety, fears about our existence. Most of us are being treated psychologically and we all move between the charm of being here and the sounds of war.
Thankfully, we are blessed with a supportive, generous, and loving embrace from amazing donors: the Yad L'Ami Foundation. Ria decided to invest in our souls and tried to create a healthy and enjoyable leisure time for us. One of her wonderful initiatives is the design of the music room in our kibbutz.
In this beautiful music room, all kibbutz members and residents of different ages can participate in music lessons on various musical instruments. We are all aware of the miraculous effect of music on the soul, and there is no more fascinating means than the music we produce to unwind even for a short time. With the constant noise in our souls, the music room is a balm for all of us. Children and adults flock there and take music lessons and see the place as an island of relaxation in the war zone in which we live.
Thank you very much from us, the Yad Mordechai community, for this wonderful initiative that is adapted for all ages and for all of us.
May peace return to our region and may we only hear the chirping of birds, the music of nature. With great appreciation, the Yad Mordecai community.

Because this is so successful, we have decided that also people outside the kibbutz can register, so that even more traumatized people from other communities on the Gaza border can receive help. Yad L'Ami helps to pay for the music teachers and the participants themselves also have to make a small contribution.

Netiv Ha'Asarah
Bilha and Yakov Inon's house burned down completely during the Hamas infiltration of the community of Netiv Ha'Asarah on that Saturday morning of October 7. Bilha was initially reported dead, as was her husband, but a lack of DNA evidence led the IDF to retract that conclusion and Bilha was instead reported as missing. The Inon children decided shortly after the attack itself that there was no possibility that Bilha had survived and chose to sit shiva—the traditional Jewish mourning period—for both of their parents. After a very complicated investigation, the Israel Defense Forces confirmed in early August (ten months later) that Bilha Inon, 75, who had been officially considered missing, had been burned alive in her home on October 7 along with her husband, Yakov Inon, 78.

Monument for Yakov and BIlha

She was never thought to have been abducted to Gaza by Hamas, as there were no other kidnappings from Netiv Ha'Asara on October 7. The small community of less than 1,000 people, the community closest to the Gaza border, was one of the first places to be infiltrated on October 7 by several terrorists who flew in with paragliders. Yes, I have to state that twenty people were horribly murdered that day but Yakov and Bilha were burned alive in their bomb shelter. Their house is completely burnt out. Bilha and Yakov had five children and eleven grandchildren.

I knew Bilha personally when she took part in a therapeutic baking course for women in the community. The family was looking for donations to erect a monument at that place to commemorate their parents. It was an honor for us to be with this family in their pain and loss of their parents (we donated the picture).
We will never forget what happened on October 7.

One of the parents from Netiv Ha'Asara writes:
Thank you very much for making it possible for us to start a cooking class in these difficult times. Thanks to your contribution, thirty-one children had an experiential, educational, and therapeutic experience, which connected them to one another and also made it possible for them to learn about themselves. The children looked forward to the workshop every week and came home proudly carrying delicious meals that they had prepared. Thank you very much, dear people of Yad L'Ami, for giving our child the opportunity to experience these workshops in a confusing and unstable time.

***In the meantime**, we had a meeting with the school in Sa'ad. This year, sad enough, but all the children need therapy. There are too few therapists because of service in the army and we hired an extra horse therapist from Sde Boker for one day a week. We want to help as many children as possible. Next week we will start with horse and dog therapy. More about this next time.*
A nurse is required in the girls' home in Sa'ad. This means high costs for a boarding school, which does not yet have a full number of girls. They also don't get the extra help because most of the girls are from other parts of the country. This year also many girls are receiving music therapy. More on this subject later.

Why do you leave for Israel in a time of war?
We certainly had to answer this question a few times when we left home at the beginning of July. We stammered: "Well, we hear that the Israeli people are having a hard time in the fight against evil. If you love justice, if you value peace over war, if you respect your neighbor, if you would rather build up than tear down, then you will go, right?" These words above only really became clear when we got there. The Israeli people are groaning under the terror orchestrated by Iran. We went because we wanted to roll up our sleeves and show the people of Israel that they are not alone. With young men fighting for the survival of the nation and fathers risking their lives to ensure a future for their children, we have worked up a sweat to create a beautiful garden. The fact that we were there for the people was perhaps more important than the end result. Through this act, we brought hope to a torn nation by being there, listening, and helping. The gratitude and amazement were therefore great for the help offered. A life experience you will never forget. ***Jacco and Willem***

Mosad Siqma where the men, Arjen, Jacco, Willem, and some volunteers worked up a sweat. Before and after.

On September 1, 150 young people returned to this institute three times a week and more are added every week. The director, who did his years there himself and is now in charge at the age of 25, has our hearts. In the meantime, we have provided them with the first aid resources that are necessary when you are guiding so many young people. Their old storage facility along with its contents also went up in flames on October 7 and there is further damage to windows and walls due to the missiles. A lot of adjustments are still needed to get the place back into order. The youth themselves will also participate in a memorial evening on October 24 to commemorate those who died, including several of their friends who were murdered or kidnapped. Yad L'Ami has also agreed to help financially. How important is it for their own processing to be involved together in this memorial?

The holidays are coming

Although it is not easy to focus on the autumn holidays (Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur, and the Feast of Tabernacles) at this time, it is a biblical command to celebrate the feasts of the LORD (Mo'adim). This means that a lot of food coupons will be handed out again, so that people can cover the extra expenses. Prices in Israel are skyrocketing. The farmers are having an extra hard time and a lot of agricultural land has recently gone up in flames in the north.

Everything has its appointed time under heaven, says Ecclesiastes

Changes are coming up in the foundation. The heart of the foundation remains the same, but people come and go. Silvia is leaving us after 9.5 years of loyal service to the Holocaust survivors. I want to express many thanks to her from me personally and from the members of both boards! Thank you for always being able to count on you over these nine years. You have been faithful, and the elderly were always happy to see you. You feel that your time with Yad L'Ami has come to a close and you are going to write about that yourself. Fortunately, Albert de Hoop remains involved and continues to help with the administration.

In the meantime, I am very grateful that Mirjam Reijnen, already known to many, has reacted spontaneously to fill this place. We are now in a period of the changing of the guard. Mirjam will write about it next time, but first we are going to say goodbye to Silvia.

Farewell and transfer. In early 2015 I was asked to take on the Help for Holocaust Survivors project. With much love, I have worked for the past 9.5 years to improve the living conditions of 'our' elderly and to take away some of their loneliness. With a heavy heart. I made the decision a few months ago to stop working at Yad L'Ami at the end of September. This was of course not a hasty decision, but after praying and searching I arrived at this decision. The actual time of saying farewell to the elderly was not easy, for both parties. The fact that Mirjam will now continue the work has fortunately had a soothing effect. We visited the elderly together and this resulted in very nice meetings and introductions. She was warmly welcomed by everyone! I have every confidence that she will continue the work among the elderly with a warm heart and I wish her much joy and strength in doing so. I would also like to wish Ria and both boards many blessings in all their work and commitment to the foundation and the Jewish people. I have very fond memories of the past years. Thank you for the pleasant cooperation and the trust given.

Lots of love, ***Silvia***.

There is much more to tell but follow us on: www.yadlami.com or Facebook and Instagram of Yad L'Ami.

Let us be in constant prayer along with Isaiah 61:3:
May the mourners of Zion receive comfort, jewelry instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
a garment of joy instead of a spirit of despair, so they will be called oaks of righteousness
a planting of the Lord, for the display of his splendor.

Ria Doekes

Donations can be made in Israel, directly to: The First International Bank of Israel - Jerusalem Main Branch 012 Account No: 409-825026 Amutat Ha-Ma'ayan Yad L'Ami. Swift Code: FIRBILITXXX	***Checks may also be sent to:*** Amutat Ha-Ma'ayan Yad L'Ami P.O.BOX 32116 – Jerusalem 91320 – Israel Mail: yadlami@yadlami.com Website: www.yadlami.com