



WAR

RISHE DEITSCH

It is my sincere hope and prayer that by the time these lines are printed, Klal Yisroel will be delivered from its present state of danger and sorrow to one of Geulah, and that those being held captive in the hands of resha'im will have been released into the arms of their families in good health.

For a discussion of how in chutz la'aretz we are meant to react to the situation and what we should be doing about it, please visit nsheichabadnewsletter.com home page for a talk by Rabbi Yossi Paltiel. -Ed.



Yossi Brook helping a soldier in Sderot.

CONVERSATION THE AMERICAN PARENTS OF A SEMINARY STUDENT HAD WITH THE REBBE WHILE ISRAEL WAS AT WAR:

FATHER: Our daughter is studying in seminary in Eretz Yisroel. She's 18 years old. We don't know whether to bring her home because of the war.

REBBE: She is in seminary in Yerushalayim?

FATHER: In Yerushalayim.

REBBE: Then she's together with the Aibershter in His capital. What could be safer?

FATHER: The Rebbe is saying we shouldn't bring her home?

REBBE: *Chas v'shalom* to even entertain the thought.

MOTHER: She has free time now, she is off.

REBBE: She can still learn good things in the Holy City. May it be with great success. [PAUSE] Don't even tell her you considered her leaving.

This applies not only to your daughter but to any Jew entertaining the thought of leaving Yerushalayim. We're all planning to go there soon, with Moshiach. Why plan the opposite?

To view the video of this conversation, please visit nsheichabadnewsletter.com home page.

REPORT FROM TZIVIA PIZEM, SHLUCHA IN SDEROT

When the war first began, I, together with my husband, Chananel, our children, and my parents, Yossi and Zahava Brook, who live next door, entered into lockdown. As the uncertainty of the situation grew, we opened the Rebbe's *Igros*. In the letter we read, the Rebbe wrote: "The women and children should leave the city."

Without hesitation, my mother, my children, and I packed our belongings and headed to my aunt in Yerushalayim. At the same time, my husband and my father decided to stay in my parents' home in Sderot and continue our *shlichus*.



Dr. Morris Botomsky, senior surgeon at the Barzilay Hospital in Ashkelon, did not see the value of *tefillin*, and so every time the *shliach*, Rabbi Avrami Lerer, offered him *tefillin*, he refused... until now. Now, three days after the war began, he came to Rabbi Lerer and asked to put on *tefillin*. Dr. Botomsky explained, "When human beings slaughter us like this just for being Jews, this is a reason to strengthen our connection to G-d." Hearing these words, Rabbi Lerer couldn't hold back his tears.

The very next morning, a missile struck our home. We felt the *hashgachah pratit*. The Rebbe's guidance had saved us.

My husband and father continue our holy work in Sderot.

I am *baruch Hashem* still able to provide support to our community and reach out to countless individuals. Since I am the high school English teacher in the school serving all the *kibbutzim* near the Gaza border (Sha'ar Hanegev), I remain in constant contact with my students, offering them guidance and comfort.

May our journey serve as an inspiration and a source of hope for all of you, wherever you may be.

If you wish to help the Sderot shluchim rebuild their home, you may donate at raiseathon.com/helprebuild. -Ed.

EXCERPT OF A LETTER THE REBBE SENT TO A FATHER WHOSE SON WAS STUDYING IN ERETZ YISROEL (5727/1967):

●●● I take this opportunity also to acknowledge receipt of your cable in regard to your son... Surely by now you realize the extent of the shame which those boys feel

who, at the insistence of their parents, fled from Eretz Yisroel in the time of crisis. These boys feel greatly hurt that their parents took them away from the Holy Land where they were in the midst of some two million Jews (may their number multiply), to flee like cowards from the land of which it is written in the Torah, "G-d's Eyes are upon it from the beginning of the year to the end of the year." The indictment with which they will saddle their parents will not be easily forgotten by them, and it may take them not days and not weeks to overcome and forget it, but many months and perhaps years. I do not wish to elaborate on something which is far from a credit to some of our brethren who unfortunately lost their nerve under the stress of circumstances. You ought to feel very happy that your son did not flee from there, and remained in Kfar Chabad to continue his Torah learning, and by his very presence gave further encouragement to our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land in this time of need. ...May G-d grant that you should be truly and consistently proud of him and of his conduct from now and forever more...

REPORT BY MIREL LIPSKIER, SEMINARY STUDENT AT MACHON SHOSHANA IN YERUSHALAYIM

I'm writing this Erev Shabbos Parshas Bereishis, exactly six days since the start of this war. I'm feeling oddly serene, sitting on a bench overlooking the hills of Yerushalayim with the sun shining. It's hard to think that this same beautiful sky is witnessing thousands upon thousands of missiles. If it's not here, it's a mile away. If it's not now, it was ten minutes ago.

But let me start at the beginning.

Simchas Torah morning, 7:30 a.m. A day I will never forget. *Hakafos* the night before had ended late and my friends and I were finally catching up on our sleep from all the late nights and early mornings. I woke up to the faint sound of what sounded like the Shabbos siren in Crown Heights, but I was in Kfar Chabad. I was surprised that Kfar Chabad had gotten its times mixed up. But I thought nothing of it and rolled back over. My cousin in the other bed laughed at the irony that all three of us had woken up at the same time but a second later our friend suddenly realized that this was no Shabbos alarm, nor was it an ambulance or a police car. She shot out of bed and looked at us with the biggest, roundest, most fear-filled eyes and yelled, "GUYS! IT'S A BOMB!" I opened our bedroom door a crack and the sight I saw will haunt me forever. I saw our host in his *tzitzis* and pajamas dashing to his

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children's bedroom and scooping them up, one in each arm.

To say I was scared is a vast understatement. With whatever sanity I had in me I grabbed my blanket, attempting to cover myself in my pajamas, knowing we were about to be squished into a room with men. As I turned around to tell my friends to follow me, I felt the most terrifying BOOM I have ever felt in my life. And I live in New York. I know what gunshots sound like, I know what fireworks sound like, I know what car accidents sound like. This was nothing like those. The house shook as we tried to reach a safe space. We huddled close together in the only hallway with a door, not nearly a shelter or even a safe room, but it made us feel like we were doing something to protect ourselves. In that tiny hallway was our hostess with her husband, their six children, her elderly grandmother and her aide, plus my two friends and me. We sat there terrified as more explosions were heard and the house trembled.

Then it was calm for a few minutes, and then our hostess assured us that missiles never hit Kfar Chabad so—even though it happened once—there's no way it would happen again and we were safe to go back to bed. My friends and I decided to get dressed and then sleep in our clothes just to be sure that we'd be *tznusdik* if this would happen again. Not even an hour passed when we heard the siren again. I can still feel the urgency we felt as we flew down those steps into the hallway. Again, we sat for a few minutes and then were told to go back to sleep because anyways people won't be going to shul. Just as a precaution. Because really it couldn't be anything major. It's Kfar Chabad, after all. Kfar Chabad where their shelters are full of furniture and storage since they haven't been used in 15 years.

The non-Jewish aide in the house kept giving us more information, and gradually we came to understand that this was no ordinary surprise attack but rather an operation of terror that was not backing down.

This year was probably the first time I've ever eaten a full meal on Simchas Torah together with all the men of the household sober and serious.

Shabbos ended, and then the stories started coming in. I had friends who were in the south for Simchas Torah and what they experienced was utterly terrifying. While we were going into the shelter for a few minutes and then coming out, they were spending the full night and next day sitting in the shelter, scared for their lives.

Motzoei Shabbos brought more sirens. Looking up and seeing our hostess's sister-in-law crying, we knew something was more than wrong. Mommies don't cry in front of their children. I opened my missile app (no one told me that's something I would need to download!) and saw those little red dots on the map popping up nearby, and then zooming in a bit more I saw that they were directly in Kfar Chabad. Missiles? Directly hitting Kfar Chabad?! There was just no way. At this point we were naturals in running to our makeshift shelter and as soon as I heard the siren I dashed for the children who were distracting themselves watching videos and picked up one little girl (who promptly had an accident on me from the fear), while my friends each carried more kids down. With the news fully available to us now, we began hearing about the horrific atrocities that were going on just a few miles away from us. The most



Tzivia Pizem and her mother, Zahava Brook, *shluchos* in Sderot, with the Chabad of Sderot menorah, made of missile pieces.



Yoni and Noam Maizel and their children, along with many residents of Nachlat Har Chabad, are busy cooking hot kosher food for IDF soldiers. Here we see Yoni and the children making a delivery to grateful soldiers.



The Pizems' destroyed kitchen.

repeated line that night was “*kmo hashoah, mamash kmo hashoah.*” Just like the Holocaust. And that is what it is. At what other time did we hear of parents being tortured to death in front of their children? Of children being beheaded in front of their parents? Of young women and girls being savagely violated only to be murdered? Of elderly civilians being taken as hostages from their own homes?

After a nerve-racking and sweaty day, my friends and I were desperate for a shower. Look how the tables turned. Before Shabbos, our biggest worry was that we wouldn’t have enough time to shower since all the kids hadn’t showered yet. And now we were worrying whether or not we could shower without having to run out to the shelter.

If someone would have told me last week that just a few days later I’d be running for my life from missiles and bombs I would have told them they’re hallucinating. I look through my camera roll and get shaken up every time I see my friends and me dancing and singing at the top of our lungs at a concert on Chol Hamoed, and then just a few photos later there we are sitting huddled in a small, hot shelter, singing *Ani Maamin* together.

It felt, and still feels, like I’m living in a horror movie. This doesn’t happen in real life these days. It just doesn’t. Until it does. The world, and certainly not Israel, hasn’t seen anything like this before.

After much coordinating, my seminary, Machon Shoshana in Ramat Shlomo, managed to arrange a bus to take us back to Yerushalayim from Kfar Chabad. Saying goodbye to my cousin and her friend, my

“trauma buddies,” was not easy. We all knew this was just the beginning. The streets were eerily silent and deserted, streets that are infamous for their traffic. I had never before said *Tefillas Haderech* with as much *kavanah* as I did that day, on our short 45-minute drive. We were all praying that Hashem should spare us the experience of having to get off the bus and lie down on the street covering our heads.

The whole Sunday, *Isru Chag* here but *Simchas Torah* in America, held some of the most excruciating hours of my life; I can only imagine what it must have felt like for our families in America, knowing that something is happening but not knowing exactly what or how we’re doing. I had been holding it together pretty well, calm and smiling, but the second I heard my parents’ voices over the phone I broke down. It all became so real. I was here, they were there. I was surrounded by Arabs ready to kill Jews, they weren’t. I spent a good few hours talking to all my family members who were nervously checking in on me and then managed to sleep for three hours before having to wake up for the semblance of normalcy that seminary was trying to make for us.

Monday we had two more sirens, once while in class and once when we were all in our apartments. My apartment does not have a safe room, so the second the siren rang we all dashed out the door and ran into the next-door dorm. Their safe room is a tiny bedroom for two girls. And yet we somehow fit nearly two dorms into that one room. We passed the time singing and laughing.

My friends and I decided to take advantage of the opportunity the *shlucha* in Shaarei Tzedek was offering.



Sderot *shliach* Rabbi Chananel Pizem outside of his destroyed home. Rabbi Dovid Caytak giving *Chitas* and *tefillin* to IDF soldiers.

We got onto a bus and volunteered in a hospital. Although the language barrier is still difficult, the time we spent walking around offering hot drinks and cookies to patients in the hospital (civilians as well as soldiers) is an experience I'll never forget. Never before have I felt so appreciated for a *shlichus*. The patients didn't want us to leave, and neither did we.

We're all living life and yet every minute is spent waiting for something to happen. It's like we know something is about to happen, we just don't know what or when. It's hard to live like that. Hard to breathe, hard to sleep, hard to eat when you don't know what will happen the next second.

Not being able to leave the city is terribly constricting. And yet there's tremendous guilt that comes with a thought like that. I feel constricted because I can't leave the city? I miss my friends who are a few miles away from me? What about the people who are being physically constricted and tortured in Gaza, all alone and afraid? And I'm complaining that I can't go buy board games?

Shabbos is coming. We were supposed to be in Achziv this Shabbos, a beach city on the border. I guess we weren't supposed to be, though. It's hard to believe that it's almost a week since this all started. In a certain way it feels like just yesterday, but I also cannot even remember what life was like before the war. I know my life is changed. Forever. When this is over and we can think straight, I know there will be a lot to process. I've been forced to grow up and make my own life-and-death decisions in a matter of seconds, but at the same time I've never felt more vulnerable and child-like. It's like

all I need is my mommy and her soup and then all the problems will go away.

Here is my message right now to everyone in America:

Thank you for reaching out. Thank you for *davening*. Thank you for all the rallies and *farbrengens* you're arranging. I know it's for the soldiers and for the safety of Eretz Yisroel and no one is really thinking about one little girl in seminary when they're arranging it, but I can tell you that it makes a difference. We all feel it. To see thousands of people singing in front of 770 together instead of another gruesome video of the atrocities going on here is heartwarming. And to my friends and family—it's never too much. You can never ask me too often about how I'm doing or how it is around me. Every message means so much.

We are safe. Really. Yes I know that today is supposed to be a day of *jihad*. And yes, I know that the Arabs ten minutes away from us just had a shootout with the IDF. But we've been safe until now and we will continue to be safe. We all keep saying how we can't imagine how hard it must be to be in America right now. You don't know what we know. Which is that we're happy being together. That instead of wasting another night nervously checking our phones, my friends and I decided to chop each other's hair off just for the fun of it. That the sun still shines and we still find reasons to laugh.

I'm no therapist or rabbi or speaker or politician so I do not have the right words of comfort nor do I have advice for anyone, not even myself, so I won't pretend. But what I can say with full certainty is that I know this will end miraculously. I just know it. Good Shabbos, from the holy city of Yerushalayim. ❀