

YAD L'AMI – Rosh HaShana – Yom Kipur – Succot 2024

“If it had not been the LORD who was on our side,” Let Israel now say – “If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us. Then they would have swallowed us alive.

Blessed be the LORD, Who has not given us as prey to their teeth. From Psalm 124

Rosh HaShana, Yom Kippur, and Succot. We hope and pray that these days will pass peacefully. We usually celebrate the feast together. We celebrated the evening of Rosh HaShana together with many people and everyone contributed a dish. The whole country had spent the previous evening sheltering in our safe rooms. The day after? We got back to our usual activities and my job was to prepare two kilos of meatballs to take to the celebration, hoping that it would be possible to meet and that I wouldn't be stuck at home alone with all the meatballs. The instructions of the Home Front Command became a bit stricter for the upcoming holidays.

This is also the night that Wim, my husband, went to his heavenly Father nine years ago under the trumpet blast. In the Jewish tradition, it is thought that only righteous people are taken home on such an evening.

Since I can't answer all questions personally, I'm sending this update. First of all, thank you very much for your involvement; it encourages us tremendously in these days. Yes, it's hectic, there's lots of tension, and everyone is very alert. There are rocket barrages from Lebanon and Yemen. Gaza is not keeping quiet either; another tunnel with several chambers was destroyed there. In Haifa, Tiberias, Samaria, and as far as Eilat, rockets and drones from Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Gaza have entered Israel's airspace. On the ground, in Samaria and Judea, the army is present to keep things calm. Fortunately, we have not yet had an alarm in our area, but last Sabbath large pieces of debris fell here from a ballistic missile from Yemen, which Israel had already shot out of the sky somewhere outside Israel, but had such power that the remnants fell nearby. (This letter is written before the evening that whole Israel had to run to the shelters)

But now enough is enough

It was foreseeable that Israel's patience would run out at some point, after a year of constant fire in the north, where entire villages were flattened, cows killed, and chicken coops set on fire. A lot of the harvest was wasted and much nature reserve land has burned. That is besides the fact that more than 60,000 people have been evacuated from their homes and have spent the last year staying in hotel rooms or elsewhere, and that more than half a million people have to run to the bomb shelters sometimes daily. Since October, more than 9,000 missiles and drones have been fired from Lebanon. **And this is all happening under the eyes of UNIFIL.** It is too crazy for words; they are there supposedly to keep the peace.

The area from Haifa northwards is under Home Front Command restrictions. Schools are not functioning, and work is only allowed in places where there is an air-raid shelter. So now Israel is striking back, but not without a whole week of warning the citizens of southern Lebanon! Israel managed to hack into the telephone systems in Lebanon and warned more than 80,000 Lebanese to leave their homes in areas where Hezbollah has stored heavy weapons. They also managed to make local radio broadcasts; all of southern Lebanon was told to evacuate to avoid injury. Have you ever heard of Russia warning the people of Ukraine to leave before they attack? And now Putin tells Israel to leave Lebanon immediately. How bizarre! Major terrorist leaders have been eliminated: no. 1 Nasrallah. He terrorized all of Lebanon and the Middle East. Many Lebanese thank Israel. Now that he is out, perhaps we can get back onto the path of peace. In the past, Beirut was known as the Paris of the Middle East. Lebanon and Israel were good friends, and the inhabitants went to and fro. It was the same with Gaza. Before Hamas came to power, friends of mine would go there to buy groceries, eat and drink coffee, and people from Gaza came to Israel. In Syria, Sunni Muslims took to the streets partying and singing, thanking Israel for eliminating Nasrallah. It was also very cleverly done. As early as Wednesday, there were plans to attack the Hezbollah headquarters, but that necessitated great precision; they had to be sure he would be there. Netanyahu wanted to cancel his trip to the UN in New York because of the plan; however it was decided that he should go, thus diverting attention away from the Middle East while delivering his speech at the UN General Assembly. Just before giving the speech, he was told that it was certain that Nasrallah was in his bunker, and he gave permission to the IDF to bomb the building.

Friday's attack killed at least twenty other Hezbollah leaders, including two close associates of Nasrallah, one of whom was in charge of his security forces.

As you have read, before that we had the drama with the beepers and walkie-talkies, which ensured that only the members of Hezbollah would be hit. Nasrallah had called for all mobile phones to be replaced by such beepers some time ago, because he was afraid that Israel could easily hack or trace the phones. Now, not only did all these beepers sound simultaneously, but after a few seconds they all exploded resulting in enormous chaos and panic. So many terrorists were eliminated in one fell swoop! Not only was the elimination of high-ranking Hezbollah terrorists a goal of Israel, but in this way the identity of many terrorists was suddenly made clear. Israel can now figure out whose beeper, walkie-talkie, or radio exploded. Hezbollah itself has said that these devices were only used by Hezbollah members. Moreover, communication within Hezbollah has also been severely disrupted.

I would like to mention one more name, Ibrahim Aqil of the Radwan Force. He was killed along with fifteen other commanders when their building was hit by the IAF and collapsed. This top commander had been appointed as successor to Fuad Shukr, Hezbollah's no. 2, who was eliminated in July. Aqil had been wounded on Tuesday when his beeper exploded. He was discharged from the hospital on Friday morning and immediately called a large meeting to plan revenge attacks. The original plan to invade Galilee, just as Hamas had invaded Israel on October 7, had to be implemented immediately. First Nahariya and Shlomi and other villages in the north would be attacked. Their goal was to kill and kidnap Israeli civilians. Unfortunately for him, all communication in Lebanon had been disrupted by the beeper action. Israel sensed where they were and struck. In one fell swoop, the sixteen head commanders of the Radwan Force were eliminated. The US Administration had issued a \$7 million reward for information regarding the whereabouts and subsequent arrest of this Ibrahim Aqil. The U.S. accused Aqil of a role in the truck bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut in April 1983, which killed 63 people, and a U.S. Navy barrack six months later, where 241 people were killed. He was also wanted for leading the hostage-taking of Americans and Germans in Lebanon in the 1980s. Some were killed, others were imprisoned for years. *I mention this because we quickly forget history, which makes it clear why Israel is doing all this. Israel was allowed to provide justice for the USA, but will Israel be awarded that \$7 million?*

October is going to be a difficult month. I have been invited to various places to attend the commemoration ceremonies. Of course I can't attend all of them, but I can't ignore the places in which close friends suffered greatly on that terrible day. Some commemorations are on October 6 or 7, and others after Sukkot. Under these circumstances, we try to be there for the people. There is not a single child on the Gaza border who does not need help. Slowly, the new project to rebuild the animal corner in Kibbutz Sa'ad has begun. Permission had to be obtained for this and now that everything is in place, we are going to look again at how we can help with this. It is a big project but, after restoring the place, all children from the southern region will be able to receive help. We have hired another horse therapist, who will work one day extra each week, because there are 100 children on the waiting list. For some, it's nice to know that Arthur du Mosch will be providing this service. We received requests for a therapeutic self-defense course for the older youth and a cyber course, things they can continue in the future. Children's clubs have called for ceramics workshops, which encourage working together to express yourself, under supervision.

Yesterday we had a 'Zoom' meeting with Kibbutz Zikim, to which both the Netherlands and Israeli boards were invited. Any help would be appreciated. They are fighting so hard to get this small village back on track after a year of evacuation and dispersion. Maybe there are people who could teach an English course and/or provide therapeutic/psychological guidance via Zoom; something to think about. Or maybe you have great ideas. Contact me about that.

It is special that October 7 is also being commemorated in many places in the Netherlands. It would be nice to hear from you if you have a special evening on October 7 to support Israel.

I have a special prayer request for our soldiers. So many are being called up to the army reserves again now in Lebanon. Some have just returned home after serving for months in Gaza. It's so hard for all the wives and children to not see their husbands and fathers for months on end! Just a few days ago, nine young twenty-year-old soldiers died in Lebanon.

Again, there is so much to write about. From Israel, I wish everyone many blessings in your own locations. **Please don't forget that there are still 101 hostages languishing in Gaza!**

Ria Doekes

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